This issue is dedicated to the memory of Professor Aldona Jawłowska (1934 – 2010) who established the journal. Her idea was to make it an interdisciplinary vehicle of open debate in the humanities. The profile of the founding mother of our journal is in itself a record of the Polish humanities struggling to survive and flourish following the political transformation from the obnoxious totalitarianism of the past to the market democracy that followed.

In this special issue of Societas/Communitas we present a selection of papers from previous issues in Polish. All authors were, at the time of publishing, members of the faculty of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences. In this way we want to present the journal’s publisher, an Institute with a brief — though approaching 25 years — and complicated history.

The academic community at the University’s ISNS defines applied sciences as, firstly, the generation of knowledge based on empirical studies as broadly understood. And secondly, as the application of notions, theories and concepts already existing, not only for resolving social problems but also for describing and interpreting social life, both as an entirety and in its multifarious aspects, fragments and layers (usually leading to significant modifications in these notions, theories and concepts).

The specific nature of the ISNS may be described in brief by the following two expressions: INTERDISCIPLINARITY and PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES. In its science and research teams, the Institute gathers together representatives of a variety of the humanistic disciplines and social sciences (sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, pedagogues, historians and philosophers), frequently representing unique sub-disciplines and academic specialisations.
Special Issue
In Memoriam Aldona Jawłowska

Edited by
Jacek Kurczewski
Contents

From the Editors .................................................................................................................. 7

Reminiscences, Farewells

On Professor Aldona Jawłowska, the Mastermind and Editor-in-Chief of ‘Societas/Communitas’ ........................................................................................................... 9

Iwona Jakubowska-Branicka

Images of Reality ................................................................................................................. 71

Grażyna Woroniecka

From Rational Debate to Political Mimetics: Contemporary Politics in the Light of Sociological Theories ............................................................................................................. 93

Paweł Dybel

Žižek at the Gates of Revolution – the Quandaries of the Political Subject of the Radical Left .......... 105

Jacek Kochanowski

The Microphysics of Power and Microphysics of Resistance in the Depiction of Social Queer Theory ... 143

Anna Krajewska

‘No-policy Policy’: Immigrant Women in Poland’s Eldercare Sector ........................................ 165

Małgorzata Fuszara, Jacek Kurczewski

Modernisation or Crisis? Transformations in Families of Temporary Migrants ..................... 185

Beata Łaciak

The Problems of Immigrants and Refugees in Poland Based on Selected Media Accounts .... 217

Magdalena Łukasiuk

Autoethnographic Method in the Sociology of Emotions ...................................................... 255

Research Workshops

Barbara Fatyga

Profile of Cultural Figures of Warmia-Masuria. Research Outline ........................................ 271
Wojciech Pawlik
On Critical Competences in Sociology and the Field of Art ............................................ 279

Reviews and Comment
Aleksandra Niżyńska
A Good Job the World is Not Just America ...... 289

Małgorzata Melchior
On Experiencing the Holocaust and the Human Condition ............................................. 297

News and Conference Reports
Katarzyna Michalczak, Marta Olasik, Agata Stasińska, Miłosz Ukleja, Aleksander Wasiak-Radoszewski
Conference Report: ‘Non-normative Family Practices’ ......................... 303

Aleksandra Herman
‘Schulz in Warsaw, Drohobych in Warsaw’ – Schulz Festival, 19–25 November 2012 ........ 315

Jan Winczorek
Jubilee Ceremonial Conference of the Research Committee on Sociology of Law, University of Warsaw (19–21 October 2012) ....... 321

About the Authors ................................................................................................................. 327
From the Editors

This issue is devoted to the memory of Professor Aldona Jawłowska (1934 – 2010) who established the journal. Her idea was to make it an interdisciplinary vehicle of open debate in the humanities. Herself an educationalist and sociologist, she wrote on hippie counterculture, on experimental theatre (in which she worked under Jerzy Grotowski) and on current culture trends. The profile of the founding mother of our journal is in itself a record of the Polish humanities struggling to survive and flourish following the political transformation from the obnoxious totalitarianism of the past to the market democracy that followed.

In this special issue of Societas/Communitas we present a selection of papers from previous issues in Polish. All authors were, at the time of publishing, members of the faculty of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences. In this way we want to present the journal’s publisher, an Institute with a brief – though approaching 25 years – and complicated history. At the beginning was a Chair in History and Theory of Morality set up for Professor Maria Ossowska (1896 – 1974) at the Department of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Warsaw. Under the leadership of her student Adam Podgórecki (1925 – 1998) it was transformed into a unique university unit dealing with sociology of law and norms in general. Over the years Podgórecki fostered interest in social pathology while his involvement in praxeology led him to propose sociotechnics as a special branch of the practical sciences that would deal with scientific influence on social processes and events. In 1973 he split from the Institute of Sociology and co-established the new and autonomous Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialisation, as the name he proposed – the Institute of Sociotechnics – was unacceptable to the communist political authorities then in power in Poland. In 1990 this Institute split into two, forming a joint Department, while most sociologists and psychologists separated from the educationalists and criminologists, setting up at the University of Warsaw the first Institute of Applied Social Sciences in Poland (the ISNS).

The academic community at the University’s ISNS defines applied sciences as, firstly, the generation of knowledge based on empirical studies as broadly understood. And secondly, as the application of notions, theories and concepts already existing, not only for resolving social problems but also for describing and interpreting social life, both as an entirety and in its multifarious aspects, fragments and layers (usually leading to significant
From the Editors

modifications in these notions, theories and concepts). Our experience suggests that the area of science thus defined expands not only the opportunities for collaboration with practitioners, but also contributes to the development of fundamental theories and research.

The specific nature of the ISNS may be described in brief by the following two expressions: INTERDISCIPLINARITY and PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES. In its science and research teams, the Institute gathers together representatives of a variety of the humanistic disciplines and social sciences (sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, pedagogues, historians and philosophers), frequently representing unique sub-disciplines and academic specialisations.

The main areas of scientific study at the Institute are generally cross-sectional and cover: sociology of social transformations – including transformations in emotions, morals, customs and the law; anthropology of contemporary life and sociology of culture – including transformations in culture, lifestyles, popular culture and its global character; the foundations of sociology of law and morals; sociology and anthropology of youth, the unemployed, the disabled and other social groups; social conflicts together with studies into reconciliation, negotiation, mediation and the resolving of conflicts; social policy together with studies of the non-governmental sector and the labour market; sociology of the family and social bonds; social and cultural aspects of human gender and sexuality; the impact of psychoactive substances on the lives of individuals and groups and social pathology issues; selected issues in social and clinical psychology; and also the history of ideas and democracy.

This special edition was made possible thanks to the support of Poland’s Ministry of Science and Higher Education, which granted funds from the National Programme for Development of the Humanities for the translation and publication of the articles contained within.
Aldona Jawłowska
1934 – 2010
On 15 May 2010, professor Aldona Jawłowska, the mastermind behind and Editor-in-Chief of ‘Societas/Communitas’, passed away.

The issue on ‘The Language of Propaganda and Creations of Reality’ was the last issue under her editorship. We were both pleased with the issue, and to this very day I can recall her joy after reading through it: “Iwonka, we’re going to have a wonderful issue.” Joy, because Aldona was a joyful person. Joyful, full of energy and enthusiasm, always rediscovering the world and its people, and with the same interest and freshness in her perspective. She left us shortly afterwards, and I am no longer capable of finding within myself that joy that I shared with her. Instead, I am gathering people’s memories of Professor Aldona, memories I asked her friends and colleagues to write. They are all beautiful. After reading them I spoke of how I felt about them to Małgosia Mieszkowska, for two years now secretary of ‘Societas/Communitas’. She looked at me, and said: “A beautiful person means the memories are beautiful as well”. And that’s how it is. I believe that single sentence encapsulated everything.

I knew Professor Aldona Jawłowska for many years. Yet it was barely a few years ago that she invited me into her friendship. Invited is a good description, as she introduced me into her circle of friends, or in any case into one of those circles, as she had very many friends. I think that was because Aldona was a very forthcoming person and a priori she liked people. Which of course is not to say she was so towards everybody, or equally as cordially. But I was never to hear her totally discrediting anybody because of views inconsistent with her own or behaviour she did not accept. Aldona never...
rejected anybody entirely, although that does not mean she would not express her frequently painfully critical opinions in very direct terms. Even so, that never violated the essence of dignity of the person she criticised. Aldona was simply not a dogmatic person, and there was not a speck of hatred in her attitude towards those thinking differently.

Just like others, I am also finding it difficult to write this recollection. As such, I will only say that despite the few months that have passed since her death, her words and comments are ‘winding’ through my thoughts related to everyday life and work. I miss terribly the possibility of talking with her, and frequently catch myself thinking that I can no longer call her to comment briefly on life or to ask for contact details to a new vet. Because Aldona loved animals, as all her friends and acquaintances know. The poorer they were, the more so, but above all she loved dogs, and always had a few.

Three days after she passed away an article on Professor Aldona Jawłowska was published on the ‘Nauka w Polsce’ website. I wrote then the following comment: “15 May saw the loss of Prof. Aldona Jawłowska. A wonderful, good person. A friend to people and animals. There are said to be no irre- placeable people. But nobody will take Aldona’s place. We hope she meets all those she loved, and all those animals whose lives she saved. Let her always be happy.”

I believe this collection of memories is the most beautiful of farewells for her. And I shall say once again, that a beautiful person also means beautiful memories. Let her remain in our memories radiant and cheerful, responding to suffering, forthcoming towards other people.
Reminiscences, Farewells

NINA KRAŚKO

I have attempted to present an intellectual biography of Aldona Jawłowska. This is not a collection of memories; Sergiusz Kowalski and I wrote such immediately after her death (Kowalski, Kraśko 2010).

I met Aldona in the late nineteen seventies, and over the following years our paths crossed quite frequently, although we made no attempt to find out about one another’s past. Asking questions for example about political activities or personal choices could have aroused suspicion regarding the motives behind our curiosity, as nobody likes somebody else barging their way into their private life. And as everybody understands privacy differently, so as not to upset Aldona’s feelings I did not probe her about the past.

After Aldona passed away I began thinking more about her life, wondering what her choices were based upon. With little faith in human memory, I decided to delve into archive materials. I requested permission to view her personal files at the University of Physical Education in Warsaw, the University of Warsaw, and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences (IFiS PAN). There were rather large gaps in the data I managed to gather, and I strived to fill them by picking my own memory and those of Aldona’s acquaintances. A particular mention here goes to Hanna Świda-Ziembra, who knew Aldona Jawłowska from 1957 and who has the memory of an elephant, or even two elephants. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to her for the help she gave.

Nina Kraśko

Aldona Jawłowska was born on 8 December 1934 in Warsaw, where her father worked as the curator of the Polish Museum of Zoology. Hieronim, Aldona’s father, was an expert on invertebrates (in particular millipedes), and published twenty-two papers in this field; he described twenty-one previously unknown species and subspecies. Born in Kowno in 1887, he was the only neuroanatomist of insect brains Poland has seen to date. He studied in Saint Petersburg, and in 1914–1915 took part in a scientific expedition researching the fauna of the Caspian Sea. From 1915 to 1918 he taught in
secondary schools in Temir-Khan-Shura and Mozdok in the Caucasus. In 1918 he passed the state examination at the university in Kiev and was appointed junior assistant at the Department of Animal Physiology, and from 1919 to 1920 he was employed as junior assistant at the Zoology Department of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. In 1920 he served as a volunteer in the 1st Legions infantry regiment during the Polish-Soviet War. From 1921 to 1928 he worked as an assistant at the Zoology Department of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, where in 1923 he received a PhD from its Mathematics and Natural Sciences Faculty. He began working for the Polish Museum of Zoology in Warsaw in 1929, where in 1934 he was appointed its curator¹. From 1945 he directed the Department of General Biology at the Medicine Faculty of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, and from 1950 to 1962 – the Medical Academy. He was remembered by his students as a rather scathing person, with a high regard for genuine and exact scientific knowledge, and his daughter’s choices in life most probably did not always meet with his support or even acceptance. He once threw out a student who turned up for his exam in sportswear, shouting that today’s students are interested in everything except study, which he knew because such was his daughter.

Aldona attended her first year of school in 1940, but the next year her father – who felt in danger of being arrested – left with his family for Iwaniška in the Kielce district. He worked there as a labourer on the roads, while teaching youngsters using clandestine materials – which Aldona was also schooled on. In 1944 the family moved to Łańcut and later to Lublin, where Aldona’s father was given the biology chair at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University then being established there. Aldona completed her primary and secondary school education in Lublin.

It had already become evident at school that Aldona was extremely skilled in sports and particularly enjoyed the rivalry. She commenced training at the ‘Czyn’ sports club in Lublin, where after a couple of months she won the regional swimming championships, later played volleyball and handball at the ‘Związkowiec’, practiced gymnastics on the bars, threw the discus, won the junior championships in the triathlon, obtained the junior record in the shot put, and was regional vice-champion in table tennis. Following her school finals she went to the Gliding School in Łębork, which she completed with very good marks, and then began training at the Lublin Flying Club.

When she commenced history studies during the 1951-1952 academic year in Warsaw, opportunities for continuing with her passion for sports

shrunk significantly. And yet she felt the need, because when in April 1952 she went to the Academic Sports Association’s swimming pool she attempted, at least on an irregular basis, to train, and in June that year she became Warsaw’s junior champion in the 20 m breaststroke.

After one year of history studies she decided to switch places of learning, and applied to the University of Physical Education (AWF) in Warsaw. She explained as follows: “After a year of studying history I have gained little, while I believe that by studying on a course in keeping with my interests I would be able to achieve good results in my learning and in sport”2.

Studies at the AWF then were two-tier, and took three years (from 1952 to 1955). As a graduate, she was given the vocational title of certified teacher of physical education. She worked as a teacher in a high school in Warka for a year, after which she began studies for a higher degree at the University of Warsaw’s Faculty of Education, graduating as a Master of Education in 19583. She was involved in work at the Literature and Reading Section of the Department of General Education, directed by Bogdan Suchodolski. In 1958/1959 she was granted an academic scholarship by the Ministry of Higher Education. In 1960 she stood in (on a contract) for a year for Irena Wojnar, who was on a sabbatical. From June 1961 until the end of May 1965 she was on a doctorate scholarship while preparing her doctoral dissertation under Bogdan Suchodolski. From 1965 she was employed as a senior assistant at the University of Warsaw’s Department of General Education. In October that same year she passed her dissertation: The Issues of Man in the Philosophy of Comte, Mill, Stirner and Kierkegaard. She prepared and conducted research into vocational orientation among pupils attending general high schools, the findings of which were published in 1972 by Ossolineum (Jawłowska, ed., 1972: 277). In February 1968 she was promoted to a university lecturer post.

The year 1968 may be acknowledged as the beginning of Jawłowska as an oppositionist. Before then the authorities had had no reason to doubt her support for the People’s Poland, appreciating her achievements and prospects. When Aldona and I talked of her youth, she said she belonged to a generation convinced they had gained by the change in the political system. Her generation did not have the bitterness of losing of the Home Army or the Warsaw Uprising, and as such they were the hope of the new authorities, the object of their wooing and efforts towards their education. Youth then

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2 I obtained information on Aldona Jawłowska’s sport interests from her student file in the Archives of the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, cat. no. 1013.

3 I obtained information on her UW academic career A. Jawłowska’s personal file (file no. 31921), at the UW’s Biuro Spraw Pracowniczych.
could feel themselves the makers of history, and their reasoning frequently overcame that of adults, for example their teachers. Aldona Jawłowska was a member of the Union of Polish Youth (ZMP), and in 1956 in objection to the ossification of this organisation she became involved in creating what then seemed to her a more democratic organisation for youth, the Socialist Youth Union (ZMS), and for two years even worked at its Central Committee. She was quick to notice that the new organisation had become too bureaucratic, was not encouraging the young to become politically active and to express their opinions, and was becoming a refuge for careerists. But her research into vocational orientation among high school pupils was conducted with the financial support of the ZMS. In articles published in Interpresse, written for readers living in other countries, she presented the achievements of Polish education. In March 1968 she signed up to a team preparing a resolution in support of students, then passed by employees at the Faculty of Education, and took part in a student occupation. When her employment should have been extended in 1971, it turned out that there were certain problems. Professor Ryszard Wroczyński, then director of the Institute of Education, wrote: “A weak point of Dr A. Jawłowska’s activities at the University of Warsaw is her relatively poor involvement in the Institute’s social and organisational work, while there have also been incidents of her not conforming to her superiors’ instructions. [...] Currently the situation has improved, and therefore the Directorate agrees to her continued employment”. The application for her further employ was backed by the department manager, Kazimierz Dobrzyński: “Over the last two years I have not encountered the opinion that classes run by Dr Jawłowska, either within our faculty or in the Faculty of Social Sciences, or that her examination-related demands were cause for tensions in student circles”. Her mentor and supervisor, Bogdan Suchodolski, also stood in her defence, writing in the assessment: “Ms Dr A. Jawłowska is a very active and valuable employee of the Team of Education Fundamentals. I highly value her intellectual acumen and involvement in academic and social activities”. Suchodolski added that Jawłowska was approaching the conclusion of a study that would constitute her post-doctoral dissertation, the intention of which was to discuss the value of knowledge about man provided by the empirical sciences and by philosophy. According to Suchodolski, the dissertation was to deal with two manners of identifying and interpreting a person’s personality: on the one hand via the results of empirical research regarding attitudes in life, systems of values, plans and prospects among the young, and on the other via systematic philosophical theories.

Despite the reservations her position was extended. Hanna Świda-Ziembba recalls that the matter was referred to the Central Committee of the Pol-
ish United Workers’ Party (PZPR). Suchodolski persuaded professor Tadeusz Wujek to attempt to change the Central Committee’s decision (Wujek worked both there and in Wroczyński’s Department). Two years later and Jawłowska herself handed in her resignation at the University of Warsaw, and joined the Social Forecasts Team at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IFiS PAN). When requesting the termination of her contract with the University, the reason she gave for her decision was her collaboration with the ‘Polska 2000’ Research and Forecast Committee, with the Forecasting Board at the Ministry of Art and Culture, and with the Social Forecasts Team at IFiS PAN.

In 1973 she was taken on at the Social Forecasts Department at IFiS PAN as auxiliary science and research employee. Her first immediate superior was assistant professor Anna Pawełczyńska, while her investigations were to deal with the subject of “culture as a category of social processes”4. Jawłowska remained in the employment of the IFiS PAN until she retired in 2004, over the years acquiring successive degrees, titles and academic positions.

Aldona was granted a year’s post-doctoral scholarship in 1974, and in 1975 her work Drogi kontrkultury [The Paths of Counterculture] was published by PIW in a series dedicated to modern thinking5. This touched on issues different to those indicated by Suchodolski. Hanna Świda-Ziemba recalls that Suchodolski suggested the new topic as well, and it was closer to Aldona’s interests. The Paths of Counterculture is among the classics of sociology. It deals with the rebellion of youth in the nineteen sixties, the transformations in this rebellion, its structure, and the diverse goals it was supposed to achieve. This youth rebellion embraced such countries as France, Italy, Germany, the United States and Great Britain. Apart from many elements in common, each of these countries witnessed features specific to them. Although universities and schools constituted the centres of the protest, negation and revolt became widespread in a variety of communities and circles, including ethnic and racial minorities, as well as people on the margins of society. The movement featured all sorts of ideological colours, presented above all by left-wing factions of mass-scale student and pacifist organisations, Maoist groups (the most active in Italy and France), Trotskyite groups, anarchists, groups inspired by the Cuban revolution and the traditions of Che Guevara’s guerrilla struggles. The contestation, initially treated as an expression of the generational conflict, soon transformed into an anti-sys-

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4 Materials regarding her work at IFiS PAN come from A. Jawłowska’s personal file (no. 910)
5 Jawłowska, 1975. The book was signed for printing in September 1975; see p. 327.
tem social movement. The contesters’ interest stretched beyond the personal experiences and affairs of those protesting, their main object of criticism being American capitalism and other countries’ governments becoming dependent on it. Jawłowska rightfully claimed that this movement constituted a contestation “within ostensibly integrated and efficiently functioning societies” (1975: 6). She also pointed out that the rebellion of the sixties could be treated as the creation and a test of the contemporary realisation of a social utopia. As opposed to earlier utopians, these were convinced of the reality of utopia and unreal nature of the world beyond. The movement’s participants felt certain that the ideal presented by the students could be achieved. The world is as it is only because people are convinced of its unalterability. Secondly, it was a permanent utopia, the essence of which was the constant questioning not only of the existing world, but also of the paths to its improvement.

The gathering of materials for *The Paths of Counterculture* began during her work at the university. Two works by Aldona would seem to the most important of her achievements in the seventies. One was an article written together with Edmund Mokrzycki, *Lifestyles and transformations in social structure: a proposition of historical-sociological typology* (Jawłowska, Mokrzycki 1978), and the second was *Consumer Movement* (Jawłowska 1981).

In the year when *The Paths of Counterculture* was published, the Department for Scientific International Collaboration – UNESCO Secretariat, on recommendation from Bogdan Suchodolski, sought to employ Aldona Jawłowska. Yet despite the proposal gaining the executive support of the PZPR’s Primary Party Organisation and even though the Institute granted her a sabbatical, the employment did not materialise. In 1978 Jawłowska received a year’s scholarship from the American Council of Learned Societies. Although she obtained the consent of the department manager and the Institute’s directorate, she did not travel abroad. Ryszard Terlecki writes that the ban on travel to the West was a particularly grievous form of repression used on scientists and artists belonging to the TKN, the Society for Scientific Studies or the Flying University (Terlecki 2000).

Difficulties with post-doctorate dissertations constituted another type of repression. Despite the undoubted scholarly qualities of *The Paths of Counterculture*, Jawłowska only had her post-doctoral examination on 29 September 1982, i.e. seven years after the book was published.

This was a consequence of her activeness in opposition circles, and mainly in the TKN. She was a member of the Programme Board, and together with Stefan Amsterdamski and Tadeusz Kowalik put together the first TKN issue,
dedicated to the language of propaganda: *Newspeak*\(^6\). Also, towards the end of the seventies, she stood in defence of the political Theatre of the Eighth Day when it was stopped by the Security Service. These activities were noticed and appraised by the PZPR authorities.

Towards the end of the seventies three groups of oppositionists were identified by the PZPR’s Central Committee: those drawn in through no ill will of their own, ignorant, holding promise for a full understanding; those aware of what they were doing, but who might change and need some time; and those who were reoffenders, constituting a lost cause. Aldona Jawłowska was classified into the third group, and the authorities considered the option of giving her three months’ notice of termination of employment\(^7\). When I asked her about this, she answered that she hadn’t known about the threat, and hadn’t considered it.

During the period when ‘Solidarity’ functioned openly, the political obstacles had disappeared and the post-doctoral program could open. The date for her post-doctoral examination was set for February. And this time as well it did not take place, as the day before Aldona was interned. Her internment should not come as a surprise; one can only wonder that it did not happen immediately on 13 December 1981. It was a consequence of her opposition activities both in the seventies and during the Solidarity revolution. Following the establishing of the ‘Solidarność’ Trade Union, Jawłowska belonged to the group of initiators and organisers behind the trade union’s Education Section (together with Krystyna Starczewska and Stefan Starczewski). It was thanks to these initiatives that a change in the programmes of knowledge about Poland and history was prepared. She began gathering comments by various people on the essence and political significance of this event immediately after martial law was imposed; the work was published in 1982, after Jawłowska’s release from internment\(^8\). Aldona regretted that the comments had by then lost their topicality. Aldona Jawłowska was also joint-founder and member of the editing team of ‘Karta’.

Aldona found the conditions of her incarceration very debilitating, and was soon taken to hospital. The Institute of Philosophy and Sociology attempted to ‘extract’ her from her isolation, and those in power at the Institute applied for her release, emphasising the poor state of her health (Kazimierz Doktors sent a letter in her behalf to the Chief Officer of the Citizens’

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\(^6\) This was the record of a colloquium discussion on this subject. Published by NOWA in 1979.
\(^7\) KC PZPR materials on the Polish Academy of Sciences, Archiwum Akt Nowych, cat. no. 859/9.
Nina Kraśko

Militia). Her immediate superior – Andrzej Siciński – gave his personal guarantee. And these efforts paid off; Jawłowska was released from internment and returned to the Institute.

Aldona Jawłowska’s post-doctoral examination was held on 29 September 1982. Her dissertation was approved of without any snags by the Central Qualification Committee, and on 23 May 1983 the Scientific Council IFiS PAN awarded her the position of docent.

Two years following her post-doctoral dissertation, Aldona Jawłowska transferred from the Department of Lifestyle Research, directed by Andrzej Siciński, to the Department of Aesthetics directed by professor Katarzyna Rosner. Professor Hanna Świda-Ziemba is certain that the switch of Departments came about due to a change of interests, and not for political reasons. After all, Jawłowska had already shown interest before in non-institutional (avant-garde, student and off) theatre. Her work at the Department of Aesthetics resulted in the book *More Than Theatre* (Jawłowska 1988).

In the nineteen eighties Aldona Jawłowska travelled on a scholarship to the United States for the first time. Her stay was initially planned for six months (from November 1984), but she request that it be extended to a year, and the Institute agreed.

In the Third Polish Republic, in November 1989, she returned to Sociology – beginning work at the Department of Theoretical Sociology at IFiS PAN, directed by Edmund Mokrzycki. From 1991 Aldona directed the Department of Culture Theory, and in 1992 she was granted the title and position of professor. She returned then to her interests in culture as a way of life, in social norms and values. Her starting point here was the concept of postmodernism, particularly in the version presented by Zygmunt Bauman. After 1989 the difficulties in contacts between Polish scholars working in Poland and those who had emigrated for political reasons ceased to exist. As such, it was easier for example to access Bauman’s works that had been published outside of Poland, and his other books soon began to be published in Poland. Moreover, this eminent sociologist frequently visited Poland himself and presented his vision of social transformations. Aldona shared an intellectual and ideological affinity with Bauman in two matters. Above all, Bauman’s approach happens to be largely convergent with that presented by Jawłowska in *The Paths of Counterculture*. In the book’s ending, Jawłowska writes that she wanted: “To show perspectives that broaden the view of the world limited by the focusing of attention on various instrumental actions performed according to reoccurring scenarios, hindering the perception of anything lying outside of the paths leading to pre-determined goals” (1975: 308).
Postmodernism may be portrayed as an effect of the rebellion of the sixties postponed in time. The subtitle of Bauman’s *Liquid Times is Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, while the uncertainty in turn is a consequence of an unquestionable ‘broadening of the world’. The author lists a few sources of uncertainty. The first is the fact that institutions previously upholding models of repeatability of acceptable behaviour are transforming at such a pace that they are ceasing to confine individual choices. A growing number of issues once in the hands of state authorities are shifting into the global realm. Political institutions, taking decisions regarding the direction of development and the goals of the functioning of the state, are incapable of operating within global space. An ever smaller role is played by protection from failure and misfortune granted to individuals by state institutions. Social structures oriented towards long-term thinking, planning and action are vanishing. This is leading to a “splicing of both political history and individual lives into a series of short-term projects and episodes which are in principle infinite, and do not combine into the kinds of sequences to which concepts like ‘development’, ‘maturation’, ‘career’ or ‘progress’ (all suggesting a preordained order of succession) could be meaningfully applied” (Bauman 2007: 7–10).

In addition Bauman and Jawłowska represent a similar social sensitivity – opposition to limitations in chances for development, opportunities for self-fulfilment, and support of conditions conducive to human development. Bauman devotes much room to those wronged by fortune, discarded from society, constituting the “waste of globalisation” (Bauman 2004).

In my opinion, Jawłowska was a non-political and a non-party person. Her active opposition to those aspects of social and political life that evoked her disapproval was a dictate for her – a moral imperative, similarly to the compassion for and defence of those wronged by fate, by the state authorities, or by their superiors. She did not ruminate over how her activities or the stance she took would affect her personal future or academic career. She devoted little of her attention to analysing what chances a movement she supported had, and whether it was worth becoming involved at a particular moment or might be worth waiting for a more suitable moment. This attitude remained unchanged in the 3rd Polish Republic, as testified to by her involvement in the creation and operations of the Open Republic – Association Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia. During the period of building the so-called (a qualifier I feel must be added) 4th Polish Republic she signed an appeal by Kraków intellectuals in defence of democracy. In her less public and more private life, she strived to look after those who had met with misfortune, and she would help everybody: those who asked for help, and those who did not ask for it but who, she felt, were in need. People could count on
financial help, on her advice, on a friendly critique, on encouragement to work on.

She helped not only people, but animals as well. Everybody knew that Jawłowska adored dogs, and she always had a few of them. They were never pedigree dogs, quite the opposite in fact; she looked after dogs abandoned by their owners, old and sick dogs requiring treatment. Her dogs had their personal ‘dog-sitter’ who stayed with them when Aldona was at work. They were the most important at home, and their affairs were much more important than those of their owner. Although Aldona wouldn’t be persuaded to see a doctor herself, she never allowed an ill dog to go without the advice of a very good vet.

In the 3rd Polish Republic she returned to teaching (lecturing at the University of Warsaw and, for a while, at the Collegium Civitas). Educating students and supervising doctoral dissertations became her passion. From 1990 to 2010 she supervised fifteen PhDs at the IFiS PAN and another five at the ISNS. She strived to get her colleagues interested in a variety of research subjects, urging them to write up reports, and preparing (editing or joint-editing) successive books published by the institutes where she worked or which she collaborated with.

In 1989 she began working at the Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialisation (IPSiR), initially employed for half the full-time hours, and from 1992 for three-quarters (then at Warsaw University’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences, after the IPSiR was reorganised as the University’s Faculty of Prevention, Resocialisation and Social Problems), and full-time from 1997. In the year 2000 the University of Warsaw was her main employer, and the IFiS PAN her second place of work up until 2004. She also continued working at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences after retiring.

The Institute has much to owe Aldona Jawłowska: supervision of undergraduate and post-graduate students, the subject-matter of lectures, and also the specialisation course on ‘Anthropology of culture – the problems of

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multiculturality’ (in 2004/2005). It was thanks to her efforts that in 2006 the Institute’s periodical ‘Societas/Communitas’ was published. Every issue focuses on a different area of the social sciences. Both the authorities and community at the Institute have shown their appreciation for Aldona and her work. To mark her seventieth birthday, a book was compiled entitled *Od kontestacji do konsumpcji. Szkice o przeobrażeniach współczesnej kultury* [From Contestation to Consumption. Sketches on the Transformations of Contemporary Culture] (Kempny, Kiciński, Zakrzewska 2004). In 2005 she was elected for the first time as the chairperson of the Institute’s Scientific Council for three years, and in 2008 was elected for the second time; sadly she did not complete her second term.

References


Jawłowska A., Kempny M. i Tarkowska E. red., 1993, *Kulturowy wymiar zmian społecznych*, IFiS PAN,


I first met Aldona Jawłowska during a conference in Radziejowice in spring 1972, I believe it was in April. We met for the last time, by chance, in spring 2010 (I think it was in March) in the allotment gardens by ulica Rostafińskich. Aldona was there on a walk with her three dogs; I was with my granddaughter in a pushchair. Those two encounters form the frame of the now closed collaboration, acquaintanceship and friendship with an exceptional person, a colourful and fascinating character whose views, courage and determination aroused admiration and respect.

During the conference in Radziejowice – a working conference of the Social Forecasts Team at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IFiS PAN) – Aldona evoked interest not only as a person from outside, somebody new in our highly consolidated circle and not only as a beautiful woman of unusual appearance; she drew people’s attention with the independence of her judgments and the determination in how she conveyed them, or in other words the traits that characterised her personality. In 1972 Aldona was still working at the Psychology and Education Faculty at the University of Warsaw, although she had already begun collaborating with Andrzej Ścigalski and the Social Forecasts Team he directed, and which she transferred to two years later. The conference in Radziejowice was one of numerous gatherings by this team during which a program was formed regarding research into lifestyles, constituting the main area of the team’s interest over the following twenty years. Aldona, with her original and multidisciplinary education and broad interests – combining knowledge in philosophy, anthropology, pedagogy and sociology – perfectly suited this team and its research program. The Social Forecasts Team, transformed a few years later into the Department of Lifestyle Research, ran an interdisciplinary program researching lifestyles and culture, a program close to cultural anthropology. This was a place and academic circle unique not only within the IFiS PAN, but also within the whole of Polish sociology of the day, dominated then by a macro-social and quantitative approach, which the unforgettable ‘Salon Niezależnych’ cabaret group called ‘water-gauge

Reminiscences, Farewells

ELŻBIETA TARKOWSKA
sociology’. The sociology practiced by the Social Forecasts Team was totally different. Aldona Jawłowska made a significant contribution to the development and execution of this program, a program of the sociology of culture, or – in keeping with Jerzy Szacki’s term – cultural, understanding and qualitative sociology, collaborating with philosophy and cultural anthropology, receptive also towards other disciplines. In her analyses of lifestyles, Aldona focused on the relationships between lifestyle and values, and she conducted research regarding alternative lifestyles. In 1975 she published her famous and pioneering Drogi kontrkultury [The Paths of Counterculture], in 1981 the equally innovative Ruch konsumentów [Consumer Movement], and in 1988 what was also a very popular book, Więcej niż teatr [More Than Theatre]. She also made contributions to the collective issues published by the Social Forecasts Team. In her book Styl życia. Koncepcje i propozycje [Lifestyle. Concepts and Proposals] (1976), the fruit of another of the Team’s conferences, this time in Kazimierz in 1973, Aldona in conjunction with Edmund Mokrzycki published the brilliant and continuously inspiring article Lifestyles and Transformations in Social Structure. A Proposition of Historical-Sociological Typology and an important program article, Lifestyle and Values. She also had her share in the Team’s next publication, i.e. in the book Styl życia. Przemiany we współczesnej Polsce [Lifestyle. Transformations in Contemporary Poland] (1978) and in other works. Together with Bogdan Gotowski she put together the collective volume Młodzież w procesie przemian [Youth in the Transformation Process] (1977), the printing of which was long postponed by the censors. Ultimately the book was published in an edition of 100 copies, and sold only to those on a special list of authorised recipients upon display of their ID card.

Aldona Jawłowska was a student of Professor Bogdan Suchodolski, and it was under his supervision that she put her doctoral dissertation together: ‘Anthropology and the Philosophy of Man in the Works of August Comte and Søren Kierkegaard’. This was interesting due to its multidisciplinary character – the presence of philosophical, anthropological and sociological threads. From those long-bygone years I can recall a visit to Professor Suchodolski’s home. Three of us went there: Aldona Jawłowska, Andrzej Siciński and myself. I cannot remember why I, a young PhD student, happened to be involved in that visit, although it proved a memorable event for me. Neither can I recall what our conversation was about; most probably collaboration. Professor Suchodolski’s article appeared in the first collective volume on lifestyle and its concepts.

Aldona Jawłowska was a rebellious and independent individual. This manifested itself in her scientific work and in her opposition activities (she...
Elżbieta Tarkowska

participated in the works of the Society for Scientific Studies, ‘Karta’ and other initiatives] and in her consistent resistance to the absurdities of everyday life. There is a well-known anecdote of how one hot summer Aldona cut a hole in the wing of an enormous (uncrowned) eagle adorning the Palace of Culture, on the occasion of the state holiday on 22 July I believe. This cloth screened a window in the premises of her Team, situated on the 19th floor, blocking the airflow and rather effectively hindering her work. The authorities treated the hole in the eagle’s wing as sabotage, the room was declared off-limits for some time, and there were certain unpleasant repercussions.

Aldona bore the costs of her independence and opposition activities in the form of blocked travel on foreign scholarships, difficulties getting her works published, and her post-doctoral dissertation suspended for seven years. During martial law she was arrested on the eve of her planned post-doctoral examination, and was incarcerated in a camp for internees in Goldap. She was one of three IFiS PAN employees interned during martial law; and it is worth recalling that all three of them worked in the Social Forecasts Team.

A new stage in her scientific biography comprised the Department of Culture Theory, which she created in 1991 on the wave of transformations and reforms in the institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences post 1989, and which she directed until her retirement in 2004. This was an interdisciplinary team, gathering researchers representing diverse specialisations – sociology, anthropology and philosophy – interested in an open and interdisciplinary program for researching culture and the cultural aspects of the transformations taking place. They included Marian Kempny, Anna Wyka, Paweł Dybel, Elżbieta Skotnicka-Illasiewicz, Barbara Engelking-Boni and myself. There was also a group of excellent PhD students, today mostly scientific staff in their own right with many an accomplishment to boast of, linked to this department.

The department’s beginnings were an intense time of numerous meetings, boisterous discussions and the unconstrained drawing up of a joint research program. I remember two important meetings from autumn 1991. The first was a conference in September in Karpacz, a joint initiative by the department directed by Aldona and the Section of Social Anthropology of the Polish Sociological Association; Aldona had supported the activities of this section from the moment it was formed. The conference was organised in Spartan conditions, as it was held in an old hikers’ hostel the road to which was very complicated. The second important working meeting of the entire team and its supporters took place in October 1991 in Elżbieta Skotnicka-Illasiewicz’s home around an enormous extendable table probably capable of seating two dozen revellers; it was wonderful for discussing around!
The issues and the heat of the discussions conducted there are best reflected in the collective work of which Aldona was joint editor: *Kulturowy wymiar przemian społecznych [The Cultural Dimension of Social Transformations]* (1993). This book emerged as a result of the above meetings, and at the same time it was an outline of the program of the Department of Culture Theory. The participants also took with them memories of the unique mood of those meetings and discussions. For me personally an unforgettable experience was the journey from Warsaw to Karpacz in Aldona’s little Fiat. Aldona had only just started driving, while I – after quite a long stay in the United States – still had fresh memories of the cars and roads there, and their style of driving.

Aldona was the co-author and scientific editor (or co-editor) of many significant collective works to be compiled within the Department of Culture Theory. They tackled the key issues of reflections regarding culture, the transformations of culture in a society undergoing profound transformation, the changes in contemporary art and culture, and the process of globalisation, consumption, advertising, popular culture and other new and unknown yet important and interesting cultural developments. At this point I have to mention books such as *Cultural Dilemmas of Post-Communist Societies* (1994), *Wokół problemów tożsamości [On Problems of Identity]* (2001), *Kultura w czasach globalizacji [Culture in the Times of Globalisation]* (2004), *Konsumpcja – istotny wymiar globalizacji kulturowej [Consumption – A Significant Dimension of Cultural Globalisation]* (2005) and others. Their titles reflect well the issues constituting Aldona Jawłowska’s interests in her later years. It is worth stressing that Aldona recently returned to the issue of lifestyles, which was expressed in the organisation in March 2009 of a very interesting national conference: ‘Lifestyles and Customs in the Perspective of Changes in Cultural Values’.

A mention has to be made of the very close relations between the department as a whole, and Aldona Jawłowska in particular, with Zygmunt Bauman, who was a friend of this circle, accompanying us for years and a source of many an inspiration. Janina Bauman also collaborated with the department, sharing her knowledge of the Holocaust and the mechanisms of memory. Discussions regarding their books, their lectures, and their scientific and social get-togethers were a regular part of the history of the Department of Culture Theory run by Aldona Jawłowska.

One of the characteristic attributes of her creativity was her skill of spotting new cultural phenomena only just appearing. She was one of the first in Poland to investigate consumption and advertising. At the IFiS PAN Graduate School for Social Research, Aldona ran a seminar very popular among
Elżbieta Tarkowska

PhD students. Under her supervision around a dozen doctoral dissertations were written that tackled new developments in contemporary culture, ones not yet described by researchers, such as capoeira, the issues of artificial man, astrological discourse in popular culture, and various forms of protest and action by alternative communities such as youth movements in Russia, ecological movements (‘eco-warriors’) or the problems of Belarussian identity. Her PhD students researched new sub-cultures, passing fashions and fascinations. She was young at heart, and she understood and shared their interests. She was an excellent supervisor and advisor for young people, who could always count on her competent help and advice. At the same time she was teaching at Warsaw University’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences in the Department of Sociology of Morality and General Axiology.

Aldona Jawłowska was a researcher of culture, and she made an enormous contribution to the sociology of culture. Recognised by Michał Buchowski, together with a few other sociologists, as part of the ‘clan of sociological anthropology’, she strived to overcome the diverse obstacles and borders between disciplines, mainly between sociology, cultural anthropology, and philosophy. The opening up of sociology towards other sciences, interdisciplinarity, was the distinctive feature of her work and scientific credo. A distinct testimony to such a perspective and the culmination of such a direction of research was the establishing in 2006 of the biannual journal of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences, ‘Societas/Communitas’. The journal’s program is interdisciplinary, just as is the Institute it is affiliated to. The first issue opens with a discussion regarding issues of interdisciplinarity: its opening motto is Interdisciplinarity – A Theoretical Postulate and Experience. The ‘multidirectional approach in thinking and action’ concealed behind this always was a special value for Aldona. She opposed aspirations for closing sociology within the narrow confines of ‘water-gauge’ research applying sophisticated measurements and indicators, yet very distant from genuine social life. And she countered aspirations that reappeared in Polish sociology under the banners of ‘modernity’, against the trends present today in the social sciences and the humanities in the world.

The death of Aldona Jawłowska comes as an enormous loss to Polish sociology of culture, which in recent years has lost many of its brilliant proponents: Antonina Kłoskowska, Andrzej Siciński, Marian Kempny, Jerzy Smolicz, Andrzej Flis and others. It is a great loss for sociology in Poland. And for her friends and loved ones – and Aldona had very many of them – it is a loss hard to describe.

Aldona belonged to a generation of sociologists now receding into the past, for whom work intermingled closely with private and social life. Not
only the work, discussions during seminars and conferences, and work on preparing publications was shared; fun, entertainment, leisure, holidays and trips were shared as well. We would meet up for academic purposes but also for socialising in various places: in Aldona’s flat on ul. Puławska and later on ul. Dantyszka, in Paweł Dybel’s and Ania Kubiak’s homes, and in my flat on ul. Narbutta. We would meet not only to celebrate academic degrees and titles, birthdays or name days, but also at Christmas or for herring at Easter. Visits to Poland by Janina and Zygmunt Bauman were always a special occasion for socialising in a sociological circle. Sometimes we – Aldona and myself – were specially invited by our guests from Leeds to dinner in a variety of interesting places. Among numerous such meetings I recall a reception I held for a visit to Poland by the Baumans and their friends, Ulrich Beck and his wife Elisabeth Beck Gernsheim. I remember how astonished our German guests were that all those present were sociologists, that apart from our professional matters we also socialised together and shared bonds of friendship, and that we actually wanted to meet up after work, in our free time, with the same people. Aldona belonged to a circle of sociologists for whom such gatherings were very important. The last was held in August 2008 to celebrate Janina and Zygmunt Bauman’s 60th wedding anniversary. I write of this as they were very important people for Aldona. None of us was to know then that it was the last time we would all be together. When Aldona and I would meet on a variety of work-related occasions we would always promise each other that we had to meet up privately, that we really had to organise something, that as soon as we’d finish such-and-such an urgent job we would definitely arrange something. But time ran short. What remains is the memory of a pleasant though brief and unplanned encounter in the gardens.

Aldona has joined a long list, growing at a terrifying pace, of loved ones, of witnesses of our youth and our lives, who have departed leaving empty spaces behind. Those places will now forever remain empty.
Reminiscences, 
Farewells

ZBIGNIEW GLUZA

I knew Aldona Jawlowska from an alternative drama festival in the seventies and shared work in the Commission of Independent Culture in the Solidarity Trade Union, Mazowsze Region, in 1980/81.

Later on Aldona was a very important figure in the editing staff at ‘Karta’ (an underground publication until 1990), a ‘Nestor’ who treated us as proper partners. When we began our collaboration, though twice our age she never tried to be a mentor. We treated her as a friend who knew more than us. We were impressed by her verve, by her youthful energy.

As a group of five people we established ‘Karta’, a political commentary newspaper, on 4 January 1982. Aldona appeared at the meeting unexpectedly; she was already wanted by the SB, and so we could not be sure she would manage to reach us. She arrived in sports clothes (while in hiding she didn’t stop going on her daily jogging) with proposals for the first articles, which was a great help for the journal’s beginnings. Aldona had already prepared a set of analyses: Where Are We? Defeat or a New Stage of Struggle? (which appeared a few months later in the independent ‘Krag’) – and we could relate professionally to the realities of martial law right away, with the views of sociologists, lawyers and psychologists.

But she was only briefly with us, we published barely a few frail issues together. Just before 10 February 1982, the day of her would-be post-doctoral examination, she was arrested. And our communications snapped. An underground editorial team, we couldn’t reveal any connections, so as not to make the security service’s job easier… Throughout her entire stay in Goldap, in the internment camp, and it was a couple of months, we didn’t send a single card to her. Due to uncertainty regarding the roads of communication, because it surely wasn’t due to fear for ourselves. It was crazy, we’d been friends for ages, so contact would have been natural.

When she was transferred to the hospital on ul. Banacha in Warsaw – exhausted through protracted hunger-strike – we managed to visit her at night, she wasn’t kept under guard. She said how hurt she’d been by our silence, that letters had been arriving at Goldap from all over the place,
underground publications as well with little hindrance. And we hadn’t even tried to find a way.

We called Aldona ‘Zosia’. There were few Aldonas, so using the name could have made identification too easy. Besides, we changed the names of all editors at ‘Karta’, although we made mistakes and got them mixed up. So we soon gave that up, and it was only ‘Zosia’ that remained in use for longer.

Although Aldona forgave us our silence after returning from her ‘dormitory’, we fell foul of her again shortly afterwards, publishing in ‘Karta’ issue 18 (on 9 July 1982) an article entitled Aż do rozejmu [Till Truce], in which we proposed that the underground leadership, on behalf of society, declare regular war on the communist authorities. Aldona considered that radical plan inconsistent with the journal she wanted to work with.

We agreed with her very shortly afterwards, immediately after 31 August 1982 (the second anniversary of victory), when society did not step out en masse onto the streets to defend Solidarity. While we prepared that day for some form of anti-communist uprising, Aldona kept her distance. And when we returned from the streets, dismayed, determined not to do the paper any more for “such a hopeless society”, she was ready to work together on a new rendering of ‘Karta’, constituting an almanac published ‘like a book’.

For us, a group deriving from the alternative theatre movement, the small ‘Karta’ (January-August 1982) was a kind of retreat – a journey into the region of emergency service. Following the ‘discrediting of society’ some of the editorial staff decided to return to their concepts from before martial law, and deal rather with man’s individual experience – mainly the attitudes of people finding freedom within the dictatorships of the day. This proved close to Aldona’s approach; for the second ‘Karta’ (1984) she put together a comprehensive range of articles on the repressive psychiatry of the USSR. From then on she wrote as ‘Olgierd Selim’.

When we defined the large-format ‘Karta’ in 1983 we had a problem with self-determination. We already knew that our journal would not be on the frontline of the struggles, that it would not be a journal anti-communist in its program, that its purpose of existence would not be to destroy the Polish People’s Republic and appoint some kind of better system. We wanted to write clearly that ‘Karta’ was not a political journal. Yet that also missed the point, since in the PPR any independent step taken became political. Then Aldona cut such digression short, and at her insistence the preface began with the sentence: “‘Karta’ does not want to be a political journal”.

32
The early years of the big ‘Karta’ (1983–1984) were the most intense period of our collaboration with Aldona. And not only in our editorial work. Aldona also played in the ‘Karta’ football team, as a striker (in the only photographically documented match played by ‘Karta’ with the ‘Nieprasowaæ’ Theatre, in autumn 1984, Aldona scored the winning goal, making it 6:5). Other socialising was also common, and Aldona’s small flat on ul. Pu‡awska – referred to conspiratorially as the ‘hollow’, often had dozens of people from a variety of opposition circles visiting.

In summer 1984 a few of us from the editorial team went on a ‘holiday’, so that in a villa near Augustów (rented thanks to underground connections) we could attempt together to describe the future of ‘Karta’, to plan its long-term march. Aldona was the most active visionary back then, and listed our social obligations with fervour. In the course of those few days we drew up a precise agenda of topics, but it never was put into effect. ‘Karta’ was incapable of functioning in that way – we took the topics from real life, and not from somebody’s mind, even that of the wisest of people.

In time the ‘Karta’ formula became increasingly clear, and it was easier to relate to. But then Aldona rejected it. After ‘Karta’ number 5, she informed me that she was unable to continue work with the journal as we were focusing on the individual, giving the individual a voice, looking at the world from an individual’s point of view but omitting the collective, community perspective; and there we had the year 1988, a moment when the authorities were effectively destroying community structures. As such everybody’s duty was to save those bonds, and not focus on individuals’ view of the world – as that would cause even further-reaching disintegration.

I was helpless against such arguments, but I did not accept the warning: that we were taking the wrong road. In June 1989 society recovered its say, and we – to this day – are dealing with the individual experience of the past.

In her last years Aldona did us an important favour, supporting the decisions by her outstanding students to join KARTA. Another generation of ‘her children’ now enhance our team, working in one of the most important of our programs – in the recording of witnesses of history.

Our last contact with Aldona was when she called us on 13 March 2010, concerned about signals she’d heard about our troubles, and even the threat of bankruptcy. We had no idea that she was so ill, as she lashed out with such energy against the ‘world’ that was to blame for this situation, and that “it should be ashamed” that it was not giving us a chance to achieve our mission, that it did not understand how very important it was. She spoke as if she not only understood the sense of KARTA’s activities, but also fully ac-
cepted it. Perhaps those two visions of how to reinforce society were not so contradictory? After all, they complement each other.
I knew Aldona from long ago, from the mid nineteen sixties I believe, but mainly as a writer and an increasingly recognisable figure in Polish sociology. For many a year my personal contacts with her were limited to attending some conference or other academic event together. Only on a few occasions did we have the opportunity in those years to talk for a little longer when socialising among common friends. When Drogi kontrakultury [The Paths of Counterculture] was published in 1975, Aldona’s position in sociological circles was conclusively established. I read the book with interest, since the author was taking an exceedingly interesting approach to analysing phenomena then taking on ever greater significance and drawing sociologists’ attention. I remember the reflections that accompanied me as I read that book; I was interested in the rebellion by youth in the West against the dominance of the cultural main stream and the establishment, not only as a sociological development characteristic of the countries in that area, but also as a phenomenon that I perceived in the context of a dramatic struggle of systems in a bipolar world, a struggle the final of which was a great unknown in those years. One could understand those young Americans who, not wanting to play a part in the Vietnam War, burned their draft cards, but it was also hard not to notice how gleefully this was commented on by our propaganda machine, which with satisfaction emphasised support especially for this contestation by youth rebelling in the West. With satisfaction, as it served as a confirmation of the rightness of ‘our’ struggle, and it heralded ‘our’ victory. Therefore questions arose as to whether the rebellion by the young confirmed the theory in force on ‘our’ side of the great chessboard, that the West was culturally and politically sick (the young are better at sensing this), and also how deep this sickness went and whether it was not portending its defeat in the battle of the political systems. Yet the contemplations by the author of The Paths of Counterculture took a slightly different route, typical of left-leaning sociologists in the West rather than of somebody living in our part of the world.

That ‘western perspective’ (constituting both a strength and weakness of Polish sociology) also marked another important book by Aldona, Ruch kon-
Krzysztof Kiciński

sumentów [The Consumer Movement] (1981). This for us was a largely pioneering work, and took into account a broad spectrum of the most important positions in that movement, ones that arose in countries in which this phenomenon, born in conditions of a consumer society, became the dominant feature of the social landscape. While reading it, one did not gain the impression that the author was analysing or even experiencing ‘other people’s problems’. That had its appeal, as it meant that we felt ourselves to be part of the civilised world and keeping pace with its problems, even managing to contribute something interesting to the related discussion. Except that we ourselves were living then in a totally different world, one in which not only consumption was different, but so too was the consumer movement, and even had it emerged it would have faced totally different problems (above all the problem of legalising organisations independent of the state, so characteristic of this movement). What I have said above when recalling these two books does not suggest by any means that Aldona was out of touch with the Polish reality; her public activities (which others are writing about) testify to quite the opposite. It is rather that the reflections regarding those problems embraced within the main thread of her theoretical interests ignored in a way our own experiences, so different from those that inspired her western intellectual partners (obviously I am talking here about her texts, and not her cognitive processes).

A common theme linking the two books mentioned above was the situation of man existing in a world dominated by large political and economic organisations, and as such threatening the autonomy of the individual, their authenticity, subjectivity and development. However, Aldona’s stance regarding this situation was not ‘defeatist’, hence the hopes related to movements contesting the establishments and grassroots consumer organisations that would constitute a counterweight to the might of those interested purely in the profit on sales. In focusing on this area, she certainly did not have the feeling that she was dealing with detailed issues of some kind; on the contrary, for her they were central problems of contemporary societies. In the nineties the theoretical borders of the analysis of these phenomena comprised above all the concepts of Zygmunt Bauman, related to such notions as ‘postmodernism’, or the interpretation of a consumer society characteristic of this author. This does not mean that in her thinking she only followed the path taken by Bauman, since in fact her detailed analyses of the aforementioned problems sometimes surpassed his generalising visions.

Aldona had a natural talent for teaching; she knew not only how to imbue her students with her own interests and stimulate their own cognitive needs, but also took seriously the problems of her undergraduate and post-
graduate students, devoting a great deal of her time and attention to them. This is also why it was good that late in life she became so closely tied (again) to the University, becoming – as a professor at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences, and in the Department of Sociology of Morality and General Axiology – one of the main pillars of these institutions. It is thus somewhat paradoxical that this scholar, rebellious against all establishments and averse to conservative traditions limiting the individual, simultaneously – as an academic – paid so much attention to adherence to traditional standards of scientific and academic activities. This was noticeable when, as chairwoman of the Scientific Council, she managed the defence of PhD dissertations or as an originator behind the establishing and then the editor of ‘Societas/Communitas’ strived to ensure the journal fulfilled all the traditional standards of a ‘proper’ scientific journal, and also in many other situations accompanying our teaching and research work. From that point of view, Aldona’s contribution towards the Institute attaining its well-established scientific position would be hard to overestimate.

Aldona’s work at the Institute for Applied Social Sciences naturally gave rise to numerous opportunities for direct contact, not only those resulting from my position for a number of years as the director and head of department; what I have in mind are above all the increasingly frequent conversations on topics we found interesting. A particular place among them was occupied by the issue of consumption and a consumer lifestyle, or to be more precise the impact of this lifestyle on the future of our civilisation or even the fortunes of humanity settling a planet with limited resources. One could add incidentally that by this time I no longer had the impression that a Polish sociologist focusing on threats resulting from a consumer lifestyle smacked of a certain surrealism, since our problem for an entire era was not so much consumption as profound deprivation in this area. And so when the year 2005 saw the publication of a book edited by Aldona in conjunction with Marian Kempy, *Konsumpcja – istotny wymiar globalizacji kulturowej [Consumption – An Important Dimension of Cultural Globalisation]*, I no longer had the feeling of that surrealism, as we were already on the side of the world where talk of a consumer society was not only about others’ but also our own problems.

Certain themes tackled during the conference ‘Lifestyles and Customs in the Perspective of Change of Cultural Values’, devised by Aldona and organised by the PAN Science and Culture Committee and the University of Warsaw’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences in spring 2009, were to constitute the last occasion for talking about problems of this nature. I remember in particular the impression I drew from the ‘private’ disputes with her after
the conference; it was admiration for her intellectual culture, the breadth of her horizons, her insight and erudition, admiration also present in conversation when we disagreed on some matter or other. Being unable to continue the discourse with a person of such intellectual format is particularly painful, as certain threads of conversation are severed at precisely the moment when you feel you are approaching a convergence of views. This is exactly what happened in regard to one of the more important threads for me related to a problem I brought up at the above conference, and later elaborated on in an article intended for a book that Aldona was editing together with Wójciech Pawlik. It was about the statement that in the long term neither the model of consumption nor even a departure from the consumer lifestyle would solve those problems of the future that entail humankind wasting the shrinking resources of our planet. That as such the only truly effective solution is to radically limit population growth or even lower the growth index to zero or even a negative value. During our conversations our views on this issue were moving closer; Aldona’s objections began to concern not so much the legitimacy of the actual statement as its social perception. She said more or less that perhaps in the long term it is the only effective solution to problems accumulating as a result of the balance between man and the environment being upset, but that such views would be attacked from practically all quarters, especially in regard to the negative growth scenario. And this was the issue I wanted to talk about with her on the next occasion, an occasion that is not to be.

Realising that you cannot continue an exchange of thoughts with somebody can be painful. In Aldona’s case it is particularly difficult to come to terms with, as she was a person combining intellectual maturity and enormous erudition with an outright youthful fascination with the problems she dealt with and about which she discussed. This youthfulness manifested itself both in her extraordinarily animated stance towards life around her, and in the choice of issues that appealed to her – in her interest in the future of mankind, the future of civilisation, the direction of the changes taking place in the globalised world. One often says about a scholar who has departed: “he or she could still have accomplished so much”. In Aldona’s case this statement is not a conventional phrase, but is simply absolutely true.
I took my end-of-school exams in 1975, and by then I’d known for some time that there was something seriously wrong with the world I was living in. Apart from that I hated school ‘by nature’, spontaneously, and that was every school – though the one I’d just finished in particular (the Stefan Batory High School). In addition I’d found it hard to bear any form of people being organised in an institutional manner, and most of all the army, the scouts and the Church, ever since nursery school. Obedience, acting on command, automatic or ritual actions, some kind of collective stupor, and especially uniforms, black, green and grey attire – it all seemed so disgusting to me. And for many years I didn’t know why. I also couldn’t stand the world I was living in: and it really was a despondent one, not because of persecution, which I didn’t experience, but because of the greyness, the unification and the restricted horizon. No hope for change.

At some point after those exams I read Aldona Jawłowska’s Drogi kontrakultura [The Paths of Counterculture]. I was fascinated. That book opened up before me a world the like of which I hadn’t known, and which I instinctively longed for. It barely seems credible today, but in high school I learned nothing of the contestation of the sixties, of the hippies and the anarchists, of the rebellion, the revolt. For me the year 1968 only brought to mind the disgraceful events of the ‘Polish March’, which as an eleven-year-old girl I hadn’t understood either. And here suddenly was ‘Counterculture’! Jawłowska wrote: “Regardless of whether it leads to naïve optimism, expressing the hope for rapid change, or to accepting the prospect of a long and tough road to the ‘promised land’, or to the despairing conviction of the inevitability of alienation, contestation is the questioning of everything, of the political culture of social organisation, of obvious forms of everyday existence, of ethical norms, of models and standards of behaviour. Of the entire sense of hitherto existence. What is common [to the various movements] is their absolute doubt in the rationality of the surrounding reality, combined with unwavering faith that the shapes of the new reality reside within the movement... Common also is the aspiration to restore the devalued values of brother-
hood, equality and freedom, to once again make an attempt at rebuilding
authentic bonds between people, to reconcile individuality with community,
and active acceptance of the principle of shared responsibility for and par-
ticipation in socio-economic decisions.”

I absorbed the book immediately (although I didn’t actually possess a
copy, as it was hard to get hold of; only years later I extracted it from a
friend, and to this day it stands among the ‘most important books’), and
have returned to it on many an occasion.

As a sociological analysis of cultural and social movements of the sixties,
Aldona’s book was in essence a praise of rebellion, disobedience and con-
testation. Culture and communities – in her opinion – pass away without rebel-
ling, which reveals not only new perspectives of critique of the existing state,
but also determines new horizons. Rebellion donning the form of a social
movement is ‘utopia being realised’.

In the nineteen seventies this book held a very distinct significance. And
most probably a fair portion of my generation drew conclusions for their
own activities from it. But the book is also extremely important today, 35
years later, when we’re all sitting comfortably in our small liberal stability
and when the political scene is so incredibly limited to boring parties reiter-
ating like a mantra their tale of victory in the next elections.

Aldona’s book *The Paths of Counterculture* played a fundamental role in
my life. I think that it is thanks to this book that I developed an interest in
Bergson (and his concept of an open society and rebellion against the exist-
ing obligations), and the issue of dignity (that it is more important than
prosperity) and individualism. My Master’s thesis was on Bergson, my PhD

Aldona Jawłowska avoided stability throughout her life. She never did
become a staid Ms Professor, who one year after another would repeat the
reworked material and build up her academic façade-like authority. She avoid-
ed routine, and did not like repetition; with her ideas, her research projects
and her seminars she was always a few steps ahead, in front of the academic
traditionalists. She researched what was unstable in culture. Its yeast. For
years she ran a ‘postmodernist’ seminar, and a frequent guest there was
Zygmunt Bauman. It was really thanks to her that I understood what post-
modernism is in its creative (mixing, unstable and ‘yeast-like’) edition. She
gathered around her people who fled the set academic pattern. She valued
interdisciplinarity and that is why it is difficult to explicitly classify her to-
day. Was she a sociologist, a researcher of culture, an anthropologist, an ecol-
ogist, or a critic of globalisation? She wrote articles that were so different, so
diverse, so rebellious that it seems amazing they all fitted under a single name.
She dealt with culture, politics, philosophy, and wrote about the body, about identity, consumption, freedom, ecology, rebellion, values and advertising, and stated that “all global problems begin on the plate.”

And she lived as she wrote. Beyond the mainstream and the stereotype. She didn’t go to the media, didn’t show up in high society, but was ever absorbed in her passions and drawing others into them. And in this she was so terribly young, rebellious, always somewhat ‘to the side’ but always ‘at the forefront’.

She loved animals. As I do. She had a few dogs, too many for such a small flat. Just like me. But whenever I would find some poor thing or knew about its poor state, I’d first call Aldona because I knew she would understand, would help, would pass on the news. And pass it on she did. She understood compassionately.

People who love animals to such a degree that they are prepared to forego a significant part of their private lives to befriend them, take care of them and help them, belong to an avant-garde family – fortunately ever growing in size – linked by bonds of a special liking. I did not have to see Aldona often, yet always knew that our relations (our friendship?) were of the first order. And I sincerely hope she thought the same of me.

There were no flowers at her funeral, but there was a request to donate to animal care homes instead. Aldona always knew what was truly important.
Aldona was a unique member of our community, one who could not be confined in any way within some kind of rigid formula. Because regardless of her academic achievements, themselves particularly important, she evoked widespread liking and respect through her extraordinary and extremely spontaneous personality. Her openness and straightforwardness towards her undergraduate and postgraduate students, usually served with a touch of her natural affinity, was one of her particularly valuable traits. Yet, if only for some important reason she considered it necessary, she was also capable of expressing bluntly and free of any superfluous restraint or embellishment her criticism of various disputable issues. But at the same time she was always prepared to listen to the arguments of the other side, and if the reasoning convinced her, she would modify her stance.

This is because she was a person of dialogue who never would stick doggedly to her own convictions, and who even in a biting dispute managed to retain some kind of thread of agreement with her antagonist. And so even for her critical judgments one could not hold any grievances against her or feel offended, as she always expressed herself in such a manner that it applied to the actual ‘thing’, and not the person. In addition what she said usually came in the form of guidelines, good advice, and not criticism applying to somebody personally, or a conclusive verdict regarding somebody’s ‘intellectual capabilities’. This derived from her naturally trusting way of relating to others, from some kind of great optimism in life that she infected others with, convinced that any problems and difficulties could always be overcome somehow. And of course her great gift of discerning positives in them that could be supported and expanded upon. But also when she was disappointed in somebody, when she noticed some kind of small-mindedness, or instrumental treatment of others or their narrow private interests at the cost of the department or students, she managed to be very harsh and even implacable in her criticism.

What was wonderful about her was above all her desire to help others, to raise their spirits, whether in regard to their academic career or in situa-
tions involving some sort of personal misfortune, sickness or accident. How many hours, days, weeks even she spent by the hospital beds of her friends! How much energy and time she sacrificed to preserve friendships falling apart before her eyes, how much time – well beyond what one could expect – she gave to her undergraduate and postgraduate students, her colleagues… And how kind-hearted she was towards the homeless, towards stray dogs, those wonderful creatures frequently more capable than people of displaying deep, selfless gratitude and unquestioning attachment for the rest of their days.

I came to know Aldona better when I began collaborating with her in the early nineties at the Department of Culture Theory at the Polish Academy of Science’s Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IFiS PAN). I found in her then a genuine spiritual guardian, who discerned some kind of systematic idea in my post-doctoral ‘notes’ (I was far from a specialist in the field I was then dealing with). She heartened me, saying that a pretty decent dissertation could come of it all, persuading me to expand upon a number of motives and publish it all in the form of a book. Later, in yet tougher moments experienced together, when during an unfortunate journey to a conference we rubbed shoulders with ‘transcendence’, she proved a true friend indeed, later like nobody else giving encouragement in moments of acute pain and doubt.

But I also recall how initially shocked I was with her very harsh comments expressed at times regarding my ‘early writings’ in the shape of my first articles as an expert on culture. I needed a little time to realise that through her criticism what she really wanted was to stimulate me, and not write off the sense of what were in essence rather clumsy attempts. And that above all her various pieces of advice, resulting from her significantly better intuition for such issues, were of value to me. And I guess she succeeded, since frequently frankly irritated by her harsh opinions I strived in ‘great torment’ to rethink everything and thoroughly rework my initial endeavours.

Later on I was to observe Aldona displaying a very similar stance towards her numerous PhD students, both during the few years of working very closely together at the Department of Culture Theory and later on, for example during the sittings of the Examination Committee for Doctorate Studies at the University of Warsaw’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences. I always admired how in certain research projects among future doctorate students (and not necessarily those she would have supervised), ones we’d written off in advance, she would manage to find some interesting idea. She would point out that although a particular project required amendment, and further work on the methodology, etc., if this and that were to be improved it could prove
the starting point for writing an interesting thesis. And then I thought to myself that those young people writing their master’s or doctoral thesis under her tutorship were exceedingly lucky to have such a supervisor. 

The directness with which Aldona was prepared to express her judgments and opinions regarding others went in tandem with her extraordinary tough-mindedness and courage. Her activities in the opposition, her unswerving stance during numerous interrogations or attempts to blackmail her, etc., constituted a beautiful chapter in her life. Likewise she did not shun speaking in public and taking a distinctive position in many so-called ‘sensitive issues’. And it didn’t matter if her comments were delivered in the Scientific Councils, at conferences, in articles in the press or in scientific papers. Just as during the Polish People’s Republic she spoke out in defence of various groups persecuted by the communist regime, of the opposition groups she was closely linked to and labourer groups, likewise later on she spoke out uncompromisingly and critically on various forms of domestic hypocrisy and provincialism of thinking. For example in regard to various facets of Polish antisemitism, attitude towards ethnic or sexual minorities, the struggle for women’s rights, restrictive abortion law, or the discussion around in vitro. Yet in her critical posture she never identified explicitly with any political party or option. She maintained the stance of an independent intellectual, who in their critical thinking never looked at the party banners or ideological slogans beneath which somebody was taking the floor, but only at what somebody was actually doing. And as such the right wing, the centre and the left wing of our political scene could all be criticised of cynical uncouthness, passiveness and a purely pragmatic play of all of these issues.

She was also probably the only person I have met in my life who was free of any complexes. Well, perhaps with the exception of the ‘Oedipus complex’, although that is only my purely theoretical conjecture. Everything about her was spontaneous, impulsive, ‘on the surface’. Spoken right away in words, hammered into action and gestures, without the slightest suppression, conventionality or avoidance via silence. As such she was incapable of conducting any intrigues behind the scenes whatsoever, of developing roundabout strategies for achieving a goal, or of striking back for disappointments. Everything she did always featured some kind of wonderful nobleness and straightforwardness.
It was Spring 1957. I was 26 years old, and an assistant for professor Suchodolski, who said to me one day: “I’ve been approached by our postgraduate student who’s also active high up in that new organisation, the Socialist Youth Union (ZMS), and they have lots of money there for nationwide research on youth. I’ve sent her to you, as you’re writing a dissertation on youth, so you can work together. I have to say I’m very impressed by her.” That last sentence came as a surprise to me, as the professor tended to be critically ironic of people in his judgments, and that was the first time I heard such words of recognition pass his lips.

I met Aldona a few days later, and I was no longer surprised. Opposite me stood a young girl (22) who you wouldn’t fail to spot in a crowd; tall and dark, with short hair and the kind of figure I’d given the goddess Diana in my imagination. Fine and regular features, her face focused on her inner thoughts while at the same time distracted in regard to everything going on around her. An intelligent look, full of kindness. Agile and sporty in the way she moved, yet chaotic in a way, with a tint of artistic bohemia. Her entire form shone with the spontaneity and warmth she radiated. She immediately set about enthusiastically laying out her broad-scale research plans.

As far as I recall, nothing came of the research. The ZMS did not dish out the promised sum (perhaps Aldona’s plans were too bold, and considered dangerously dissident), but Aldona’s regular collaboration with professor Suchodolski and the department began then. At the same time a deep friendship grew between us, and endured till the day she died.

It was not the friendship of everyday familiarity, but rather a mental and intellectual relationship. This intellectual understanding was facilitated by the fact of belonging to the community of professor Suchodolski’s department and our intellectually enriching participation together in the department’s seminars. In addition, the fact that we had different yet related interests was also important. As such we were able to share our reflections and reading materials, thereby broadening our cognitive horizons. We also accompanied one another mentally in our personal problems emerging over
time, always being able to count on genuine mutual help in difficult situations.

After some time, when the doors opened to doctoral studies, we formed a separate group of almost 10 people within the department, comprising people on similar wavelengths. I was the oldest in this group, while the group’s main nerve centre was Aldona. Apart from daily contact at work we would socialise, when along with the drink, food, and atmosphere of fun and cheerfulness we also conducted passionate intellectual discussions. Involvement in this group also furthered the tightening of my friendship with Aldona.

This all took place before the traumatic events of 1968 and all of their depressing consequences, stretching over the next few years. The ‘post-March’ clean-up included the closing of professor Suchodolski’s department (along with other university departments), while institutes and other departments were established in their place, staffed with people who in March 1968 championed Moczar’s antisemitic faction then gaining influence in the Polish United Workers’ Party. Two years later our professor was dismissed from the university by rector Zygmunt Rybicki, spokesman of Moczar’s faction. From then on he worked only at the Polish Academy of Sciences, focusing on the history of science.

And that was the fuse that tore our intellectual-social circle apart. Interns could forget about plans for doctoral studies, and doctors – about finding employment. Therefore the younger ones went their separate ways, their fortunes varying, and Aldona and I were subjected to humiliating persecution (while two other department employees from our group were left in peace). Those years yet further bonded my friendship with Aldona. We lived through the nightmare of 1968 together, getting conspicuously involved in supporting the ideas of students and the students themselves (including taking part in their sit-down strike), and later we were both classified as ‘dodgy’ and persecuted.

We both began considering leaving the faculty. But since things were awful in many circles, we did not want to land just anywhere, but wanted to find circles in which each of us would be able to develop their interests – yet at the same time circles not penetrated (like the Educational Faculty) by the spirit of the ‘party’. Aldona succeed much sooner, leaving in 1973 for the Polish Academy of Sciences, joining a circle of open-minded sociologists working in futurology. That was a time dear to Aldona, but not to me. I only managed to change environments 5 years later, moving within the university to an interdisciplinary institute (functioning as a faculty), and its sociological department. There was not a single member of the Polish United Workers’ Party in the department, and it was chaired by doctor (now professor)
Krzysztof Kiciński. The Institute and the department itself underwent many a reorganisation, took on new staff and PhD students, others formed separate departments, yet our department’s community, in its core and intellectual atmosphere anticipating exchange of thought and freedom of exploration, remained unchanged. It was this community that I managed to draw Aldona to in 1989, and she linked this work to her work at the Polish Academy of Sciences. And so after an interval of sixteen years we were to work together again, this time for over 20 years. And once again we took part in seminars, meetings and discussions together.

The break in working together occurred during a stormy period, when each of us was involved in different areas and at slightly different times, our activities only occasionally intersecting. But our friendship – our exchange of thoughts, opinions on the social situation, mutual help and knowledge regarding private matters – that all lasted throughout those years. It was rather during the last 20 years that we no longer had the strength or the time for frequent socialising as in the years of our youth. Only from time to time would the two of us arrange to meet for lengthy conversation ‘between kin’, while ordinarily restricting ourselves to brief exchanges at work or over the phone. Yet our psychic-mental closeness and years of friendship meant that but a few sentences sufficed for each of us to grasp immediately what was happening in the mind or thoughts of the other, and to be able to participate in this empathetically right away. In any case, Aldona’s existence – nearby, within the same department – became a source of energising force and substantial support in life, and for me her sudden departure is a trauma, as if I’d lost a twin sister, a significant nerve of my own life.

At the same time I realise that the world, and science in Poland, has lost a unique, irreplaceable person. Our long-lasting friendship has developed in me a need, and simultaneously a duty, to preserve the image of Aldona’s personality, in all her distinctiveness and her characteristic extraordinariness.

* * *

Erich Fromm posited the thesis that man is a being that, by gaining awareness, broke away from nature, and the tragedies, problems and dilemmas of the ‘human world’ began at that point.

Yet Aldona was a phenomenon in whom outstanding intellect was coupled with a complete union with nature. She was a conduit for nature in all the planes of her personality. For a start, this was displayed in her powerful connection to the world of animals. I could never understand by what miracle she encountered such a number of stray dogs; it has only happened three times
to me in my life. Stray dogs would themselves cling to Aldona, or if small and helpless, their whimpering would draw her attention. They knew they would be cared for; if not in Aldona’s home, she would not rest until she’d found the right people to look after them. Her closeness to nature was also spotted by a crow (a bird apparently wild) that would wait every day for Aldona on the bonnet of her car, would nudge her with its beak, perch on her shoulder and not fly away before receiving the right amount of food and its daily portion of petting. Birds used to fearlessly circle around Aldona, and look into her windows.

Aldona’s biologism was also expressed in her keen involvement in various sports. Yet she was guided by the need and her enthusiasm, and not by calculated ambition, when practice requires self-imposed discipline and an inner compulsion. Running, skiing, swimming or handball, practiced with much skill, zeal and a sense of ease, were simply her natural way of being in this world. She was equally as passionate in regard to various sensual experiences: good food, love, adventure and smells. She lived her life to the full in joy as well as in attacks of depression, mourning and pain.

It was particularly characteristic of Aldona not to internalise to any degree the rules followed by the world of people ‘detached from nature’: the norms, stereotypes and rules of the game in the theatre of everyday life. She was guided by powerful inner impulses, by intuition, by empathy and by motoric dynamics. She was a totally spontaneous being, and the expression of her personality was not mediated by the conventions (so-called form, ‘persona’ or ‘face’) we have become accustomed to. And as man’s emotional plane is labile and disorderly, thus Aldona’s conduct and behaviour was unpredictable and caused misunderstandings in her relations with others. This mainly applied to her motoric dynamics; charged with emotion, her drive might quickly burn out or show substantial durability. But at the moment of birth it was apparently highly charged. Hence during the first few years of our acquaintance I myself changed my opinion of Aldona on several occasions, and I never knew for certain whether her drive would suddenly stall or, on the contrary, lead to significant consequences. When at the start of our acquaintance Aldona drew up some interesting action plans and voiced enthusiasm and emotional involvement, I had the impression that the gates were opening to a colourful reality, ready for joint participation or at least support. But when on a few occasions I realised that there was no next stage to those plans and emotions, I diagnosed Aldona as a person with but short-lived enthusiasm, and so not to be concerned about. And again I was surprised when I noticed that some of Aldona’s commitments were still underway, her plans were passing into the stage of execution, frequently beset
with obstacles, requiring one to fight the matter’s resistance and take laborious steps that would discourage and break many people. Many, but not Aldona. When her drive entered such a phase, she was capable of overcoming any obstacles and infecting others with her enthusiasm. Collective research and books, conferences at home and abroad, putting together teams of people, socialising and travel, and lastly establishing and running the journal ‘Societas/Communitas’ and (through much effort and pains) setting its high position; all that constituted Aldona’s accomplishments and trend of her active life. Except that when her drive moved into gear, it always did so very dynamically, and you could not anticipate how long it would keep going for.

Other friction in Aldona’s social contacts also arose from her uncontrollable emotionality. On waves of enthusiasm, Aldona would take on a variety of commitments – ones that seemed simple to carry out at the time. However, she did not take into account the effort they required, or that they might clash with other commitments, or her own personal or private or health-related problems, or her own moody nature, occasionally excluding her (due to disheartenment and depression) from any activity requiring concentration. As a result she became known for ‘missed’ deadlines, although she did usually complete the tasks in the end. Yet here as well she surprised people by completing certain commitments (if they were emotional priorities for her) extremely quickly, far ahead of any possible deadlines.

And one more: Aldona was headstrong. When getting totally involved emotionally in various activities, she would fly into an irrational anger if she encountered any obstacles, voicing her indignation or impatience. This anger was fleeting, never malicious or deliberately aimed against anybody, but quite naturally it also created some dissonance in her relations with others. And Aldona’s inclination to make such outbursts increased with age, traumatic experiences, and light-heartedly ignored health disorders. Aldona led a life as active as could possibly be, beyond her physical capabilities, and later on also beyond what her age could cope with. Her mental drive was stronger than her body, which was increasingly often making its resistance felt.

Despite all the discords people may have experienced in their contacts with Aldona, she was a person highly liked by others. This was due not only to the attractive distinctiveness of her personality, or the fact that wherever she would appear ‘life itself’ took on that energetic force of hers, but above all because she was quite simply an absolutely good person.

If we assume (as is often done) that ‘homo sapiens’ is the bearer of two opposing tendencies, of aggression, destruction and rivalry on the one hand, and the pro-social instincts of working together, solidarity, help and empathy on the other, then Aldona’s psyche was full of tendencies only from the
second part of this opposition. In her natural stance towards the world (and especially towards those dear to her, towards family, friends and students) there was no division into ‘me’ and ‘not me’. She had no emotions of jealousy, envy, fighting, or a tendency to make bitter comparisons. Quite the opposite; people’s difficult problems became her problems, frequently even her own personal torment, hence sometimes her far-reaching involvement in helping derived from her direct emotions, and did not constitute an act of ‘rendering services’ or sacrifices for ‘another’. Others would sense her openhearted and active kindness. She was also sincerely pleased by other people’s achievements (“what a wise move she made”, “that was such a good book he wrote”) and fortunes that smiled on others, even if not among those dear to her.

Her instinctive ‘immersion’ into the social world was also expressed in her preferences for team work or creating groups of people ‘across divisions’, to be brought together by achieving common goals or through mutual interaction when socialising. At the same time, should discords or conflicts arise within such a team, they became a source of serious concern for Aldona.

She also confided in me regarding her pangs of conscience tormenting her from time to time, when she would hear that her attacks of anger or unfulfilled commitments had upset somebody (which was not always the case). This was not a question of norms – something alien to Aldona’s psyche. Quite simply, others’ pain was her pain, especially pain for which she was to blame. When unable to ‘put something right’, she would not reveal her feeling of guilt externally, but it constituted an unpleasant inner obsession.

Her emotions towards other people characteristically contained a lasting energy within them. Not only towards me was she loyal in her friendship. In the light of this quality of Aldona’s, of her open pro-social stance and sense of ‘I’ broadened to embrace those dear to her, you could say that ill fortune dogged her life. Practically all members of her family – her father, aunt, mother, mother-in-law and husband – all died following several years of serious illness, sometimes coupled with severe pain or dementia. For many years of her life, Aldona cared for her mother and husband, watching over her loved ones’ gradual decay. And that was her life trauma. Yet in this case Aldona’s drive did not burn out, but continued to run at top revs. Apart from exhausting herself (she was a thoughtful carer, though also had to hire nurses), Aldona – the embodiment of life – was also anguished by her empathetic involvement in the suffering of those dear to her. And this was accompanied by her fearful vision of her own infirmity or slow death. She expressed such thoughts frequently when we talked. Fate spared her, and she died when – despite numerous illnesses – she was still fully active, although
she would experience disorders affecting her for almost the entire day, but which were in essence sudden. As far as we saw it, she could still be among us – just as active as she was – for many years more, and only then die as suddenly as she did. But she departed, leaving behind an emptiness that will never be filled by anything or anybody.

And here we come to one more of Aldona’s qualities, which considering her inclination towards powerful emotional involvement one could consider surprising. Namely she was not susceptible at all to any kind of fanaticism, blindness, or following false trails in social life. She possessed the instinct of faultlessly deciphering the situation in keeping with her vested openness of mind and the values she recognised: naturalness, authenticity, freedom, creativity, diversity and the ambiguity of the world. While she was not a fanatic, she did have that instinctive dynamic of getting involved in the earnest defence of such values without calculation or worrying about personal consequences. And since she lived in a totalitarian system (although in her adulthood in a ‘liberalised totalitarianism’), she had to pay such prices. For example she became involved in the ‘post-October’ Socialist Youth Union, believing that on the wave of ‘renewal of socialism’ this would be an authentic social youth movement. Despite this involvement, she soon sensed that Gomułka’s politics was about to block that authenticity and transform the organisation into a tool obedient to the party. Therefore, to begin with, she fought passionately to prevent this happening, but when she saw her efforts smashing against the tough ‘resistance of the matter’, then without a second thought she quit her rather well-paid work in the organisation’s central body to throw herself into the unknown fate of uncertainty and instability. Up until 1965 she had a variety of temporary employments, commissioned work and academic scholarships, simultaneously working to finish her doctoral dissertation. For six years she lived on such an income largely thanks to the efforts of professor Suchodolski, who valued her highly. And in those years that was far from easy (including acquiring a job opening to be able to employ Aldona).

Then, for her involvement in 1968, the price she paid was the serious threat of losing her job, and – like many who were then dismissed – being blacklisted. The party – at a high level – passed its verdict on her in December 1970, and she knew their decision. Ultimately it was withdrawn at the last moment as a result of urgent efforts made by professor Suchodolski, who – although probably no longer working then at the university – was still responsible for Aldona’s intellectual development and still had various connections. Yet for two months he fought against determined resistance, and I have no idea how he finally managed to overcome it. The verdict was with-
drawn, yet from the moment it was given to its withdrawal Aldona was aware that her life could enter a ‘black hole’, leaving her with nothing to live on.

Her earlier experiences were no obstacle to her joining the illegal opposition after 1976, initially ad hoc and later on (after the establishment of the Society for Scientific Studies – the TKN) ‘officially’. However, there was a price to pay; she was unable to complete her doctoral dissertation, despite it becoming a type of ‘bestseller’. It was only the ‘carnival of Solidarity’ that made it possible to reopen the process, and paradoxically she completed her doctoral studies during martial law, following a few months’ internment. And so she waited seven years for that moment. What she went through did not discourage her from continuing her heavy involvement in underground activities in the nineteen eighties. But by then many people were involved, and the selective character of the authorities’ persecution meant that Aldona was not affected.

Therefore, despite the constant feeling of uncertainty of living ‘on the edge’, ultimately she was not covered by the kind of repression that could, potentially, have included her. This was due to fortunate circumstances and the assistance and intervention of influential supervisors. Except that when Aldona made specific choices, her actions were determined by her sense of their obvious rightness, and she never wondered for a moment about their price.

Such was this scholar’s great class. It might seem paradoxical that somebody rooted in nature, unrestrained in their reactions and choices, could represent such a high standard in an area associated rather with rationality and inner discipline. Yet in Aldona her connection with nature and scientific passion comprised a harmonious whole. For a start, she was an incredibly bright person, capable of extracting a crucial thought from a difficult book within an hour – something that would take me two weeks. But above all she was guided by cognitive curiosity full of spontaneous passion. Even during the years when books from the West were rarities that were hard to obtain, Aldona knew how to get hold of them and fill her room with them. Sitting on the floor among literature – articles and books – scattered around her, she would say: “I’m working on this issue, but first of all I have to read and read…”.

The sheer quantity of diverse literature she would absorb could have overwhelmed her with the mass of information, deprived her of her independence, made Aldona mainly a walking encyclopaedia. But the outcome of her huge variety of reading material was creative thought, a highly individual grasp of the problem, reaching the crux of the matter, yet simultaneously set within a broad context. In her books, articles, papers and what
she would say in seminars or in conversation, Aldona would always open up new cognitive fields to others.

At the same time she was incredibly concentrated in her work, giving herself over entirely to the mental effort, as she would also do in sport, love, socialising and friendship, or in forming teams of people working together. Perhaps it was this need for concentration, a kind of trance that Aldona would then fall into, that was the reason for her inadvertently preferring to speak briefly. She left behind many significant articles in various collective books (often compiled on her initiative) and barely three monographs. Or perhaps the reason was the topic of a book she would frequently mention, saying that it would be the ‘book of her life’? The subject was to be the disintegration of our civilisation, approaching its limit. Such was her intellectual diagnosis of the contemporary world based on what she read, on her observations, and on her reflections. But maybe for Aldona, the ‘elixir of life’, immersing herself for months in the analysis of disintegration was so mentally repulsive that the drive inside her was unable to deploy itself sufficiently to actually enter the stage of execution. The book she spoke of so much was never written.

However, alongside the three monographs, she did leave behind numerous unique articles scattered around various collective publications. I believe it would be worth gathering these various priceless intellectual syntheses together and publishing them in a single book. People could thereby once again encounter the fruit of Aldona’s thinking, and by doing so – now that she is no longer among us – meet Aldona herself.

And finally: on the whole, our reading and reflections were enriching and complementary; there was no controversy between us. Except for one matter – our attitude towards so-called supernatural phenomena. A few years ago, somewhat disoriented in the contradictory signals coming from her, I asked: “Aldona, you do believe in something. But what do you actually believe in?” And her answer was: “I believe in all those similar themes and symbols that appear in various religions around the world. After all, the fact that you see them in religions arising at various times and in societies with no cultural connections must testify to man’s intuition regarding what is beyond us. And do you truly believe that we come to an absolute end, that there is nothing afterwards?” I answered in the affirmative, and I saw genuine concern and care in Aldona’s face. She said: “Listen, you really must do something about that. Because if you don’t have the attitude that there are other forms of life, and that you’ll find your place there, then you’ll just hang around and that will terrify you, you’ll feel lost.”

I am an agnostic, and so when thinking that death is probably the end of everything, I still cannot rule out the possibility of Aldona being right. How-
ever, I am certain that if she was right, then she easily found her place in the world of spirituality and energy, and that with her attitude she felt as if in a new ‘home’ in which she could take root, just as she was rooted in the world of nature, society and culture.
Memories, particularly when regarding somebody dear to you, somebody important to you, cannot be put in order. And that’s a good thing, as the ability to arrange memories in drawers would prove that one has ‘conclusively’ sanctioned somebody’s absence. I am not thinking now of any metaphysics, or referring to the Freudian description of the ‘work of mourning’, aiming for the reinvesting of a subject who has lost an important point of reference. I am simply basing on previously proven experience that if I rely on a spontaneous situation and image-based selection from the memory of fragments of a world shared with somebody, then that somebody remains in a way ‘less absent’ for me. Let that suffice for my explanation for sharing with readers only sketches of the images that haunt me, particularly when I find my fingers beginning by themselves to type in 22 825-30-32. We were in touch over the telephone almost every day recently. I was calling her more often, nagging her to go for a check-up, as I was very concerned that Aldona – who had been looking forward so much to her Easter trip to Nieborów, where she had always previously succeeded in ‘catching her breath’ – was feeling constantly tired this time, and admitted that she had failed to get the rest she usually got. She said she would go and see a doctor when she got home, maybe even the next day, but when I called in the evening and asked whether she’d been, she chased me away like an annoying fly, telling me about so many important activities she’d had, which had postponed her visit till the next day, or perhaps the day after... And it was like that every day. She was incorrigible in that respect, and there was nothing I could do. I even asked Zygmunt Bauman to ‘take some action’ about it, which I believe he attempted to do, but with about as much effect as I’d had... There were constantly students, somebody who needed help, an article that had to be finished, the dogs’ illnesses and numerous other matters, among the most important of which – as I’ll return to a little later – was the JOURNAL. But first of all about an image that I see the most strongly, constantly anew, in my current everyday summer life.

For the last few years I have been spending a few summer months in the same house in Zalesie just outside of Warsaw. There’s a post with a basket-
ball net by the drive up to the garage, and beneath it, among the juniper bushes, lie two old balls once subjected to heavy training by the athletic sons of the home’s owner. Every time I open the door in the morning to let the cats into the garden, I see Aldona, shutting the door of her red car, her gaze already looking for the balls. She picks up the first one she finds, dribbles, and then throws it accurately into the net. Once, twice, three times, ten times. And only after such a session does she reach to the back seat for a bottle of wine for the evening and a delicious tart with the season’s fruit, bought in some good cake shop in Ochota, not far from her home (the shop’s cakes even smell of summer in the winter). There are of course also some small titbits for the cats of the house (Aldona used to regularly bring huge packs of dry pet-food to the flat in Warsaw since the time she’d seen that apart from my two housecats I’d also inherited a whole clutter of courtyard cats from a neighbour who’d passed away). Aldona was still throwing that ball into the net just last year, when she’d pop into Zalesie during breaks between her lakes and her beloved swimming. Because of the problems she had with her knees we no longer went on long walks together, or out mushrooming, but would just head for a nearby meadow by the forest, where you could spend ages observing the birds drilling their skeins before migration. The local dogs would always run along the road behind Aldona (I had to reassure her that they were not stray dogs, but just liked crawling through holes in the fences to get to the street and run around in a pack), while those that barked from behind their fences calmed down at the sound of her voice. I also sometimes try to calm them down as Aldona would, but they keep on barking until I’m out of sight.

In previous years, whenever the weather was half-decent, we would also take a ride in the morning, usually to the local reservoir. Sitting on the bank, I’d admire the calm and harmonious rhythm of Aldona’s swimming (when years earlier we’d treated ourselves between semesters to two weeks of swimming every day at the Warszawianka pool, while I ‘scored’ twenty pool lengths, with intervals, Aldona would swim three times the distance and then some more, so I’d rest waiting for her in some Jacuzzi. Once when my husband and I spent the second half of September in a holiday centre in the forest by the Zalew Zegrzyński, Aldona came to join us for two or three days with her dog, and was the only one to swim in the reservoir’s cold water far beyond the marked bathing section, arousing the concern not only of passers-by, but also her dog Lala, barking despairingly at the water’s edge. Even on a photograph I took then, Lala has an open mouth, her eyes turned towards the water, tired from looking out for Aldona.

During the last two years in Zalesie we no longer went to the water; however, she told me much of the fun she had swimming in the lakes of the Brodnica region. We also spoke of how ‘dissolving away’ in the water would

58
be the kind of death one could dream of. Aldona knew better what she was talking about, I had only repeatedly read Herman Broch’s *The Death of Virgil*. Somehow I think we always spoke of the most important matters in the great outdoors. I can remember how in the early nineties we ‘escaped’ for half a day from a conference organised in early autumn in Białowieża to stroll in the forest, and then lay down for a long time in the grass, warming ourselves in the rays of the sun and staring into the sky. We agreed then that this was precisely how we imagined life in paradise. I added that it was sadly only literature. But Aldona, seeking some metaphysical sense, replied that not necessarily, and that nothing could be determined in these matters. That place in the grass reappeared to me years later, my eyes closed, at precisely the time when Aldona told me calmly of the operation awaiting her, and that she would use the time before then, as long as she would feel reasonably all right after her daily laser treatments, to ‘put her matters in order’. The image reappears so strongly to this day, that I believe that – if I’m ever again at the same time of year in Białowieża – my feet will take me by themselves to that very same place.

I once managed to persuade Aldona to attend a congress on aesthetics in Ljubljana. We travelled first of all to Vienna, and then stopped – together with a younger friend from Gdańsk – in Graz. The three of us climbed the nearest peak to see the panoramic view of the higher mountains, and there we came across some beige-pink Alpine cows, several times the size of our Polish cattle and roving free. At first we took fright, worried that they might not be happy with our company, but they showed such indifference that we calmly sat down nearby. Those cows’ leisured calm soon took hold of us as well, and when it was time to leave we quite simply began feeling jealous of them, listing what they didn’t have to do, and what we – slaves to urban life – had to. And when later on we would sometimes reminisce about that trip more like a holiday than for science, we would say to ourselves how great it would be to once again sit on the peak near Graz, ideally in the same company.

I also frequently see an image of Aldona and Marian Kempny on the semi-circular terrace of our former house in Konstancin, when we would sip wine of a summer evening and laugh together, frequently at nothing much, which happens among people who are relaxed, who have hidden all their worries away. Back then we all had much fewer worries than later on, there were as yet no serious illnesses among loved ones, there was no death. The plans we would devise with the wine seemed easy to achieve, everything was in front of us. And while we’re talking about plans, let us return to ‘Societas’, probably the most important of the ventures Aldona decided to leave behind for the community in which she was active, and in which – as she so often said – she felt very good. The idea had long been germinating in her mind. We talked
about it when she was editing or co-editing specific issues of ‘Kultura Współczesna’, when the journal was published at the (no longer existing) Institute of Culture, a place where a group of researchers representing various disciplines in the humanities, and interested – putting it in the most general of terms – in the modern day, would meet at seminars and conferences. Aldona was then running the Department of Culture Theory at the IFiS PAN, and as such numerous contacts and shared ventures (if only to mention the regular seminars on ul. Senatorska with Zygmunt Bauman, then coming to Poland more often and for longer) were natural. She had accomplished her plan at the Institute for Applied Social Sciences, dedicating much time and energy to editing the journal. She knew I was working at the ministerial committee for the parametrisation of periodicals, and so first of all tormented me with questions about whether two years really had to pass before applying for points, and what did one have to do to obtain the maximum number of points. Later on, when the journal had been evaluated highly and I told her about that, she was worried that for such a long time the ministry’s website had not been providing the appropriate information. I explained to her that the committee had done its job and passed on its proposals to the respective officials, but she was worried about whether somewhere ‘higher’ the points wouldn’t be changed. She would ask me almost every day whether perchance I’d received any news from the ministry, despite knowing that I was only there for the committee’s sitting three or four times a year. And when the information was finally posted on the appropriate page, she immediately began looking into how to get onto foreign lists, bringing in even higher points. She thought up successive topics and potential authors, and was also worried right from the start about whether she would manage to build the kind of editing team that would take everything further. Towards the end she would talk increasingly often about this ‘further’. As soon as she found out that she was ill, she decided that she would not subject herself to any reinforcing of the effects of the operation through chemicals or exposure. She argued that she was more interested in the quality of life than its length, and that should the disease’s spread make it impossible for her to function normally she would vanish into a hospice, where – she was certain – they could deal effectively with the pain (she had some experience in this matter, as she had stayed with one of her friends as she died in a Warsaw hospice). Tired after Nieborów, she said that somehow she would ‘make it’ to the summer holidays and her beloved swimming. And I asked her with concern: “But before then and afterwards you’ll pop in to see us in Zalesie?”

“Well, of course,” she answered. “How could I deny Kitty those fruit tarts he likes so much…”
Reminiscences, Farewells

JOLANTA KARBOWSKA

A friend? Yes. Although also a buddy, if I were to search for the right description of our half-century-long acquaintance. And I hope she would not insist here specifically on correctness and using the female version of buddy. It began around the mid-sixties at the University of Warsaw’s Education Faculty; I walked into a room where I saw a tall, slim figure standing on a chair, arranging books on the top shelf. And she gave me some information.

I no longer know how that developed into so many years of closeness, or how our friendship began.

Perhaps from when I, ‘homeless’, was taken in, and moved into a self-contained part of Aldona’s and Wiesław Konstanciak’s then vast flat on ulica Dantyszka. Or maybe a little earlier – from when we both attended Professor Bogdan Suchodolski’s postgraduate seminar.

And later on those ski trips. First of all to Szczyrk, where during the more difficult runs down from Skrzyczne I was instructed professionally and so intensely that my ‘boards’, then still wooden skis, fell to pieces.

We set out for Zakopane, for Sobczakówka, as a group of three grown-up women (just as before, we were joined by Zosia Zinserling, my editor friend from PIW, the State Publishing Institute) plus my eight-year-old niece Kasia and Aldona’s poodle Żabka (Słodka Żabcia). There was plenty of excitement. This time Aldona’s passion for sports instruction focused on the child, but a rather striking tumble by Madam Instructor right in the middle of the beginners’ slope on the Gubałówka mountain defused the situation. Nevertheless, teaching Kasia to take the T-bar lift up the slope was an irrefutable achievement, something I, her aunt, had long failed to do. Żabka on the other hand gave us many an unforgettable moment, for example jumping into our beds with his muddy paws.

As for a trip to Wisła, this time just us three adults, what stuck in the mind the most that time was Aldona’s unconditional and obligatory order for us to have ‘contact with the skis every day’ to guarantee fitness and ability. And there were times when we really did not want to batter ourselves on
the moguls skiing down from Stożek! Our return to Warsaw in the second half of February was also rather out of the ordinary; the train came to a standstill late in the evening in the middle of a field in the middle of a blizzard. It stopped snowing, but we were still stuck there. Around two or three hours later, an irritated Aldona exclaimed: “I’m getting off! I’m not going to be stuck here, shut away, as if in captivity! At least I’ll have the possibility of manoeuvring out there!” ‘There’ was the white-and-navy emptiness of a winter’s night; you couldn’t even see any blinking lights of nearby villages that would normally be visible. Frantic and rational argument made no headway. We couldn’t even call on her sense of responsibility, as this time there was neither child nor dog. It was only the deliberately base arguments that Zosia and I put forward, that just the two of us would find it hard to manage with all the luggage (skis, boots, backpacks) – as she was planning to leave hers with us – fortunately protracted the negotiations to the moment when the train finally began moving again. And long afterwards, ‘possibility of manoeuvring’ became our capacious motto for describing numerous situations, not only those involving spurts for freedom.

A few years later there was a winter’s night – of the gloomy December variety – that did not end so happily, its consequences for Aldona very unpriorous, and that was just before her postdoctoral degree. Yet she managed later to talk of her ‘boarding school’ in Goldap, where she was interned, with her customary humour, and valued the friendships she formed there.

Dogs were always there. The special Słodka Żabcia, a she-dog, had belonged to Aldona’s mother. As proof of the highest level of trust, I was permitted to return from Mikołajki to Warsaw by bus with her. Just the two of us. Pampered (and spoiled, like all of Aldona’s dogs!), she behaved like a real lady during the journey!

There was Zmora (fondly called dear Zizia), who was found as a puppy in a cage in the Pole Mokotowskie park, and her only puppy Jedza. The vagrant Kuba – practically an outdoor dog loved for his independent character and for the considerable problems he provided. Felek – a small, old and ill mongrel, looked after till the end of his days. ‘Been-through-a-lot’ Lalka was rescued from an allotment near Radzymin. And we drove back together along the icy wintry roads (by then we were in Aldona’s motorised years) from Nieborów with Miśka, a ginger she-dog sleeping the winter nights there in the hotbeds; she was to find a home with some acquaintances of mine (who at no small cost managed to restore her health), living with them well-groomed and loved, as if in a dog’s paradise. I see her very often, as I do many others as well, such as the dog being hugged in the photograph along-
side the obituary in the ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’. Rescued, treated, they found new homes or Aldona gave them a ‘scholarship’ to pay for a good refuge.

As that’s how it always was – a telephone call: “Jolka, an old, abandoned dog, found, look around for somewhere, I’m unable to take in yet another one”. Sometimes it worked.

To complete the picture, sometimes there were also two dogs plus skis. But then not in Aldona’s car, and the ever-reliable Danusia helped out; such was the case not long ago in Karpacz.

And with no dogs at all only in Szklarska Poręba, in the hostel on Szrenica, together with Józek and his daughter Weronika.

The home on ul. Dantyszka, after I’d moved out (though it always remained dear to me), was also the venue for frequent get-togethers among the common friends of Aldona and Wiesław, whom we called ‘Zorba the Greek’. Probably because of his looks, but also due to his outlook on life. A regular date was 1 November, the day of his birthday. But there were many other occasions as well. It was always great around the table, in the company of charming ladies and gentlemen emanating a bygone reverence. Tales from the forests, of sailing, sometimes voyages back to the years of the war and the partisan activities of Wiesław and his friend, Jurek Trojanowski, in the Świętokrzystkie region. Now only with Julia and Andrzej would we now be able to look back together to our meetings then. Aldona’s hospitality, the jokes, and above all her sincere laughter, erupting suddenly, deep and roaring till the eyes watered.

So many good experiences. And the memory.

Warsaw, 30 June 2010
I shall start with a personal admission: I do not want to reminisce, I consider – and in this respect I am an incorrigible supporter of Robert Nozick – that denying the deceased the right to secrecy is some form of violation of their freedom. Quite simply I do not know whether Aldona, with her passion for separateness, would be pleased with such a recollection, for example mine, or whether she would recognise it as confining her within boundaries she has not accepted.

And because of that I will not recall Aldona in her academic or public roles, and would rather prefer – which I believe will be trespassing less – to recall a few situations in which she sort of hurriedly revealed her desires and expectations towards others.

In other words, I shall present three situations in which I was involved, and not as the most active since next to Aldona that would not have been possible; situations in which I saw Aldona outside beyond the role of author of Dróg kontrkultury [The Paths of Counterculture] (a book that enabled us all to move on from the Polish People’s Republic in terms of culture), or a spectacularly ideological woman belonging to the last generation of idealists, who attempted to ‘blow some fresh air’ into progressive ideas, changing themselves and the real state socialism at the same time.

So here they are. Three situations in which Aldona offered others her way of seeing, or rather experiencing, solidarity. It is worth pointing out that she gave this almost in passing, not looking to see if she had managed to influence us, whether it had been effective, whether she’d fully persuaded somebody about something...

Situation one. Please imagine a night in June, 1981. Aldona and I are on our way to Wrocław for a conference, ‘Teacher Solidarity’, to listen to what advice Jacek Kuroń has to give to teachers. It’s an overnight train, uncomfortable and crowded as they were back in the People’s Republic. We have a place in the sleeper coach, pleased that we’ll get some rest before yet another marathon. Nothing of the sort! It soon transpires that our coach’s conductor, along with a number of other conductors in his conductor’s com-
partment, don’t like Solidarity and don’t know who Jacek Kuroń is. Aldona then says that can’t be, that we have to go to the conductors with a mission of enlightenment. So we went… Aldona spoke all the way to Wrocław. I’m not sure she actually convinced the conductors, but they listened to her carefully right till the moment we left the coach.

_Situation two._ I met up with Aldona and her closer friend, the now long-deceased Anna Potocka-Hoser, one winter at the PAN’s Retreat in Zawoja, shortly after martial law. On the evening of the first day there, Aldona declares that she genuinely wants to get some proper rest. We go for an evening walk, and end up in a quarrel with one of the local farmers about his large, courtyard dog being tied to too short a chain. Aldona shouts at the dog owner, and he hasn’t got a glue what these city folk are on about. When I suggest quietly that “the farmer won’t let us get away with it alive”, Aldona calls for solidarity with the suffering animal. We walk away from the fence. The farmer is shouting, we’re shouting, and the dog’s barking. Within a few days the whole of Zawoja knows about Aldona’s efforts, while the dog just earns a slightly longer chain. You could say that from that moment on, the whole of Zawoja knew of the solidarity between the retreat’s residents and the unfortunate dog.

_Situation three._ Parties were a part of life in both the early and later years of the Polish People’s Republic, and were then known as ‘prywatki’ and not ‘imprezy’ as they are today. Apart from the copious quantities of gossip, these parties were also a forum for fierce discussion and the exchange of views. At one party we organised towards the end of martial law, at least thirty people turned up. It was pretty crowded, and it was fancy dress; as such there were quite a few gypsy ladies, there were taxi dancers with fox furs on their shoulders, janitors, clowns, fleet admirals, Warsaw insurgents, a party secretary, a secret collaborator and ambassadors from foreign countries. Aldona arrived late, as usual, dressed as a Morris column covered in leaflets for the officially banned ‘Solidarity’. As she entered, she said in a confidential whisper, that all of us there were, after all, members of Solidarity! I felt sad and stupid, because for a moment, in my celebratory insobriety I had forgotten about the res publica.

So why have I written all of this? Quite simply to show that these various forms of solidarity, with a small or with a capital letter, were in Aldona’s case linked to a social mission, but the kind that did not force anybody to do anything. Aldona’s solidarity was not based on dictate, but on the feeling that those great ideas deserved something from every one of us. Aldona simply communicated solidarity, but did not command it. She barely suggested it, and that derived from her sense of freedom, from how important it was to her, from how strongly she defended it and wanted to discern in others – in what they were doing with their lives and their ideas.
Aldona was a relative of mine, above all a beloved aunt – and an experienced, intelligent friend. For the last few days now I’ve been busy around my computer, preparing to write something about her. Yet I really don’t feel like doing it. I don’t want to write down my memories. I’ve been putting it off, constantly finding some new pretext or other to keep me from getting down to it. After all, writing your recollections about somebody is admitting that that person is no longer there. And that is very hard to accept. A few weeks on from the funeral, and it’s still not really getting through to me that she has departed. Her flat looks like a place whose owner has gone away for a while, but will be back shortly. There are no dogs there of course, but then that’s nothing unusual either, after all Aldona would always take them with her. I haven’t been calling her now for a few weeks. And she hasn’t been calling me either. But that’s also normal. She’d usually head off somewhere in the summer. And I’d go away as well. “I’ll be in touch when I’m back, probably in September,” one would say at this time of year, and that was it. September this year is rather unreal, too distant. As if it shouldn’t really be here at all. And what else can I write here? What’s the point in writing anything? But they’re calling. “Wouldn’t you write something, a few words, two or three pages, some kind of farewell, a memory, because something from everybody…” But I don’t want to write such things. I don’t know how, I don’t know what to say. On the other hand I have to put together a few thoughts about her, although it’s still too soon for me.

Aldona knew she had cousins – the grandchildren of her father’s brother, Hieronim. And thus she managed to reach my father and his two brothers. I’m not sure they actually realised then that their father had two cousins, Aldona and Maria. They lost touch, nobody kept a watch over such matters, and the boys’ father died when they were still children. Their mother, a hard-working woman, brought them up on her own, giving all of her time to them, sparing no efforts to ensure them at least the minimum of material comforts. She did what she could, and did not have the strength or opportunities for more.
I was born shortly after they met. Then Aldona was helping my parents, both very young at the time. She would suggest possibilities for earning some extra money, and sometimes she helped them herself financially. And she also strived to help in making up for gaps in their education. Then we drifted apart and ultimately there was no contact for many a long year. Only Andrzej, my father’s older brother, kept in touch with Aldona.

I really came to know Aldona in late 1995. I had been accepted for studies and more or less after a month, maybe two, Aldona realised that I was in the first year. That came as a big surprise to me. The blurred trace of my early childhood memories of Aunt Aldona began to assume proper shape. I was given her telephone number by Professor Małgorzata Melchior. And then we began to get to know each other in late 1995 and early 1996. At first that embarrassed me, made me feel shy. It was difficult to attend you own aunt’s classes, to be given university credits by her, write essays, sign the attendance list, etc. Sometimes I didn’t know how I should behave. I would escape down a corridor, afraid of bumping into her and not knowing how to behave. I’d usually skirt wide of the Staszic Palace. On the one hand I was impressed by having somebody like Aldona in the family, but on the other was stressed out by the thought that somebody might think something or say something behind my back, after all it’s obvious that ‘people know what they know’. Perhaps that was due to my complexes, about not being a sufficiently good student, or later a postgraduate student. Never mind, in the end I ceased bothering about it and wearing myself out with speculation over what other people might be thinking. In the meantime my private contacts with Aldona were becoming increasingly close, and we were becoming family more and more. At moments of difficulty, Aldona’s presence was encouraging and gave me belief in myself. And I’ll never forget that.

Neither will I forget the kind of person she was. Sincere, emotional, selfless, somebody you could always rely on. Above all the way in which her authority manifested itself was magnetic. Never forced, never imposed. Aldona wouldn’t stand on her tiptoes, she wouldn’t carry a stand around with her just to place it in a central point at any occasion, skip onto it and strive for attention and splendour. When you are a true master, you will never call yourself one. You simply are one, it is how others see you. A mentor does not bother everybody else with their wisdom, but will simply attempt to answer questions posed. She is free of buffoonery and does not perform the theatre of hierarchy. And these sentences – possibly banal, but true – suit her perfectly. They paint a picture of Aldona.

And so Aldona’s authority was not a result of just her extensive academic knowledge. It derived from much deeper; she was above all a wise and re-
ceptive person. The kind of person you observe and almost instinctively want to be like. That is why people were attracted to her, wanted to spend time with her. They wanted to associate not only with her knowledge, but simply with her, the person. At the same time she could sometimes be outright brusque. If she didn’t like something, or something irritated her, she would say so directly, often without mincing words. If she considered something idiotic, she said so bluntly. I experienced that myself, on more than one occasion. But that’s precisely why I trusted her so fully. Her critique was sincere, and was given out of kindness. And then, if she claimed that she liked something, you could be sure it was good. Aldona did not manipulate people and their opinions. Her authority did not require any interpersonal ploys. And that’s something you either have or you don’t. And she had it.

There were many important things I didn’t manage to tell her. I had the impression that her wisdom in life, and that good warmth of hers, would always be there. After all, such people don’t die. Of course she did indeed have some very serious health problems. A few years ago she underwent a major operation, and never really fully recovered. Recently she was frequently weak, and getting ever weaker. So from where was that irrational certainty that Aldona could not die? Maybe because the death of a young person is always unexpected, it always comes as a shock. Openness to the world and to other people, youthful curiosity in life and spontaneity all went together with the experience and wisdom of a sage. And here once again the secret of Aldona’s authority is revealed. Aldona’s soul never aged. But at a certain moment this young woman’s body refused to function.

I am grateful for my lot, for having had Aldona as my aunt, and as a result for having been able to befriend her. Just under three weeks after Aldona’s death my grandmother followed, my mother’s mother, our family’s great loving heart. The two most important people of the oldest generation left us at almost the same time. I have nothing more to say. Now there is much, much more to remain silent about.
Images of Reality*

The contemporary world is a reality of a market of pieces of information that operate in parallel and are bound by nothing. Different sources convey different types of information about the shape of social reality, thereby creating different images of this reality, their truth or falsity being essentially unverifiable. The assumption that media create images of ‘parallel realities’ is the starting point for the reflections made in the following article. At the same time the media fact, understood as a creation of reality, translates into social fact, understood as an event. Decisions made by individuals – which relate to their actions – are formed in reaction to these events. Can this assumption be justified in scholarly theory and experience? What are the mechanisms of reality-shaping used by the media? And, finally, what are the determinants that decide which sources of information we consider trustworthy? These issues are discussed in ‘Images of Reality’.

The contemporary world is one of a totally unconstrained market of simultaneously functioning sources of information, the existence of which is supported by new technologies. The different sources communicate different information regarding the shape of social reality, thereby creating a variety of images of this reality. These are images whose authenticity or falsity is unverifiable, as it is generally impossible for the individual to access the social facts the information refers to, and the only available means of falsifying or substantiating these facts is to consult some other source of information. The individual ultimately has no choice but to confront information deriving from different sources, which may enable analysis leading to the selection of some common content from a sea of contradictory information. But such confrontation may end in total failure. Then one is left to placing particular trust in one or a few sources of information, and taking as true the image of reality thus created.

For the purpose of this paper I shall assume that media create images of ‘parallel realities’, while the media fact understood as a creation of reality translates into a social fact, understood as an event, in reaction to which the individual takes decisions concerning action. The choice of a single or a few of the creations of reality presented belongs to the individual.

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If we stick with this assumption, we can imagine the social world as a collection of individuals ‘immersed’ in a variety of social realities, depending on their choice of source of information. This is a vision of an atomised society comprising individuals incapable of achieving a consensus, highly desirable in a democracy, in regard to goals and values, since that would require the version of reality to be agreed upon beforehand. Such a vision is a vision of catastrophe.

Are the media genuinely potentially capable of playing such a role in constructing the image of social reality? Do the assumptions I have adopted have any grounds in scientific theory and empiricism? What are the mechanisms used by the media in the construction of social reality? And finally, what determines which sources of information we acknowledge as credible?

The topic outlined here is complex, embracing a multitude of more detailed issues, and as such a comprehensive discussion is doomed to fail from the very start. These issues have been the subject of analyses by experts in social communication, linguists, sociologists, political scientists, psychologists and social psychologists, and the theoretical and empirical explanations they present enhance our knowledge, while every theoretical proposal is an invaluable impulse for the emergence of new theories delivering new notions.

The purpose of this paper is to present selected aspects of the theoretical achievements relating to the issue of the role of language in the communication of information.

What is the relation between reality and language? Does language serve description of reality, or does it also create it? I shall begin with two examples.

Momentous events, political in character, occurred on 11 September 2001 in New York. How should these events be properly defined? An act of terrorism? An attack? War? Depending on which of these words we use, we classify this event in different ways, simultaneously lending it different meaning. For example, if the event were to be defined as war, insurance companies would not have to pay out insurance to their policy-holders, which they are obliged to do if it is defined as a terrorist attack\(^1\). On 1 September 2004, a tragedy unfolded in the town of Beslan. A group of men from Chechnya, Ingusetia and other Caucasian republics, under the command of Shamil Basayev, seized a school and for three days held over one thousand people – mostly children – hostage. The group, who called themselves Chechen freedom-fighters, demanded the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Chechnya. President Putin defined their activities as a terrorist attack, placing it on a par with the attacks on the World Trade Center. From that moment on, the problem of Chechnya and its struggles for independence from Russia prac-

\(^1\) This problem is discussed by Jerzy Bralczyk (2003).
tically vanished from international politics, despite previously being a subject of diplomatic efforts and measures. The Chechen people began to be identified with terrorists, just as many people identify followers of Islam with the group that carried out the attack on 11 September 2001\(^2\).

Words define reality, they lend it sense, at the same time equipping it with a conceptual apparatus via which the individual perceives and describes reality.

George Orwell was the precursor of such a stance. He introduced the idea of newspeak to literature and, as it later turned out, to science as well. He wrote: “The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of IngSoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought – that is, a thought diverging from the principles of IngSoc – should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words. Its vocabulary was so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could properly wish to express, while excluding all other meaning and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods” (Orwell 2004: 245).

If Orwell’s comment on the impact of language on the perception of reality seems too abstract, then referring to an example having nothing in common with politics will suffice. The languages of many peoples inhabiting the coldest and snowiest realms of our globe have many words or terms describing the shades of white of the snow, meaning that the members of these social groups use concepts related to these terms both in their perception of reality and in rendering accounts of it.

The nature of language and the connections and relations of a language with social reality are the subject of deliberation among sociologists, linguists, philosophers and psychologists. Sociolinguistics is developing along numerous lines, and various schools have formed within its confines. The borders between sociolinguistics, linguistics and the sociology of language have not been distinctly defined. When one talks of sociolinguistics, its relationship with linguistics is stressed; when talking of the sociology of language – its relationship with sociology. Studies in the anthropology of language are also evolving.

Alongside these directions, a social constructivism within which the role of language is considered in the process of constructing social reality emerged.

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\(^2\) The mechanism of generalisation is used in the above examples. This is applied in ethnocentric discourse, contributing to it invaluably. Michał Głowiński (2004: 7), in describing anti-Semitic discourse, gives the following example: “If a Mr Epstain were to punch a certain Mr Dąbrowski in the face in a pub or by a kiosk selling beer, this is no ordinary dispute between two tipsy men; it is rather the case that a Jew attacked a Pole, or to put it even more expressively – Jews attacked Poland”.

73
from the sociology of knowledge together with the development of postmodernist theory.


According to Berger and Luckmann, from a sociological point of view the human world is determined by two facts. Firstly, the social character of man, and secondly man’s interaction with the world through the agency of symbols. These two facts fundamentally determine what becomes social reality for man. Social reality only bears the value of reality to the degree to which it is equipped with meaning. Specific phenomena may be perceived as processes, facts and relations only insofar as they acquire meaning, some symbolic content. Knowledge, even the simplest, is a result of order being given to information as a consequence of man’s social existence. The simplest of human inclinations, such as certain activities turning into habits, and then the typification of activities, relations or persons, lead through social interaction to the emergence of facts in an external relation to the individual, facts that constitute the ‘building blocks’ of their reality. Following this the processes of institutionalisation bring about various mechanisms involving the legitimisation of the emergent institutions up to extensive symbolic universes, and ensure the reality thus emerging not only the status of an objective domain of facts, but also cause it to subjugate the individual to their laws (introduction in: Berger, Luckmann 1983).

Analysis of the processes in the social creation of reality is the job of the sociology of knowledge. Berger and Luckmann write: “The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these. Before turning to our main task we must, therefore, attempt to clarify the foundations of knowledge in everyday life, to wit, the objectifications of subjective processes (and meanings) by which the intersubjective common-sense world is constructed” (Berger, Luckmann 1983: 50).

The decisive form of objectification is meaning, i.e. the generation of signs by people. The sign differentiates this from other objectifications in its visible explicite intention of serving as an indicator of subjective meanings.

Signs group together into systems, for example systems of gesticulative signs, sets of manufactured material objects, etc. Yet the most important sys-

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3 We come across the term ‘social constructivism’ in Polish sociological literature. ‘Social constructionism’ and ‘social constructivism’ are generally used interchangeably, although sometimes authors attach notions not entirely identical to these terms. For the purposes of this paper, I shall use the term ‘social constructivism’.

74
system of signs in human society is language. Language communicates meanings, it is capable of becoming an objective storage of spacious sets of meanings and experiences that can be preserved and passed down to successive generations.

Every meaningful fragment of a language is a symbol, and in this sense language may be called symbolic. “Language now constructs immense edifices of symbolic representations that appear to tower over the reality of everyday life like gigantic presences from another world. Religion, philosophy, art, and science are the historically most important symbol systems of this kind. [...] Language is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of ‘bringing back’ these symbols and presenting them as objectively real elements in everyday life. In this manner, symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents of the reality of everyday life and of the commonsense apprehension of this reality. I live in a world of signs and symbols every day” (p. 77).

Language builds semantic fields, in other words realms of meanings the scope of which is limited linguistically; it builds classificatory models differentiating objects by gender, and enables order to be given to individual social experience. Language creates the social resource of knowledge providing typifying models, not only for the typification of others but the typification of all types of event and experience, both social and natural.

It is thanks to language that we perceive the reality of everyday life as ordered and objectivised. Used in everyday life, it delivers the constantly needed objectifications and determines the order in which they are understandable and in which everyday life has meaning for us. Language marks the points of orientation in a person’s life in society, and fills it with objects of meaning. Objectification of the world is an effect of the awareness “that there is an ongoing correspondence between my meanings and their meanings in this world, that we share a common sense about its reality” (p. 55).

The typifying models essential for defining reality, for the typification of all sorts of event and experience social and natural, are also provided by the social resource of knowledge. In this sense the resource of concepts an individual has at their disposal determines the way in which they perceive reality, while these concepts are a connotation of the terms contained in language.

Social constructivism draws on the assumptions of the theory of symbolic interactionism, according to which the mechanism behind the formation of social structures and representations consists in the constant exchange and evolution of the meanings of symbols occurring during interpersonal interactions. Language codes reality through symbols contained in cultural code.

The psychologist Gordon W. Allport drew attention to similar functions of language. In his opinion, the nature of language consists in dividing and
categorising the information noise that influences us every second of the day. It is precisely this inherent nature of language that gives us the capacity to persuade. By labelling someone a ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘philanthropist’, ‘doctor’ or ‘sportsperson’, we emphasise some specific feature of the ‘human being’ over many other of its possible qualities. We then respond to these features, organising our reality around a particular label. “Nouns that ‘cut slices’ – such as we-they, black-white, rich-poor, free-Soviet, male-female – serve to divide up the world into neat little packages and to imply the range of appropriate courses of action to take” (Pratkanis, Aronson 2003: 69).

Using language to convey information regarding events unfolding in the real world is, on every occasion, a process of coding information. At the same time it constitutes a process of creating reality, because every piece of information may be coded in numerous ways.

A special kind of language is that of propaganda, including political propaganda.

One of the first to analyse the role of mass media in propaganda communication was Harold D. Lasswell, who defined propaganda as the shaping of collective behaviours via the manipulation of signs, i.e. symbols, half-truths, and even lies, in order to achieve a goal which does not always have to be known to and understood by public opinion (Dobek-Ostrowska 2007).

The authors of the excellent book *Age of Propaganda*, Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, define propaganda similarly, ascribing the word ‘propaganda’ the meaning of ‘suggestion’ and ‘exerting influence’ through the manipulation of symbols and by taking advantage of the individual’s psychological mechanisms. “Propaganda involves the dextrous use of images, slogans and symbols that play on our prejudices and emotions; it is the communication of a point of view with the ultimate goal of having the recipient of the appeal come to ‘voluntarily’ accept this position as if it were his or her own” (Pratkanis, Aronson 2003: 17). A propagandist deliberately creates their desired and frequently false image of reality in order to achieve an intended effect.

The language of propaganda in political totalitarianism deserves attention in its own right. Totalitarian ideology is supported by specific language, its goal being to lend social phenomena names attributing them to the categories of good or bad.

Ideology typical of totalitarianism is displayed by the dogmatism coexisting with a system of demagogic promises of fulfilling the most pressing needs of the group to which the ideological message is addressed. Totalitarian ideology is dogmatic by definition, because regardless of the content conveyed it is always based, as emphasised particularly by Hannah Arendt,
on the opposition of the categories of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, while good is defined by concordance with the propagated ideology, and bad – any criticism of this ideology (Jakubowska-Branicka 2000).

When analysing individuals’ susceptibility to antidemocratic ideologies in *Authoritarian Personality*, Theodor Adorno characterises this via the criterion of ethnocentric slogans contained within these ideologies. He describes ethnocentrism as follows: 1) accentuating the rigid stratification of social groups in an ideology. The division in ethnocentric ideology is based on the individual’s psychological identification with the group felt to be their own, as opposed to the group perceived in categories of ‘outsider’. One may distinguish between one’s own and the outsider group on the basis of very diverse criteria, for example such as ethnic background or worldview preferences; 2) glorifying one’s own group, ascribing it positive traits as opposed to the negative stereotypes formulated in regard to outsider groups; 3) expressing in hierarchical categories the relations between one’s own and an outsider group, and granting one’s own group the right to dominate over the outsider group, which should submit to the former (Jakubowska 1999).

When discussing totalitarian ideologies, Allan Besançon introduced the concept of totalitarian gnosis. He states that Marxism-Leninism, or any other totalitarian manner of thinking, is neither a philosophy nor a classically understood ideology, but may be compared to Gnosticism, as gnosis – accompanying the later Judaism and emerging Christianity – possesses a structure of thought characteristic also of the totalitarian way of thinking. Gnostics possessed an awareness of the collapse of the old world and, as a consequence of this, the blending of the concepts of good and evil. The purpose of the world is the absolute dominion of good, while the way to become liberated from evil is gnosis, i.e. knowledge. This applies to the rights of the world and of man, their evolution, original state, fall, atonement and means enabling liberation from evil. Gnosis makes it possible for the individual to achieve a proper grasp of the situation, and as such – to choose good. In gnosis, all phenomena are explicable and understandable, as they are derived from a single matrix, from one model of ordering the world. Gnosis can only be absolute when it is dogmatic, as it has to eliminate any criticism (Besançon 1989).

A reflection of such a structure of thought is totalitarian language. It was analysed by Victor Klemperer, who posed the hypothesis that the strength of Nazi anti-Semitism and Nazi hatred derived from linguistic manipulation.

According to Francoise Thom (1990), names ascribing social phenomena to the categories of ‘good’ or ‘evil’ create a new linguistic structure, a newspeak, a wooden language. The author lists the main functions of total-
It is essential for totalitarian language: it enables the differentiation of one’s own from strangers, its non-usage or improper application becomes a means for discovering dissidents and enemies; it fulfils a persuasive function, the task of which is to convince the addressee of the rightness of the deliverer’s views; it is distortionary, i.e. constrains, blocks and drowns out the real information by twisting and distorting it. The most important function of newspeak is performance, i.e. the creation of a new supra-real reality. To recapitulate, the author lists seven attributes characteristic of newspeak: 1) it resorts to appraisal leading to double assessments of the same object depending on whether it belongs to the sender or their enemy world (e.g. a guerrilla-bandit); 2) it is pragmatic, meaning that it strives to be effectively influential, and ritual; 3) it is magical, meaning that words are not used to convey meaning, but to evoke feelings and passion; 4) it is arbitrary, meaning that it introduces or removes certain expressions or arbitrarily alters their meaning; 5) the meanings of words are undefined, fluid; 6) the fundamental concepts of totalitarian thinking are expressed in an idiomatic manner, untranslatable into natural languages; 7) the language is selective, simplified and lexically poor, and is inclined to use abbreviations, due to which it becomes accessible to only those in the know.

Of Polish works on the subject, analyses of totalitarianisms by Jerzy Bralczyk and Michał Głowinski (2003) are classics. Bralczyk describes and analyses the language of party-state political propaganda in the nineteen seventies, then in the eighties and nineties. He analyses precisely and comprehensively the speech of the Polish People’s Republic’s propaganda, revealing its goals and component parts, and characterises the linguistic shape of the world of propaganda, its ritual and incitive functions.

Głowinski laid out the overall concept of newspeak and reflections on the language of Marxism as an obstacle in social communication. In his book Nowomowa po polsku [Newspeak in Polish] (1991) he articulated in four points the basic qualities of newspeak. Firstly, the most significant procedure is the imposition of a prominent sign of value. This sign leads to transparent polarisations, cannot give rise to doubts, and ultimately brings about a decisive and unquestionable evaluation. Evaluations leading to dichotomous divisions become more important than the meaning of a word. This meaning becomes subordinate to the evaluation, meaning that it is not the original meaning of the word that is important, but what qualifiers are tied to it (good / bad, etc.). Secondly, newspeak constitutes a synthesis of pragmatic and ritual components. The pragmatism of newspeak, desirable due to its goal of strong and direct influence, is limited by its ritual character, i.e. a certain kind of faithfulness towards oneself and one’s own traditions, the
assumption that the boundaries of dependable language cannot be violated regardless of the circumstances. Thus the ritual character is the realisation of the assumption that in certain situations one can only talk in a particular manner. Thirdly, in newspeak a huge role is played by the element of magicalness. Words do not so much describe reality as create it. What has been expressed authoritatively becomes real. From a formal point of view, these are declarative comments; the magicalness is talking about desired states in such a manner as if they were actual states (e.g. youth always with the party). Magic also has a negative side, with the non-usage of a word condemning to non-existence the thing this word signifies. Fourthly, arbitrary decisions play a much greater role in newspeak than in other social styles. Words, formulae and sanctified expressions may, by a one-off decision, be removed from or restored to official propaganda overnight. According to Głowiński, the most important quality of newspeak is the single-valued-ness mentioned in first place, the remaining rules constituting its derivatives. Newspeak has universal qualities, meaning that it takes command of all levels of language: from intonation to the rules behind constructing a statement, from phonetics to rhetoric – and for this reason the author defines newspeak as a quasi-language. He distinguishes three fundamental varieties of newspeak: persuasive-propaganda, bureaucratic, and kitsch-carnivalesque.

It turns out that the language of propaganda – treated as specific only to totalitarianisms – is also used in contemporary democratic systems, rendering invaluable service to political propaganda. Researchers of the language of totalitarianisms call such language wooden language or newspeak, as well as doublespeak. Double because each word is ascribed – apart from let’s say its dictionary meaning – a plus or minus sign.

William Lutz collected an entire volume of such definitions, and every year awards a prize for the most deceptive usage of language by a public person. Newt Gringrich drew up an official note entitled: ‘Language: the key mechanism of control’, which presents two lists of words that in his opinion make it possible to spice up any speech: “optimistic, with a positive impact” – these are such words as, for example, “inspiration, choice, initiative, eliminating holidays in prison”, and contrasting words: “rotting, liberal, them/their, radical, subservient to the trade unions, betray” (Pratkanis, Aronson 2003: 68).

According to Pratkanis and Aronson, politicians frequently interpret contemporary social problems by using doublespeak: ‘cold war’, ‘domination theory’, ‘crawling communism’ or ‘new world order’. Each of these defines a situation in a manner desired by the sender of the message, such as to steer social response in the direction desired by the politician. In The Age of Propa-
they discuss four main techniques of exerting a propaganda influence with the aid of language. These techniques are: preliminary persuasion, i.e. striving to define reality in such a way that the addressee of the message accepts the sender’s definition of the situation; building up the message sender’s credibility; the way in which the message is conveyed; and appealing to emotions. In their opinion, the utilisation of these techniques in persuasion and propaganda allows the creation of ‘world images’ in which the individual must live; must, because there is no possibility of confronting them with reality.

Of the sociotechnical strategies described, two deserve special attention as their effect seems particularly dangerous for the functioning of a democratic society. These are granfalloon tactics and the mechanism of dehumanisation.

The so-called granfalloon tactics are the tactics of relating to group pride. Such tactics were used by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address. When delivering his speech to listeners gathered at the cemetery of soldiers killed in the fratricidal battle of North against South, he defined the problem in such a way that he managed to unite all those gathered, while the address itself went down in history, and is treated as a significant impulse for the establishment of the United States of America. Lincoln constructed an inclusive granfalloon, arousing in all those gathered a sense of pride in being Americans, regardless of the differences dividing them. The principle of building an inclusive granfalloon consists in finding the ‘common denominator’ for the largest possible number of individuals.

The opposite to the inclusive granfalloon is the exclusive granfalloon, appealing to the proclamation of a superiority of ‘us’ over ‘them’. This sense of superiority is reinforced by the ridiculing and stigmatising of the ‘others’. When building exclusive granfalloons, we split the world into us and them. The findings of psychological research into this issue are extremely interesting, and indicate that respondents display a fondness for those marked with the same label as themselves, even if this is a totally senseless label, devised purely for the research, for example date of birth. Researchers believe that a granfalloon functions in this manner because two fundamental psychological processes occur. Firstly, the knowledge that ‘I’m part of the group’ serves to divide the world and helps understand it, in a manner very similar to that in which words and definitions categorise the phenomena around us. “Differences between groups are exaggerated, whereas similarities among members of the granfalloon are emphasised in the secure knowledge that ‘this is what our type does’” (Pratkanis, Aronson 2003: 190). Secondly, social groups are a source of pride and sense of one’s own value. Exaggerating the differences between groups often leads to the dehumanisation of the outsider group, whose members are represented in our minds by simple and often offensive definitions and labels, such as Chinky, nigger, or Jew, etc.
The mechanism of dehumanisation is one of the most fascinating yet simultaneously terrifying in its effectiveness and simplicity. It is utilised to ‘facilitate’ an individual’s psychologically unrebuked annihilation of representatives of some other group. The secret lies in presentation of the ‘enemy’ as a sub-human being, in belittling their humanness and magnifying their guilt. Pratkanis and Aronson are of the opinion that this dehumanisation mechanism is used in every war, contemporary as well, as it eliminates the dissonance that might arise as a consequence of our cruelty towards the enemy. Contemporary ethnic cleansing, for example in former Yugoslavia, is an example of the application of the dehumanising mechanism. Another good example of the application of this strategy would seem to be the famous term used by George W. Bush in his speech following the attacks on the WTC, the ‘axis of evil’, referring to countries favouring (in his opinion) terrorists.

The granfalloon tactics and related mechanism of dehumanisation are good examples substantiating the rightness of the hypothesis regarding the power of the influence language has on the shape of social reality. Utilisation of this technique de facto sets the borders and shape of social groups, labelling some as friendly, others – as hostile. In this sense language is a magical tool of interpreting and at the same time creating reality. The very selection of criteria via which we describe the world is a creation of that world, and via description we ascribe the described objects to defined social groups. We can talk about Roman Polański as an ‘outstanding director’, but may also say ‘that old man’ or ‘immoral rapist, paedophile’.

A special variety of doublespeak is the rhetoric of hatred, the opposite of the rhetoric of empathy. The rhetoric of hatred was analysed and described by Michał Głowiński in his book Nowomowa i ciągi dalsze. Szkice dawne i nowe [Newspeak (cont.). Sketches old and new] (2009). When referring to analysis of the contemporary political discourse in Poland, particularly that of selected political groups, he distinguished six fundamental attributes demarcating its essence and defining how it functions.

This is the rhetoric of absolute truths, of truths always being on our side, of us inarguably being entitled to them. There is no room here for any reaching of agreements with an opponent, for understanding their truth. Fully absolutist opposites are in force here, the world is black-and-white, there are no in-between forms. This is the rhetoric of exclusive and absolute truths, excluding any discussion whatsoever, even with sympathisers of the opposition.

The rhetoric of hatred does not address those who have become its target; they cannot be partners, because any persuasion here is beyond the options at hand. They are talked about, they are accused, hatred towards them is aroused. One addresses those one considers one’s own, or believes to be potentially one’s
own. Its goal is the moral and sometimes also the physical annihilation of those against whom one turns; it is meant to destroy, discredit, humiliate them.

Dichotomous divisions are an inalienable element of the rhetoric of hatred. They embrace everything within this rhetoric, are universal in character, and express themselves in the opposition of US and THEM. Dichotomous divisions are directly connected to axiology. What lies on our side constitutes an absolute value, while what is to be found on the other side is devoid of any value, constitutes a universe of anti-value. Dichotomous divisions are treated within this rhetoric as coming from above, as obvious. Nobody and nothing is able to question the fundamental line of division. The truth is on our side, and we represent it.

Dichotomous divisions are linked to viewing the world via conspiracy theories. Those on the other side of the fundamental borderline are organising themselves against us, acting in all possible ways to our detriment, and they want to take away what’s ours. Everything we dislike is a conspiracy, anybody who does anything at all we disapprove of is a conspirator.

In regard to individuals or groups classified in the ‘them’ category, valuation is entirely unambiguous and homogenous. Everything one can say about them has to testify against them, discredit them. Negative labels become the fundamental category. They may be ideological or political in character, may refer to an individual biography, to everything else. Evaluations are imposed arbitrarily, texts representing the rhetoric of hatred are dominated by adjectives and easily deciphered periphrasis. Their unmasking and accusatory character simply cannot evoke any doubts in the addressee.

The narrator is moulded as one expressing ultimate and unarguable truths, formulating their statements in an extremely apodictic manner, delivering as if their judgments held binding force and were unquestionable. Legitimisation of the meaning of the narrator is to be found not in the narrator but in the ideology the narrator represents, in the rightness of what the narrator says.

Generalisations constitute the next attribute of the rhetoric of hatred. This attribute is mentioned by Głowiński as typical of the contemporary anti-Semitic discourse. Specific individuals do not appear in it, it is a consistently subject-free world, without specific people, featuring only representatives of the two sides: on our banks the noble, on the opposite – the bad, the vile, the threatening. A consequence of this type of generalisation is the application of the rule of collective responsibility. Głowiński discusses this mechanism by using what he himself terms a caricatural example: if a Mr Epsztain were to punch a certain Mr Dąbrowski in the face in a pub or by a

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4 This feature is discussed by M. Głowiński in the paper: *Zawsze to samo [Always the same]* (2004).
kiosk selling beer, this is no ordinary dispute between two tipsy men; it is rather the case that a Jew attacked a Pole, or to put it even more expressively – Jews attacked Poland.

It would seem that the rhetoric of hatred described by Głowiński could be defined – referring to Adorno’s theory – as the language of ethnocentrism. If so, the question that arises is how to define language in opposition to the rhetoric of hatred, a non-ethnocentric language. I believe an appropriate definition would be democratic language. Democratic in the sense of treating all people (and thereby social groups) as equal in their rights and freedoms, as equal subjects of the law regardless of the criteria differentiating them.

According to Głowiński – and this is something hard not to agree with – the rhetoric of hatred plays an enormous role in today’s social life, ruling out dialogue, reaching an agreement, or any consensus whatsoever. In addition, and this is something that deserves particular attention, what has become an essential figure of such rhetoric is – as in the times of totalitarianisms – an enemy.5

It is hard to agree with the claim that the language of hatred is also used by those who protest against this language. The definition of the language of hatred understood as ethnocentric language embraces contempt towards groups that may be set apart using various criteria capable of serving as a basis for social discrimination, starting from criteria that are stricte ethnic and ending with preferences in worldviews and morals. However, treating the fact of using the language of hatred as such a criterion is demagogy, and leads to the conclusion that defence against violence is violence qualitatively identical to that used by the aggressor.

In referring to the theories quoted here, I adopted the assumption that language lends order to and explains reality through symbolic coding. A sign is an indicator of meaning, while language may be treated as a system of signs that communicate meanings, and each fragment of language may be defined as a symbol.

But what kind of relationship is there, and does one exist at all, between information conveyed using language and actions taken by an individual?

One may assume on the grounds of symbolic interactionism theory that the assumption regarding the possibility of such a relationship existing is sound.

Social interaction is understood as the process of individuals communicating via the agency of symbols. The occurrence of symbolic interaction is

5 Discussion of the objective enemy figure in: Jakubowska-Branicka (2008).
the emergence of social relations in the full sense of the word. One of the dimensions of this process is the formation of language, thanks to which participants in social action not only become aware of meanings, but also communicate them. Taking Dewey’s example, Mead recognised that a characteristic attribute of the human intellect is the ability to, firstly, apply symbols in order to mark objects in the environment; secondly – to analyse alternative lines of action addressing these objects; and thirdly – to restrain inappropriate lines of action and choose the appropriate direction of action. Mead called this process of intellectual application of symbols or language a dress rehearsal in the imagination. He treated the existence and duration of society, or interaction within organised groups, as something dependent on this ability people have to carry out a dress rehearsal in their imagination, testing their line of action addressed to others, and thereby enabling the choice of behaviour that could enable interaction (Turner 2006: 401).

If this point of view is adopted, then one may assume with a high degree of probability that these dress rehearsals in the imagination, testing out lines of action, will be carried over into individuals’ behaviour. In this sense, the manner in which actual events are coded may translate into individuals’ action, and a media fact understood as a creation of reality – into a social fact.

The individual, in the course of their life, draws information from a variety of sources, frequently rivalling one another. Sources of information may be members of various social groups of which the individual is a member; persons belonging to other social groups, even in opposition; and persons playing various social roles in the individual’s surroundings, of lesser or greater significance. There would, however, seem to be no doubt that in the times of postmodernism the media constitute the main source of information. And so if, as I have assumed, we can attribute verbal information (as only such is the subject of my considerations) with such relevant significance for the process of shaping an individual’s subjective reality and this person’s decision-taking, then a key problem becomes the way in which interpersonal communication takes place, and according to what models.

The debate continues on whether the mass media are a tool of influence of unlimited power, or whether there are also factors that in a significant way condition the effectiveness of their influence. If we accept that the mass media are a tool of unlimited power, we then treat the recipient of what is communicated as only a passive addressee of the signals conveyed. Nowa-

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6 I refer to selected models taking into account the issues most relevant to the considerations presented in this paper.
days, though, the majority of theoreticians and researchers lean towards the second of the options mentioned above.

Putting it in the most general of terms, we can split the categories that might condition the influence of the information communicated into two groups. The first comprises factors linked to the psyche of the individual and how they perceive reality, and the second – social circumstances.

While discussing the first group of factors, let’s remain with the problem of the process of symbolic coding and decoding of information.

One of the models of the process of communicating is the experience community. The concept of ‘experience community’, i.e. of attitudes, ideas and symbols shared by the sender and the recipient and conditioning the effectiveness of communicating, was introduced in 1954 by Wilbur Schramm (Goban-Klas 2005; Dobek-Ostrowska 2007).

In the theory of communicating, the interactive approach is tied to symbolic interactionism and Erving Goffman’s concept of dramaturgy. According to this, the process of communicating is not restricted to the usage of symbols, meaning signs and codes, but is above all an intersubjective process conditioned by the experiences and views of every participant. The interactive approach allows for a confrontation of the ‘events’ talked about by political actors with the goal of consolidating collective identity, leading in consequence to presentation of the actors themselves (Dobek-Ostrowska 2007).

Schramm distinguished three main phases of creating and receiving a message: coding, i.e. translating thoughts into an explicit message; interpretation, i.e. defining the code used; and decoding, the interpretation of the thought contained in the message.

For Schramm, communicating meant an individual sharing their experiences and participating in a certain community with other individuals. In his opinion, the most important aspect of the communicating process is synchronisation of the source (the sender) with the addressee (the recipient). A community of ideas, knowledge and attitudes between the participants in the process remains the fundamental condition for the effectiveness of communicating. The sender and recipient should use the same code and operate with the same symbols, and only then will the coding, interpretation and decoding proceed in an undisturbed manner, and the information conveyed by the sender will be received in keeping with the latter’s intention.

Let us recall that Berger and Luckmann, in considering the process of objectification of subjective processes, also emphasise the meaning of the individual’s awareness, that between ‘his/her’ meanings and ‘their’ meanings there exists an unceasing correspondence in this world, that they share
a common sense in which it is real. Only then does the reality of the every-
day present itself as an intersubjective world, common to all individuals.

However, one must take into account that the assumption of a common
awareness of symbolic codes may prove unwarranted, and thereby the pro-
cess of communicating may be disrupted. It would seem justified to adopt
the hypothesis that different social groups, even within the same society,
may use different symbolic codes.

The abundance of theoretical depictions of the problem in question means
that there is no unambiguous definition of mutual relations between sign,
meaning and symbol. A sign is sometimes identified with meaning, and that
in turn with a symbol.

For the purpose of this paper, I shall assume that a sign is the smallest
element of which every message is constructed. Every sign is connected to a
meaning, and this meaning may vary depending on the ‘knowledge’ of the
recipient of the message. A sign plus the meaning ascribed to this sign by the
recipient constitute a symbol of some kind of ‘being’, real or conceptual.
Recipients may assign various meanings to the same sign, and thereby vari-
ous symbols.

Let us consider the problem using the swastika sign as an example. In
Sanskrit, this sign signifies wellbeing and good luck, while in India, in Cen-
tral Asia, but also in Europe it used to symbolise good fortune and auspi-
ciousness. The moment of this sign’s appropriation by Hitler saw a change
in our knowledge of the sign; in this context, it signified the Nazi party and
nationalism, thereby becoming the symbol of Nazism, the Holocaust and
war. The perturbations related to the decoding of the meaning of the swas-
tika are still distinctly evident on various occasions. For example this sign is
present on the memorial stone placed by friends at the site of the death of
Mieczysław Karłowicz, a composer who died beneath an avalanche in the
Tatra mountains in 1909. On this stone, beneath the inscription, they placed
what had then long been a widespread ‘unexpected cross’ in the region, the
swastika – Karłowicz’s favourite sign for luck. Therefore, since for the ma-
majority today the swastika explicitly symbolises Nazism, should it be left on
the commemorative stone or should it be removed, so that those not in the
know would not treat Karłowicz’s stone as a Nazi grave?

Therefore, in order to retain the correct process of communication, the
fundamental condition of knowledge regarding a sign’s meaning must be
fulfilled.

Yet fulfilling this condition does not guarantee a correct communication
process. Decoding the meaning of a sign in keeping with the will of the
sender of the message, using the example of the swastika as a sign for the
Nazi party, does not end the process of communication. Nazism may be perceived as patriotism or treason, and so we are dealing with a process of double symbolic coding. If the meaning of a sign, and thereby the symbol related to it, is determined, it may be appraised positively or negatively by the recipient, which also seriously upsets the process of communication. If I convey a message regarding country A as a liberal country, in the sense of respecting human rights, and treating this definition as positive for this country, I must bear in mind that a recipient, even if they attach the same meaning to the word liberalism, does not by any means have to be an enthusiast of philosophy and the practice of human rights.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above considerations is clear-cut. The sender of a message, when preparing the information, should possess the knowledge of the meanings assigned to the signs by the recipients of this message. What is more, they should also have the knowledge of where the symbols conveyed lie in the symbolic order of each of the recipients.

Schramm’s model of the community of experience has in our times been extended, and the name it is known under is the reception model (Goban-Klas 2007). The creators of this model emphasise the distinctness in the interpretations of the same message by multiple recipients. They do not receive the actual message as it was delivered or expressed. The model of coding and decoding is connected to analysis of reception, and derives from semiotics, analysis of discourse and critical theory, while constituting a derivative of the so-called alternative paradigm. The essence of the reception model is the positioning of the attribution and construction of meaning in the actual recipient. Semiology assumes that a meaningful message is constructed of signs having their own denotations and connotations, depending on the choice of the coder (sender and recipient). As such, media messages are by their very nature open and polysemous. Communicators code messages in line with ideological and institutional goals, but recipients are not obliged to receive them just as they are sent, and may resist the sender’s influences via oppositional interpretation, in keeping with their own stances.

The social psychologist Kurt Lewin was one of the first to take social variables, conditioning how a message is received, into account, by introducing the concept of the flow of news into the analysis of the communicating process (Goban-Klas 2007). He recognised that in all social situations, the flow of information is always uneven and incomplete, regulated by an entire range of obstacles. He called these barriers gates, which are controlled by individuals or institutions fulfilling the roles of gatekeepers, letting through some bits of information while holding back others. The fundamental question regarding information flow relates to the functioning of the gatekeep-
ers, to what they let through and what they withhold, and in what manner they stimulate information flow.

Katz and Lazarsfeld (Goban-Klas 2007) put forward the hypothesis of a two-stage information flow, proclaiming that content disseminated by the mass media does not always reach the mass public directly, but also via the mediation of a particular category of recipients, described as public opinion leaders. It is they who screen the information, creating a new quality.

The Rileys’ sociological model takes account of the influence that the small social group an individual belongs to, or would like to belong to, has on their attitudes and observations (Goban-Klas 2007). Original groups, groups of positive and negative reference, shape the individual’s social personality, and thus the way in which they receive information conveyed by the sender. Social psychology has formulated a number of statements connected to this issue, while the authors of successive models of the process of communicating are enhancing them with this knowledge.

Analysis of selected models of the process of communicating provides the grounds for stating that communicating is an extremely complex process, and the manner in which information is received by the recipient may be far removed from the sender’s intentions, due to the decoding being inconsistent with the sender’s goals, the influence of one’s social environment, groups of reference, and finally the attitudes, mentality, and structure of positive and negative figures of authority in the individual’s consciousness.

A separate question, important for the deliberations presented here, is that of the variables determining the individual’s choice of source of information. What does the individual’s choice of the most credible and trustworthy source of information, from one of the rival media of mass communication, or a person of significance in the group they belong to or a group of reference, depend upon? What factors decide who, in this individual’s opinion, will be a positive authority, and who a negative one? What kind of messages will have content that seems attractive to this person, corresponding to their vision of the world? Will it be the picture of reality created with the language of hatred or the language of love?

The sociology of knowledge and social psychology describe a number of detailed mechanisms behind getting to know the world. It is accepted that every person is a researcher of the reality they live in, meaning they form theories of this reality, and these theories – as forms of representing the world – serve the interpretation of oneself, other individuals, social interactions and the surrounding reality. These theories – schemata – determine the aspects of reality the individual’s attention focuses on and how these aspects are interpreted. A schema is simultaneously a model and a tool of cognition.
Therefore the individual, in creating and defining the reality in which they exist, is simultaneously choosing the apparatus for examining this reality. When choosing the source of information, the model for getting to know this reality is chosen at the same time, which in turn determines the choice of source of information.

Thus we are dealing with a ‘vicious circle’, the action of which is very difficult to interrupt. And it is all the more difficult as of the many statements regarding the patterns governing the behaviour of individuals, a rule given by social psychology as one of the more important is that saying that most people, from the information surrounding them, choose that allowing them to uphold their convictions held to date, without risking the deconstruction of the identity they have achieved.

Summary

In postmodernist times there are numerous senders of messages, of information regarding reality, functioning simultaneously. They convey messages differing in content, frequently contradicting one another. Some of these messages are conveyed using doublespeak: either in the language of hatred (the language of ethnocentrism) or in language we might call democratic, non-ethnocentric. In order to be conveyed, every piece of information regarding reality must undergo the process of symbolic coding.

The individual, the message’s recipient, chooses their source of information on reality from messages functioning in parallel. This choice depends on both personality-related and social variables. The choice of source of knowledge about reality de facto determines the theories and schemata the individual uses, which in turn determines subsequent decisions when choosing the source of information. In addition the interpretation of every message is determined by the symbolic code the individual uses.

Are we therefore living in the same or a variety of realities? Can society think as a set of individuals, each of whom is immersed in a separate reality? Does the common shape of reality have to be negotiated via social discourse to enable a democratic consensus? The considerations presented above suggest the answer is in the affirmative.

It would be hard to overestimate the significance of this answer for the shape of contemporary liberal democracy. A crisis in democracy is a matter every country faces. The problem of democracy is the definition of the surrounding reality adopted by its participants and the related expectations towards political behaviour rather than the attributes of the authorities currently in office. It is the image of reality recognised by the individual as true
that ultimately determines whether this individual is prepared to support and achieve a democratic system of values, and hold a dialogue with representatives of other social groups regarding the shape of democratic rules enabling peaceful coexistence.

In this sense the world created with the aid of the language of hatred is destructive for democratic existence. The situation in which such language is used by the authorities is particularly dangerous, leading to a decline in the level of social trust and shattering the social capital constituting one of the more important conditions for the efficient functioning of a democracy. The mentality of individuals determining the choice of the picture of reality created by this language is also destructive for the democratic order. It was not without reason that Erich Fromm, in commencing his deliberations laid out in *Escape from Freedom* (1997: 23), quoted a truth formulated by John Dewey: “The serious threat to our democracy is not the existence of foreign totalitarian states. It is the existence within our own personal attitudes and within our own institutions of conditions similar to those which have given a victory to external authority, discipline, uniformity and dependence upon The Leader in foreign countries. The battlefield is also accordingly here – within ourselves and our institutions.”

**References**

Thom F. 1990, Drewniany język, CDN, Warsaw.
Sociological reflection on politics seems partly unanimous only about one issue: that politics have escaped the influence of social actors, including those representing the state, and have become a field of effect of not always clear macro-processes, ruled by chance or by contingencies (Luhmann). The elimination of individuals and rational discourse from the sphere of political agency is nonetheless accompanied by a rhetoric of their agency role, the influence of their voice and opinions on key political issues. The efforts to expose and explain this phenomenon invoke different phraseologies, from the diagnosis that the ‘power elite’ manipulates the masses, unnoticeably and consistently taking over legislative power at the same time (Mills); through various modifications of politics becoming independent and of their auto-creativity (Lash and Urry); or their auto-poiesis (Luhmann); institutional reflectiveness and expert systems (Giddens); to the concept of ‘seduction’ (Baudrillard) – a gentle but ruthlessly consistent strategy of seduction which the masses succumb to without losing the (illusory) sense of subjectivity.

The answer to these processes given ‘in the name of the subject’ may be a slip of subjective activity into the sphere of sub-politics (Beck). It is an activity which is non-instrumental, non-executive and indescribable in terminology, far from purposive rationality (e.g. a strike or traffic jam), but which nonetheless once again brings in the subject to social institutions ‘abandoned’ by politics. Another answer offered by sociology is locating subjectivity, pushed out of social communication, in ‘new communities’ (Giddens) created around different modes of information use. As a consequence of these processes political communication transforms from a domain of discourse (which has changed its social location) to a domain of mimesis: depictions using associations and affective models of reaction.

In light of the indicated transformations the role of the sociological theory of politics is changing as well. By custom it has established itself as the voice speaking in the interest of the rational subject. Its aim is to identify and strengthen the voices of resistance against political mimesis. Moreover, its aim is to reinforce the desire to find space in which the form of the rational subject would regain its raison d’être.

One of the good traditions of sociology is the consistent persistence with the attitude of emancipation. I do not have in mind here the term as under-
stood in the works of Habermas, whose rationalism, though not isolated in sociological theory, is not widespread either. I am thinking rather of an approach requiring any analyses of broader phenomena and processes to end with the question about what place in them the human individual occupies, with this individual’s motivations, customs, expectations, need for a sense of safety and agency, the individual frequently inconsistent, capricious, emotional, uninformed and undecided. It is increasingly rare for contemporary sociologies to model the ‘homunculus’, criticised with such passion by Schutz (1984: 185-186), opting instead for richer models, more descriptive than analytical.

The cultural turn in sociological theory has brought with it a sensitisation towards the issues of communication, information, and ways of reacting and interpreting, as used by a subject in their activities. Attempts have also been made to construct a conceptual schema that would enable the establishing of certain rules in the realm of results of subjective interpretations on a macro scale (which is tied, no more no less, to subsequent strivings to build a theoretical bridge between the poles of macro- and micro-scale left behind by classical sociology).

Sociological reflection regarding politics gives an impression of being relatively concordant in practically only one issue: that politics has totally escaped the influence of social actors, including those of the state, and has become a field of influence for macro-processes that are not always obvious, their course governed by randomness or, to put it differently, by contingencies (as defined by Luhmann). The alienation of the individual actor is thereby becoming absolute; but the elimination of the individual from the area of political agency is accompanied by the rhetoric of their causative role, the impact of the individual’s voice and opinions on important political issues. Attempts at exposing and explaining this phenomenon resort to diverse phraseology, from diagnosis of manipulation of the masses by the ‘power elite’, which is discretely but steadily taking over the prerogative of the legislature (Mills), via diverse variants of politics becoming independent and being self-creative (Lash and Urry) or its ‘autopoiesis’ (Luhmann), institutional reflectivity (Giddens) or risk management (Beck), to the concept of ‘seduction’ (Baudrillard) – a mild but ruthlessly consistent strategy of temptation to which the masses succumb without losing their sense of subjectivity.

Let’s take a brief look at these concepts. Charles Wright Mills, in his *The Power Elite* (1961), portrays political life as dominated in all key issues by advocacy groups concluding tactical agreements between one another and effectively making use of existing formal institutions, such as Congress or government, for their own goals. These goals, frequently of a supranational scope, are achieved through legal lobbying, the manipulation of public opinion and informational policy, and have no connection (unless accidental)
with the interests articulated by citizens as part of their democratic participation. The latter only find political representation at their constituency scale; a congressman drawn from a specific constituency represents this constituency’s local interests and takes part in subtle horse trading with other congressmen in the same situation for at least their partial execution by the legislature (pp. 330-334). In issues reaching beyond a local level, politicians surrender the field to the executive power as the only one capable of accumulating support around an issue not narrow in its significance. The representatives of this power usually hail from one of the ‘cliques in the womb of bureaucratic institutions of the administration’ (p. 338) and carry out lobbying work on behalf of their employers. This work takes place in cabinets and behind the scenes, while for the requirements of the official media a politician must ‘invent topics’ (p. 337) to show their involvement in domestic issues, about which as a matter of fact they cannot actually speak.

Despite the false appearances of a conspiracy theory that emerge from a brief presentation, Mills’ analysis is not a theory of such a nature. He believes the causes behind the field being laid open to the backstage operations of advocacy groups are to be found in the transformations in the structure of American society. The Great Depression of the thirties ultimately eliminated the so-called old middle class (of relatively independent entrepreneurs sharing a Protestant ethos of work and accumulation) from this society, positioning ‘white collars’ in its place – hired qualified employees rendering professional services for their clients. The absence of the core around which social structure had emerged in the United States, and which possessed proportional representation in the legislature, meant that the institutions meant to reformulate the diversity of conflicting interests into binding legislation fell into an ‘organisational deadlock’ (p. 336), which could only be broken by an external impulse. The normative inconsistency of the situation, when – simplifying – the ‘government dictates laws to Congress’, requires the manipulation of information on a mass scale. According to Mills, this is precisely what is happening in the politics of the United States, where the former society, participating, politically aware and building its country, has been replaced by the formation of a ‘political elite’, functioning backstage, and a mass public for whose use politicians prepare a political spectacle. Information important in the taking of decisions is obviously not good material for such a show, and as such it remains in the hands of the true decision-takers.

Mills reveals a world of politics of an imperial state seriously embroiled in an order of international politics and economic domination; one could interpret his analyses as the prediction of further processes in the internationalisation of politics, which in time also embraced countries with a less
prominent role in the creation of a supranational economic and political agreement. His critical research from the nineteen fifties already reveals the processes coming to light once again today in relation to the numerous faces of globalisation, including the draining of vital information from local political life (on a nation-state scale) and the resultant alienation of the individual subject. The voter has no cause to feel discomfort, as politicians are seeing to the voters’ need for a sense of subjectivity, organising attractive shows in which they are assured of their key role in taking politically important decisions. Ironic, yet consonant with the premises of the sociology of politics some 40 or 50 years younger...

Niklas Luhmann carries out his own analyses at a higher level of abstraction, using the terminology of systems theory. For this author, the domain of political life is an arrangement of numerous systems of communication of a high degree of closure to reciprocal influence (autopoiesis). Operating its own code and selecting content upon ‘entry’, the system of political communication simplifies the problems raised – out of systemic necessity – and reduces them to binary models. Officially, in keeping with the traditional political science model, “parliament makes the laws […]. The executive carries out the programs decided politically, while the public obeys the decisions and elects the parliament” (Luhmann 1994: 55). However, such a process automatically sets the next one in motion, one heading in the opposite direction: “The administration drafted the bills for politics […]. Politics, with the help of its party organizations, suggested to the public what it should vote for and why. And the public exercised its influence on the administration through various channels, like interest groups and emotional appeals” (p. 55).

In the neutral language of systems theory, Luhmann reveals this same process, which in the concepts of machination and lobbies was described by Mills – the process in which political institutions of democratic countries take the initiative and define the topics, the style and the hierarchy of issues tackled by politics, assigning others the role of the ‘public’. In such a perspective, ‘depoliticization’ treated as a pathology of the development of democracy becomes a bad definition of the problem; it does not consist in an unattainable, as Luhmann defines it, ‘activation’, but in the elaboration of a sufficiently adequate theory of society to enable analysis of real means by which systems of political communication close the circuits of their own self-reference (p. 74). Focusing theory on three planes, on public opinion, politicians and legislation, is insufficient for this goal. ‘Compensatory institutions’ that help “mediate the circularity of self-reference” (pp. 74-75) become a significant field of operations. In other words we should not so much worry about official politics losing its ability of involving citizens as focus on
investigating by what means this involvement – invisible to politics – is expressed. In other words: where can one find those topics that official politics loses sight of?

The hermeneutics of suspicion and unmasking characteristic of the normative concepts of ‘depolitization’ therefore clash with a different perspective: the hermeneutics of recovery (Beck, Giddens, Lash 2009: 218). Numerous researchers are of the opinion that official political institutions are succumbing to far-reaching erosion, and as Ulrich Beck puts it, ‘sub-politics’ is creeping in in their place, setting in motion many areas of society abandoned by the retreating politics (p. 32). Political science’s depictions of political life do not have the tools to grasp these processes of (sub)political opening up and self-organisation taking place beyond formal political institutions linked to the state. It is thanks to them, declares Beck triumphantly, that the “individual subject is returning to social institutions” (p. 32); however, this is a return in new contexts: one of associations, consumer movements, protests and happenings, and in numerous other forms in which causative action is becoming the privilege and right of the active individual, despite information and decision centres shifting away from the individual’s possible influence. These methods are pressure, emphasis, creating situations blocking routine collective action (strikes, traffic jams); information and decisions are largely shifting into the regions of informal communication. All political transparency is vanishing, the clear political order described by political science is vanishing, and its place is being taken by a non-instrumental, non-executive and conceptually indefinable activity far-removed from purposive rationality (p. 38). In the concepts of sub-politics thus understood, the subject regains agency in collective action, but this occurs at the cost of ‘relative paralysis’ resulting from the clash of increasingly even “different groups and levels of the process of decision-taking and participation” (p. 40). The cost of enabling sub-politics and the conflictive relationship between its subjects and the subjects of politics turns out – according to Beck’s analyses – to be a rejection of traditional understandings of the political as the domain of purposive and rational activity coordinating the defining and achieving of collective goals. ‘Relative paralysis’ is the cost of sub-political processes, yet at the same time a condition for the politically alienated individual subject to be able to recover their individual political agency, albeit now at a different level.

Anthony Giddens’ concept of institutional reflectivity (2002: 316) remains consistent with the depictions presented above. Understood as the routine inclusion of new knowledge into existing contexts of activities, reflectivity of this kind ascribes agency to those experts responsible for the
emergence of ever newer narratives. In such terminological *decorum*, the political is presented as the domain of institutional reflectivity, of specialised expert languages whose credibility is based on the (fragile?) foundation of ‘trust’. Giddens’ depiction seems somewhat broader than Beck’s, since sub-politics as well cannot be attributed full resistance to expert influences. Nevertheless, it is not totally saturated with institutional reflectivity. The degree of institutionalisation varies, for example the relatively highly institutionalised ecological movement, positioning itself ever more distinctly in political space, compared to the spontaneous gathering of people expressing solidarity in mourning or outrage towards particularly moving events (such as ‘marches against violence’). Individual subjectivity, displaced from politics as such by processes of communication, is entering new forms of community allowing for a narrative in categories of ‘us’. These are not the former communities based on analogies of location in the social manner of production, but based on “ways of using information” (Beck, Giddens, Lash 2009: 219), i.e. by following Gidden’s thinking, on narratives in which their members express their experience under the influence of selected know-how. The selection of content of such knowledge, which incidentally is inevitable in an informational environment replete with contradictions and links between the information and the interests of numerous groups and circles determining the shape of the narrative created, simultaneously creates what could be described roughly and metaphorically as the temporary identity of such communities.

This brief and rather cursory review brings to light two fundamental topics of the sociological theory of politics. The first is the subject of political communication – organised in terms of language, in a discursive form; this is the domain of narrative, of reflectivity. This is elaborated on in numerous studies into the rhetoric of political communication, the monitoring of ‘disturbances’ in such communication (Habermas), persuasive strategies and linguistic means of manipulation, rebellion and resistance. Paul Chilton and Christina Schaeffer describe the obtrusive obviousness of the linguistic character of politics as follows: “It is surely the case that politics cannot be conducted without language, and it is probably the case that the use of language in the constitution of social groups leads to what we call ‘politics’ in a broad sense” (Chilton, Schaeffer 1997: 206). This is currently developing in the direction of diagnosis of the transformation of political communication from the domain of discourse into the mimetic domain – of representations and usage of associations, etc. (Beck, Giddens and Lash 2009).

The second subject is the search for ‘sources’ of power (whatever this may be). Such a concept aims to determine the level of integration of social
events, which may be ascribed the capability of initiating causal relations, the ultimate consequence of which is local national politics. In this trend, the absence of autonomy for one’s own domestic politics is treated as obvious, the causative centres perceived on a trans-national level. Ulrich Beck even calls for the shattering of nation-state imagination in the sociological thinking of politics, in order to create space for the development of cosmopolitan imagination, meant to breathe new life into the decaying and increasingly inadequate sociological theory (Beck 2005: 344-355). According to this author, the sociology of global processes is supposed to be the most sensible intellectual response of the social sciences to the changing political reality of today’s world.

These topics are elaborated in relative isolation, refer to different sources and cause analyses to be placed on different levels: only thanks to such bridging concepts as ‘institutional reflectivity’ can the micro-analyses of political communication meet (at least rhetorically) with the macro-analyses of the dynamics in decision processes in world politics. There is, however, one more point of contact – not on an intellectual plane, but in the empirical world in which they ‘become’ forms of social life investigated later. This is the point where the individual social actor stands by the ballot box and has to choose between alternative elements, defined beforehand without their participation. They may possibly opt not to take part in the official elections and (also possibly) get involved in activities at a sub-politics level, which in itself is also a political choice.

The political practice of carrying out formal and informal procedures, resulting in the emergence of specific lists of electoral candidates, is – from the point of view of such a voter – full of cognitive gaps filled with generalised knowledge of the plans and programs represented by party candidates. This knowledge usually derives from pre-election political commentary (experts, the media), from informal sources where people have become used to agreeing on their opinions with family and social circles, etc., and from voters’ favourite press (once again – media and experts). None of these sources delivers a sensible transition between the ‘source’ of power, a specific voter’s personal situation and groups of reference, and the candidates proposed on the said list. These are the conditions for returning once again to Giddens’ catchy terminology of ‘manufactured uncertainty’, forged into a decision due to ‘active trust’ (Beck, Giddens, Lash 2009: 238–239) – maintaining via narrative the conviction of having made the right choice. In these categories, the participation in elections may be interpreted as an act of reciprocation on the part of the voter, their ‘opening up’ to the framework of the broadly-understood community (pp. 238–239), while refusal to partici-
pate or initiating an alternative strategy (sub-politics) – as refusal of dialogue. Except that – as theories diagnosing the political alienation of voters in contemporary democracies suggest – this is a dialogue of the deaf, i.e. everybody says their own, while all they have in common is the decoration.

The expanses of discontinuity in political information are filled by the voices of experts commenting on the work of experts; this successive overlapping of opinions – binding and credible due to the expert’s position, though frequently contradictory to the opinions of other experts – blurs the source problem (if such ever existed), and comes across to the audience not so much as text interpreted with reflection, but as certain generalised meanings selected according to an emotional key.

The sociological theory of politics is reluctant to let go of the rational and understanding individual making choices on this basis. But individual reflectivity in post-traditional societies is being replaced inescapably and universally by institutional reflectivity, which marks out the paths of affective reactions for individuals. Only a secondary rationalisation carried out by individual actors when faced with the task of explaining the decision they have taken obscures the shameful fact of having been guided by impressions.

But do individuals actually have any other option, do their powers of judgment receive sufficient data to set the process of political understanding in motion? Media-based messages are practically their only source of knowledge, but this is full of mediated knowledge, filtered through so-called informational politics, and organised according to the key of presentation conventions. The multitude of ideological orientations in the informational media is illusory, as each of them appeals to the emotions, such as acceptance, sense of obviousness, fairness and phobias, etc., and shapes the informational communication to suit. Instead of a single story of politics, the attentive reader can receive many stories – yet they are still tales. According to Jean Baudrillard, there is no longer any told reality beyond these stories; the referent has vanished, and only images (simulacra) remain. And it is between these that the political rivalry for faith and support is played out: they intercept the ‘whirling’ causality of events, arbitrarily held and illustrated in the narrowed perspective of the difference providing a field of choices (Baudrillard 2005b: 24).

In his searches for the relationship binding politics with the subject, of key importance for modern times, Baudrillard resorts to the metaphor of ‘seduction’. This is a very significant dissociation from disciplinary rhetoric (Foucault), and even a rival concept. Foucault and Baudrillard do not explain the same world of the relations of power. In Foucault’s depiction, power is ‘genuine’, systemic and timeless; it is power dispersed in embodiments yet possessing a single vector: discipline limiting and shaping corporality and...
discourse, an ordering of taming that the tamed self learns to accept and reproduce. The Panoptican figure is an unceasing reminder of the threat of punishment for disobedience (Foucault 1993). According to Baudrillard, power is a commodity that fascinates and seduces (Baudrillard 2005a: 170–171), it is the reality of desire, a fest of satisfaction. As a mild strategy it does not tame but it manipulates, it does not suppress desires but meets them halfway. “[The masses] will be rigged up with desires in order to be distracted,” he writes “Yesterday they had a (mystified!) consciousness and were alienated – today they have an unconscious and (repressed and corrupted) desires and are seduced. […] The poor, seduced and manipulated masses! Where once they had to endure domination under the threat of violence, now they must accept it by dint of seduction” (p. 171).

The generalisation formulated by Baudrillard leaves no doubt as to his theoretical intention: “[…] this theoretical hallucination of desire, with its diffuse libidinal psychology, serves as a backdrop to that simulacrum of seduction which one now finds everywhere. Having replaced the world of surveillance […] hovers today over the desert of social relations and of power itself” (p. 171–172). Baudrillard’s statement places him explicitly in the trend of what we often call French post-modernism, presenting politics in terms of ‘depoliticising’ and only an ostensible presence in the form of a hegemon state. As certain ideas of this trend are commented on by Stanley Rosen, the pretence of the political, the pretence of the citizen and the inalienable hermeneutic character of politics constitute the reality of the ‘end of history’, when reason loses its superiority over hermeneutic imagination, which in turn legitimises the non-rational character of choices and aspirations. Tearing apart the relationship between hermeneutics and the political entails the collapse of society, transforms “citizens into hermits, wandering in their respective private deserts, and so at the mercy of the adjacent political authorities” (Rosen 1998: 120). Thus the possibilities of realising political agency are limited to only anarchy or silence.

Regardless of one’s affinity for or aversion towards the metaphor of Baudrillard’s works (regarding which it is hard to remain indifferent), his ideas do recall what is essentially a traditional motif in the sociology of politics, that of manipulation. Whether we call it manipulation or seduction, it remains an approach logically antithetic to works whose central concepts constitute violence and domination. And whereas the latter have elaborated on the theories of ideology well established in sociology (the sociology of knowledge), the former works are oriented towards translating political phenomena in terms of mimetics. However, what links them is the idea of a determined position of the subject, who – dominated or seduced – remains...
in a direct asymmetrical relationship of agency, although the means by which this is expressed differ.

Politics is unceasingly problematic for sociology. Its omnipresence leads to variability of the scales analytical thought has to apply to the phenomena and processes observed; its dominating and manipulative character hinders an explicit axiological stance. Respect for the socially significant meaning of politics on the one hand, and the filling of the space of its interpretations by numerous experts quoting the authority of science on the other, often entails certain ambivalence and misinterpretations in an analytical depiction of political phenomena. The social marking of the sphere of the political as significant frequently beguiles researchers, inclined to accept the pre-established subject of the research with its entire axiological baggage – as deplored among others by Pierre Bourdieu (2001: 218). What should the sociological theory of politics be, and what role should it fulfill? Should it be ‘politically neutral’ (an indefensible demand) or involved? Relinquishing the bipolar model (of governing and governed) does not simplify the issue at all, it only transfers it into another dimension. This is because it opens up the field to analyses of the relationships between the practical and normative validity of scholarly discourse on the one hand, and the scientific validity of what has been established in the area of political expertise on the other.

The axio-normative orientation of sociological theory does not allow for this issue to be marginalised. Theory attempts in various ways to link politics, abandoned by the rational subject, with scientific discourse in a reflexive relation, restoring the consistency between the political and the figure of reason. Such attempts are made, for example, by Niklas Luhmann, who although diagnoses the admittedly theoretically essential contradiction between political and scientific theories of politics, makes an attempt at developing a language of practical communication (1994: 144).

The issue is presented differently by Ulrich Beck. He believes the relationship between politics and the theory of politics is not only unbreakable, but even constitutive. He is clearly talking about critical theory, and even about the ‘self-critical new social theory’, the development of which is an essential condition of the participatory understanding of events in contemporary politics. Beck is opposed to what he defines as the ‘fashion for anti-theories’, and neither does he accept any concept of a comprehensive social system; instead, he calls for work on increasing the adequacy of the theoretical expression of politics, which should be possible thanks to a switch of perspective from the view of the nation state (as that restricts today’s theory) to a horizon of cosmopolitan processes (a ‘political eye-opener’) [Beck 2005: 344-345]. The credo of the ‘new critical theory’ comprises – in his opinion – three points: (1) a
national perspective means that at the level of the nation state, who governs is not important; (2) a blurring of the differences between parties, interpreted by political science as depoliticisation, actually proves the globalisation of the randomness of politics; (3) differences between parties are only revealed in regard to the diversity of internal world politics (p. 314). Beck’s political theory no long takes sovereign nations or political communities as its reference, but humankind – united in the face of the populist globalism of defence against the risks of modern times and subordinate to politics, the legitimisation of which no longer requires consensus or agreement (which are becoming relics of the past) but a state of permanent threat (pp. 318-319).

From the perspective of an individual subject, this means the emergence of new forms of organisational solidarity (since old forms died together with the old politics), based on mutual ‘openness’ and trust, stepping beyond the typology of Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft. From the point of view of the relations of politics and social theory, Beck, Giddens and Lash (2009: 58) believe it necessary, as they put it, to “reinvent the political” appropriately for the processes of post-modernisation. Apart from the level of cosmopolitan politics, they also distinguish the politics of sub-systems and the level of conditions of politicisation, then placing a second distinction on this first one: into simple politics (guided by rules) and reflexive politics (aspiring for a change in the rules). In effect six scopes of activity come into being, differing in character, from cosmopolitan politics to sub-politics, displaying on the one hand utilisation of the space of agency by causative factors alienating the rational individual subject from politics, and on the other – unoccupied areas in local contexts of action that this subject may fill.

The sociological theory of politics, as shown by this brief review of selected concepts, does not entirely part company with the utopia of reflective participation by the rational individual subject. It rather establishes itself as the voice speaking in the interest of this subject: it is meant to identify and reinforce calls for resistance against the political mimesis, and to come to the aid of aspirations for finding space in which the figure of such a subject would recover its raison d’être.

References


Žižek at the Gates of Revolution – the Quandaries of the Political Subject of the Radical Left*

In this article I discuss three assumptions that are at the basis of Slavoj Žižek’s concept of the political subject. The first is the assumption that the traumatic dimension of the concept of the political implies intractable social antagonism that has its roots in the inherently contradictory logic of the process of production in the capitalist economy (second assumption). These two factors are intertwined and the result of this is antisemitism, which underlies the unconscious phantasm of the Jew-blood sucker (third assumption). This phantasm functions in capitalist bourgeois societies as a sort of justification for the fact that they do not represent a desirable harmonious unity but are ridden through with deep class antagonisms and conflicts. I try to verify critically the reliability of these assumptions while pointing to the fact that the same phantasm was also very vivid in societies under communist rule where there was no place for the market economy, and where party propaganda propagated an idyllic image of the ‘real’ unity of socialist society.

Introduction

The question about what kind of depiction of the political subject Slavoj Žižek’s concept of the political character implies touches on one of the key issues he tackles in his books. This depiction is an immanent part of this concept, constituting the function of the assumptions adopted in it. What kind of relationship Žižek’s political subject has with the concept of the subject in Jacque Lacan’s psychoanalytical theory, one constantly quoted by the author of The Plague of Fantasies, usually treating it as a starting point for his own interpretative ‘applications’ and ponderings, is a question closely tied to this. But it is a separate issue, one that would demand its own more thorough examination in a separate paper, and as such I shall concentrate below on following the first interrelation.

In my own deliberations I shall begin by profiling the fundamental assumptions behind Žižek’s concept of the political. These open the door to questions regarding the concept of the political subject that they imply, as

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one can identify a number of ‘versions’ of this subject in this author’s works, depending on the position taken towards what is political. In Žižek’s understanding of this concept, naturally.

Žižek – an Icon of Mass Culture.

There are at least a few factors that led to Slavoj Žižek becoming one of the best known icons of mass culture today. Although not on the scale of the popularity of Michael Jackson or other rock stars, or a famous sportsperson, journalist, politician or television presenter, it is still – taking his profession into account – quite exceptional. After all, there is probably no other intellectual, philosopher or scientist quite so widely known and recognisable today, with people coming to their lectures in their thousands.

His skill of clearly presenting what are sometimes highly complex issues deriving from Lacan’s psychoanalysis and philosophical tradition, interspersed with joke after joke, and his striking illustration of them using well-known motifs from the history of film, literature and painting has undoubtedly contributed to this popularity. Add to this his own peculiar manner of delivering lectures, not without its elements of acting, and his unconventional and now legendary style. All this makes Žižek an ‘interesting media personality’, which he also doubtlessly manages to take good advantage of, constantly publishing articles in the world’s most highly-read journals, or appearing in television programmes or on the radio, etc.

But Žižek is above all the author of numerous books, ones he has been producing at a dizzying pace for the last dozen years or so, probably breaking all records in this field. In them he presents a very specific type of discourse, situated somewhere on the borders of scholarly essay, political journalism and ordinary popularism. In this discourse he sets himself a goal that is practically impossible: to lay out ‘for the masses’ the fundamental assumptions of Lacan’s psychoanalysis through its confrontation with the great classic concepts of nineteenth-century and contemporary philosophical tradition: Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, Derrida and others. And in recent years the classics of communist thought – Lenin, Stalin and Mao-Tse-Tung – have joined this list.

The price Žižek pays for orienting his own writings towards such a broad audience is frequently a very simplified though rhetorically striking depiction of the issues and phenomena discussed, a fondness for sudden and sometimes totally unfounded leaps in thought, and a skilful skating over the topics brought up, etc. This is coupled with substantial ingenuity in his ‘application’ of Lacan’s conceptuality for the interpretation of selected social, political and artistic phenomena. His works also include attempts, rath-
Žižek at the Gates of Revolution – the Quandaries of the Political Subject of the Radical Left

... chaotic and full of various inconsistencies and contradictions yet often in themselves interesting, at expanding on certain motifs of Lacan’s psychoanalysis (e.g. interpretations of the diagram of sexual difference, the functioning of the objet petit a, and a new portrayal of the issue of the Real and its relationship to the Symbolic and the Imaginary).

In addition Žižek’s analyses and manner of interpreting classic philosophical papers also sometimes – with evident simplifications, irregularity and an occasionally amazing nonchalance in his choice of material and treatment of the interpretative tradition to date – bear the traits of originality, breaking free of established models of reading (e.g. analysis of fragments of Hegel’s The Phenomenology of Spirit in his The Sublime Object of Ideology, a discussion with Heidegger in The Ticklish Subject, or proposed interpretations of the philosophy of Schelling in The Indivisible Remainder, etc.).

Quite naturally one cannot not be irritated by Žižek’s literary prolificacy, manifested in his publication of two to three books a year. Even if because it entails the multiple duplication within them of the same interpretative ideas. As if the author of The Fragile Absolute were suffering from a neurotic compulsion to speak and write without a break, incapable of bearing his own silence (and others’ silence regarding him). So he has to do this without a moment’s respite, even if this carries the price of his expositions moving ever closer in standard to rather cheap political journalism, aimed at causing a short-term effect. And ultimately because the world media demand of him this constant speaking and writing ‘for the masses’, in their probably un-mistaken conviction that even if he does write something that is clearly rubbish, it will be sufficiently striking and embellished with the spicy flavour of a ‘psychoanalytical’ joke that the mass audience will buy it anyway.

To be fair to Žižek, one should remark that few intellectuals or scholars are capable of resisting temptation of this kind today. Few also manage to retain the appropriate distance to these forms of their own intellectual activity without unwittingly becoming victims of the media behemoth. The majority, after having acquired a taste for being a public and media personality, strive to constantly demonstrate their ‘existence’ in successive prominent appearances in the media, or in articles and columns aiming for an immediate journalistic effect. And this happens even if at the cost of their scholarly standard and honesty of their approach to the issues raised. Then, however, without actually noticing it themselves, they become hostage to the mass media and their audiences, expecting not a conscientious and in-depth analysis of a specific phenomenon from them so much as ‘impressive’ and ‘interesting’ comments on the matter.

Intellectuals succumbing to media pressure of this kind are ironically referred to by Pierre Bourdieu as fast thinkers (Bourdieu 2009: 57). In his...
books, spouting forth every year as if from a horn of plenty, Žižek undoubtedly thinks very ‘fast’. Nay, in recent years the ‘fastness’ of his thinking has even risen in its intensity, achieving a dizzying speed. And it is for this reason that in this paper, in my attempt at making a critical analysis of a few key figures of Žižek’s thinking on the phenomenon of political character and the economic mechanisms defining the existence of late-capitalist societies, I focus on his relatively early books. Even though one can already notice in them certain aspects of his manneristic style, his drive towards cheap showing off, and impressive but superficial and occasionally even demagogic interpretations of the phenomena in question, there is no question that they represent a significantly higher standard than the author’s literary output of recent years.

Three Figures of Thinking About Political Character

In Žižek’s expositions regarding the phenomenon of political character, one can distinguish three closely related key figures of thought.

The first of them is defined by the conviction that the phenomenon of political character is determined by its traumatic dimension. Political character is above all conflict, a relentless battle between different social groups and classes, whose interests are in principle irreconcilable. Therefore it is a matter of antagonism, which cannot be resolved in any way, while any attempts at quelling it may end in limited, short-term success at the most. This is because over time this antagonism comes back to life anyway, twice as powerful, leading for example to violent and mass-scale street appearances of persons belonging to social groups marginalised and exploited by the system, to strikes and riots, or to the emergence on the political stage of parties displaying a radically anti-democratic attitude, left- or right-wing.

The second figure is the acknowledgement that the antagonistic nature of the phenomenon of political character has its roots in the internally contradictory logic of the process of production in a capitalist economy, which determines the essence of this process. Thanks to this logic, a capitalist economy is capable of functioning and developing at all, since the state of permanent imbalance it creates on the market forces it to constantly violate its own boundaries. This is why, as Žižek states in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*: “The ‘normal’ state of capitalism is the permanent revolutionizing of its own conditions of existence: from the very beginning, capitalism ‘putrefies’, it is branded by a crippling contradiction, discord, by an immanent want of balance: this is exactly why it changes, develops incessantly – incessant development is the only way for it to resolve again and again, come to terms with, its own fundamental, constitutive imbalance, ‘contradiction’” (Žižek 2001: 71).
The close interrelation between the fundamental ‘right’ of the capitalist economy thus identified by Žižek, and the antagonistic nature of interpersonal relations this creates, means that any talk whatsoever of social ‘unity’ proves to be an illusion (this is also how one should understand Žižek’s well-known claim that “society does not exist”).

At this point, what is social and what is political becomes entangled once again. On the one hand, the economics of capitalism lies at the basis of the ‘ontology’ of what is social, antagonising relationships between people in the production process, while on the other hand the relations antagonised in this manner constitute the natural grounds for the element of the political as a relentless battle between different social groups and classes. This is also how one should understand Žižek’s statement that “the ‘political’ class struggle takes place in the very midst of the economy (...), while, at the same time, the domain of economy serves as the key enabling us to decode political struggles” (ibid). In a word, it is not as classic Marxism claimed, that the sphere of interpersonal relationships is dominated in capitalism by the relations present in the production process, constituting their reflection on a different social plane, but that these relations directly create these relationships. Everything that is economic, social and political creates an inseparable plait, some kind of Gordian knot (or perhaps Lacan’s Borromean rings) that cannot be untied unless cut by the sword of revolution.

These two figures are overlapped by a third figure, to some extent constituting a natural phantasmic effect of their close interconnection. This is the antisemitic figure of the Jew-bloodsucker, a cheat and mischief-maker as the personification of Pure Evil. This demonic Jew, due to his deepest ‘soiled’ essence, is ready to harm ‘decent’ people in any possible way; to ruthlessly exploit them, cheat them, humiliate them, set them against one another, while doing so drawing an ‘impartial’ satisfaction from all these base acts (which is also his most repugnant aspect). In creating a similarly repulsive image of the Jew, the capitalist society projects onto this person all of its own frustrations related to the ruthless rules of the economic system in which it participates and which defines it.

But the repulsive Jew-bloodsucker figure does not function in capitalist societies purely as scapegoat. If such were the case, then Žižek’s approach to the phenomenon of antisemitism would not differ in principle from its commonplace, classic depictions. In Žižek’s arguments, the Jew-bloodsucker figure does not only perform as an ‘ideological superstructure’ via which society attempts to explain the frustrating fact of its own ‘non-existence’. It is needed by society to justify to itself the fact that due to the antagonisms and conflicts tearing it apart, it does not form any harmonious ‘unity’.
In the meantime, ‘if not for the Jews’ it would be able to create just such unity, while all its members would find total satisfaction in their co-existence. Thus according to Žižek the Jew-bloodsucker figure corresponds with the narcissistically characterised illusory image of organic social unity, explaining all ‘obstacles’ making it impossible to achieve this unity in social practice. Thanks to this figure, the individuals comprising capitalist society shut out what is particularly difficult for them to accept: the fact that the formation of any form of social unity whatsoever is rendered impossible by the antagonisms generated by the capitalist system of production.

In this depiction, any antisemitic attitudes and behaviours articulated in social space derive from the fact that the Jew-bloodsucker figure lying at their basis has the status of a phantasm, blocking out what is genuinely traumatic. The extraordinary ‘efficacy’ of this figure, and its persistent lingering in social awareness, draws from continued non-awareness of the actual function it fulfils in the ‘economics’ of mental life. And unknown it must remain, as in its negativeness it enables and substantiates the image of organic social unity constituting its antithesis. Although this unity does not currently exist, it could potentially become a reality in the future if only the various obstacles were eliminated.

Antisemitism as thus portrayed constitutes both an intrinsic product of capitalism and a condition for bourgeois society to be able to function at all. In other words, as long as a free market model of the economy generating social inequalities exists, antisemitic attitudes will inseparably accompany it like a shadow. And there is practically no possibility of emancipation from this antisemitism.

Chto delat? Or Žižek at the Gates of Revolution

In Žižek’s portrayal of the relations between the spheres of what is economic, social and political in late-capitalist liberal democracy states, countries dominated by a market economy system, the only option for overcoming all negative consequences of this model lies in a departure from its ‘fundament’, comprising the system of the free market economy. After all, it is this system’s orientation for unceasingly exceeding itself, for shaking its own foundations, which liberal free-market ideologists perceive as the fundamental strength of the capitalist economy, that is the source of all evil. Such would seem to be the natural and logic conclusion emerging from the critical analysis of how the capitalist economy functions in today’s ‘postmodernist’ world carried out by the author of The Sublime Object of Ideology. And if a departure, then in that case what model of economics other
than the capitalist version should be introduced? Is economics with founda-
tions other than capitalist economics even at all conceivable?

In his early works, mindful of the experiences of ‘real socialism’, Žižek
seems to be aware that the answer to this question is not easy. And there are
two reasons for this. Firstly, because in his portrayal – and similarly to that
of Marx – the capitalist system is the highest form of method of production,
to some extent constituting the very quintessence of hitherto forms. In this
system, the very essence of what is economic comes to light, at least in the
form in which it has taken shape in European tradition to date. Secondly, for
this dilemma Žižek distinctly rejects a ‘non-dialectic’ solution, characteristic
of the Leninist/Stalinist interpretation of Marxism, as illusory.

The assumption at the basis of this interpretation was that it was possible
to form a new socialist system of production that, free of the contradictions
characteristic of the market economy, would not generate antagonisms in
the social sphere. As it happened, the system not only proved significantly
less effective than the capitalist version, but was also grounded on assump-
tions that, from an economic point of view, constituted a misunderstanding.
As a result, after decades of existence it experienced a total collapse.

In addition this system also generated deep social conflicts. Though of
a different nature than in capitalism, they were also the result – as in the
capitalist system – of its very essence, based on central administrational man-
agement (e.g. the conflict between labourers and the party nomenklatura).
In that case, if it is not this model of socialist economics and state that may
constitute a genuine alternative to the market economy model, then what
model can?

In his early books, Žižek leaves this question hanging. For example a read
of The Sublime Object of Ideology even leaves the impression that, with all
his criticism of the catastrophic social consequences of the market economy,
he sees no alternative to it. On the one hand, he acknowledges the orienta-
tion of this economy for constantly overreaching itself as the highest form of
realisation of the ‘logics’ of economics itself. Yet on the other hand, the so-
cialist economy model in its many varieties proved too dogmatic in its as-
sumptions, leading to economic stagnation, while in the sphere of ideologi-
cal superstructure it only reinforced in social awareness the old prejudices
and antagonisms dating from past eras.

But neither do we find an explicit answer to this question in Žižek’s later
books. In them, he appears to oscillate between two opposing strategies,
which essentially rule each other out. On the one hand he calls for the elab-
oration of an entirely new strategy for the left wing, more effective than that
followed to date, which would lead to many deep reforms and transforma-
tions being imposed on the ‘bourgeois’ parties dominating in the late capitalist liberal democracy state – although this would be achieved by breaking the rules of the game dominating in this state. However, whether these transformations would apply only to the social and political spheres, or also to economics itself, remains an open issue.

On the other hand they display a distinct ‘longing’ for a genuine Revolution as an Event, in which a radical departure from the current system would be brought about and the bold risk of building everything anew would be taken – and this would also merely hold the power of healing. And in Žižek’s digressions it is precisely this ‘yearning’ for accomplishing something extraordinary, breaking out of the hitherto historic ‘logic’, that results in the leader of the Russian revolution becoming the central figure – a kind of ‘meaningful phallus’: the great political visionary and strategist, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

And now it matters not in the slightest to Žižek that it was Lenin who created the ideological and theoretical foundations for the ‘non-dialectic’ socialist economy model criticised so sharply in The Sublime Object.... Or that he was one of the cruellest leaders of the revolution, a genuine butcher of the human masses, prepared to resort to any means in the name of realising his ideological goals. All that counts is that Lenin was, above all, a brilliant political strategist who succeeded (in what would have seemed an absolutely hopeless situation for the Bolsheviks) to bring about the Revolution, as a result of which the entire hitherto economic and political order in Russia collapsed. To achieve something like that in circumstances when practically everybody doubted in the success of the revolt, now that is really something!

Therefore it is mainly for these reasons that the victorious strategy chosen in 1917 by Lenin may be a good ‘Chto delat?’ [What is to be done?] pointer for today’s radical left. All the more so as just like the Bolshevik party of back then, it is extremely weak and has been practically deprived of any major political significance. Apart from this, various post-modernist bourgeois ideologists, of Fukuyama’s ilk, claim that humankind has reached the limits of its history, and that since the collapse of the Soviet Eastern Bloc there has been practically no alternative to the market economy model and liberal democracy state. This is why the radical left today needs somebody in the mould of Lenin, who would indicate possible actions it is unable to sense in its seemingly hopeless situation and prepare it for the advent of an Event, one that would fundamentally change the balance of power on the political stage. Ultimately it is about achieving the status of a serious partner/antagonist in the eyes of the main political powers in the parliamentary democracies of the West, one whose demands should be taken seriously. And then to commence putting them into effect.
To this end, though, the radical left should reject the rules of the political game that are currently in force (as accepting them it would be doomed to failure from the start), and through its actions bring about a situation in which the main political bodies of the liberal democracy state are forced to implement its demands. Although Žižek makes it clear that he is not referring to a repeat in some new form of the revolution in Russia, he is evidently fascinated by the ‘atypicality’ of this Event, one that introduced an element of discontinuity into the historical process, one that could not simply be boiled down to the role of the effect of the action of specific causes. In this sense a revolution as an Event cannot be explained in a ‘rational’ manner. And this is so in regard to its genealogy, its course, and the prospects to which it opens the way.

The sources of this fascination Žižek has with revolution as an Event bringing about a certain breach in the history of humankind, fundamentally altering the course it was taking until that time, should be sought significantly earlier on in his works, before he wrote Revolution at the Gates.¹ In his book The Plague of Fantasies published in 1997, criticising various figures of political thought, he reproaches them for their main goal being to contradict the logic of antagonism, which in itself defines the very essence of the phenomenon of the political. Žižek understands antagonism as a situation where social groups in conflict do not appear in relation to one another within the political order in question as partners of equal standing, with certain groups distinctly discriminated against. It is therefore a situation of extreme imbalance, resulting in the discriminated groups and classes being unable to fight for their rights, acquiescing to the rules of the political game in force in their specific case – as they occupy a no-win position from the outset. The only possibility for them to push through their demands is to force concessions upon the antagonists by violating the rules of this game.

This may be achieved through revolution or a political coup, or also by opting for a more ‘moderate’ form of protest – as occurred in ancient Greece, where “something emerged […] under the name of demos demanding its rights” (Žižek, 2001a, 91), or in Poland in the nineteen eighties, when workers began demonstrating against the ruling elite, forcing them to recognise their workers’ rights by establishing the trade union known as Solidarity. Common to all these situations is the fact that social groups excluded within their particular system demanded recognition by the ruling party as an equal partner in the political game. Yet this inevitably commanded them to place a ques-

¹ The concept of the ‘Event’ represented by the French philosopher Alain Badiou, referred to repeatedly by Žižek in his works.
tion mark on the very foundations of the political order prevailing in the specific case. In Poland, for example, the Party’s recognition of ‘Solidarity’ was by no means a compromise solution, but in practice meant its political defeat – as it admitted into the totalitarian system of the communist state an element that could not be reconciled with it. And that became the source of ever more serious political conflicts and ultimately the collapse of this system.

According to Žižek we are dealing with an identical situation in the modern parliamentary democracy state, in which one may point out numerous social groups that, due to their marginalised position within it, are unable to attain many fundamental rights for themselves. Or even the adherence to those rights they are guaranteed by law and the constitution. This situation cannot be explained by some imperfection of the state’s legal and constitutional order, but rather derives from the fact that social groups playing the dominant role in the capitalist process of production occupy a privileged position within it. In this manner the rules defining this process contribute indirectly to the structure of the political powers in a liberal democracy state, a structure that in practice serves to preserve the deep-set social inequalities generated during the course of this process. And these inequalities are the source of various antagonisms and conflicts that this state is intrinsically incapable of resolving, as it would then have to cast doubt upon its own systemic foundations. As a result, all groups marginalised and excluded in this state are left with no option but to pursue their rights by taking a path identical to that once taken by the Greek demos, the Polish workers, or even by the Russian Bolsheviks and Lenin.

Hence Žižek’s above-mentioned criticism of various forms of contemporary political thought. He sees them only as having different strategies of negating the traumatic dimension of politics, determined above all by constantly renewing antagonism, which cannot be solved or neutralised in any way. The essence of this conflict is grounded on tension: “...between the structured social body in which each part has its place, and ‘the part of no part’ which unsettles this order on account of the empty principle of universality – of what Balibar calls égaliberté, the principled equality of all men qua speaking beings. (...) the political struggle proper is therefore not a rational debate between multiple interests, but the struggle for one’s voice to be heard and recognized as the voice of a legitimate partner” (Žižek 2001: 89).

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2 Such purport is present in the classification of specific varieties of political thought carried out by Žižek, each of which is based on a different strategy of negating the traumatic dimension of politics (see S. Žižek, The Plague of Fantasies, New York 1997)
The question that arises is whether Žižek is not absolutising the role of
the element of antagonism and conflict, comprising the phenomenon of the
political? Which also makes it close in essence – in regard to its opening
assumptions – to the ‘ultrapolitics’ of Carl Schmitt that he criticises so sharply?
Could not his accusation, that this ‘falsely radicalising’ political conflict, by
being given the status of a war between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ (*ibid*), excludes
the possibility of common ground for a symbolic conflict, refer equally to his
own concept of the political? After all, his claim that the ‘political moment’
is defined by the logics of antagonism, in which the position of the parties in
conflict with one another is incommensurate, also rules out the possibility of
any ‘rational’ understanding between them whatsoever. And thereby it sus-
pends the ‘intermediating’ action of the symbolic level, represented in a par-
liamentary democracy state by, among others, the constitutional and le-
gal order. All the more so as the political strategy of the groups excluded
from a particular social order (a “part of no part”) should – according to
Žižek – be grounded on a rejection of the rules of the political game in force
in the state concerned. After all by accepting the rules of this game – and
thereby accepting the political and legal order – they are dooming them-
selves to failure right from the start.

Who (or what) in this case should fulfil the function here of this symbol-
ic Third (this Great Other), whom all parties to the conflict accept, and in
whose presence they are prepared to reach an agreement? Indeed, oppressed
and marginalised groups leading to a situation in which their adversary would
have to seriously listen to what they have to say, and recognise this “as the
voice of a legitimate partner”, should result in the questioning of the funda-
mental rules of the political and legal order in which this battle is played
out. This in turn means that in such a situation such an ‘intermediating’
Great Other is suspended in its function enabling the reaching of a consen-
sus between parties, and the only solution is to establish a new interpreta-
tion. Such was the case of the demands of the Greek demos and the Polish
workers of August 1980, not to mention the French and Russian revolu-
tions, which Žižek refers to with such fondness in his recent works.

The radical left in today’s states of advanced capitalist and parliamentary
democracy is also meant to bring about a similar situation in the very near fu-
ture. Of course only if it is successful – drawing on Lenin’s genius – in appropri-
ately organising and mobilising broad bands of the excluded in these states to
enter the political fight. And then as well its demands, if only they are fulfilled,
should sooner or later lead to the demolishing of the foundations beneath the
political and legal order on which these states are based, and which in fact served
to maintain the social inequalities and exclusions existing within it.
However, this depiction assumes that in this case as well it is hard to talk of the existence of some kind of common symbolic ground between the parties to the conflict, antagonistic towards one another. This is because the main ideas of the radical left, at least as they are understood by Žižek, are in fact irreconcilable with the liberal ideas on which the late-capitalist state of the parliamentary democracy is based. As a result, the people of the left bringing about a situation in which the parties holding power in the said state are forced to recognise their demands will sooner or later have to lead to the destruction of the political and legal foundations of this state. And thereby – and this is above all what this fight is about – leading to the collapse of the capitalist economic system that produces extreme inequalities in the social and political spheres.

By tracking further these implications contained in Žižek’s vision of the political, one should ask what is perhaps rather a naïve question, but one irresistibly imposing itself. And so let us assume that the radical left of the West, organised in a Leninist (or perhaps a Leninist-Stalinist?) manner, finally achieves its goal. It forces its opponents to accept its demands, which in time bring about the disintegration of the entire economic system and the liberal political and legal order of the parliamentary democracy state. What then becomes of the phenomenon of the political – according to Žižek – defined by the traumatic dimension? Does this dimension then totally fade away? And with it, does what is political as such also fade away?

Such would seem to be the silent premise of Žižek’s argumentation. Why, in his eyes the source of all evil – and therefore of the glaring social inequalities – in the late-capitalist parliamentary democracy state is the free-market production system functioning within it. If therefore one would manage to bring about the collapse of this system and introduce a totally new one, no longer generating such glaring forms of class inequality, then the main cause of social conflicts would be eliminated. One could also assume that then the radical left, having found itself in power and guided by its lofty ideas, would develop a new model for the state and for practising politics, in which the place of the hitherto deep social divisions and their related conflicts would be taken by some new, non-antagonistic forms of interpersonal relations. But then, although Žižek rightfully reproaches the aspiration for a forced ‘ennoblement’ of the traumatic dimension of politics in the hitherto tradition of political thought, his depiction could be accused of not only containing a similar aspiration, but of it taking on an even more radical form. Just as in the Leninist program of the classless Soviet state, class conflicts were to be eliminated through the development of the new economic model of real socialism, Žižek likewise silently assumes in his arguments a future non-an-
agonistic model of society developed on the basis of the realisation of left-wing social ideas in political and economic practice. Otherwise his fervent criticism of the depravities of the late capitalist model of production would hold little sense.

In a word, if the fundamental weakness of the four hitherto versions of political thought identified by Žižek was that they attempted in various manners to ‘neutralise’ antagonism as the basic element of what is political (although at the same time never succeeded in totally eliminating it), then the other side of his identification of what is political with conflict that cannot be ‘rationalised’ in any way is the drive for its total elimination in a vaguely designed socialist society of the future. Thereby the ultimate goal is the death of what is political, in a vaguely defined political-state order organised in keeping with the concepts of the left. And at this point Žižek’s reasoning of the political undoubtedly differs fundamentally from the hitherto tradition of political thought. Absolutisation of the traumatic dimension of politics to a degree that has not been achieved in any portrayal to date directs him to formulate an anti-politics project of the future in which the dimension in question could not only be effectively overcome, but even totally eliminated.

In brief, since in his interpretation of Marx’s theory the “Class struggle does not ‘express’ some objective economic contradiction, it is the very form of existence of this contradiction” (ibid, p. 241), then the only means of overcoming this situation is a radical change in economics itself. According to this portrayal, only the economics of capitalism can be ‘political’ as it produces social antagonism in an immanent manner, at its very ‘heart’. Hence economics organised in keeping with the concepts of leftism (and thus not producing class conflicts) may only be ‘apolitical’. So in that case how would this totally new socialist society, having grown on an ‘apolitical’ economy in which all class divisions would necessarily have to vanish, actually look? What could the foundations for practising politics be in it, since in Žižek’s understanding there would be practically no place for it?

It would seem that the only truth validating Žižek’s way of thinking about politics is, paradoxically, the silent assumption that a similarly socialist model of economics, society and state can never actually be achieved. For him it fulfils the function of a phantasmal projection, which only matters as much as it applies to something practically impossible to realistically bring into existence. It is something like a small object, which the subject’s imagination feeds on as something implicitly unattainable, possessing the status of a vanishing point on the horizon.

This is because only by ‘still’ not existing, as a phantasmal antidote designed at some undetermined future time, thanks to which it will be possible
to abolish the market economy system generating social inequalities as if by the wave of a magic wand, can it constitute an argument in the radical left’s fight with all reactionary forces defending the existing economic order and political and legal late-capitalist parliamentary democracy state. The only problem is that this is practically the only justification for this fight. In a word, the left’s fight only has as much sense as it can feed on its capitalist opposite, projecting on the latter all of its frustrations as on a mortal enemy. A genuine Jew-bloodsucker one can accuse of all sorts of infamy. Anyway, there is no ‘left’. Its situation is similar to Žižek’s description of the situation of a woman dreaming of being raped, yet when the rape occurs it is a deeply traumatic experience for her. Just such a trauma for the radical left would seem to be the fulfilment of its dreams of a future socialist society, in which there are no longer any class inequalities, as the free market capitalist system producing them would have ceased to exist.

Politics as Conflict and Trauma

Žižek’s conviction that a fundamental issue for the contemporary left is the development of an appropriate strategy that would make it a serious political force, capable of pushing through its goals, means that the image of the future post-capitalist society shaped in line with its concepts comes across rather vaguely in his works. As for how the economic system would then be supposed to function, not producing social inequalities as in the free market system, not a word is mentioned. This weakness in his political program may of course easily be demonstrated by tracking all traces or implications heading in this direction in his works. And there really are few of them.

In addition, as if anticipating criticism of this nature, he claims with disarming sincerity in Revolution at the Gates that in the event of the left achieving victory, then everything – as was the case after all in the revolutionary situation Lenin found himself in – would depend on the creativity and political intuition of its leaders. Well, he undoubtedly displayed such creativity and intuition, solidifying with the aid of bloody terror and repressions the model of the communist state he had devised, its administrative, political and economic order conceived with Byzantine precision. The only question is whether this model should be treated as a manifestation of his political genius or rather his ideological dogmatism? But today this is but a rhetorical question. History has exempted us from giving an answer.

This does not mean that the concept of the political as takes shape in Žižek’s works cannot be taken seriously, granting it at best the status of a deliberate intellectual provocation in which the author himself does not take
seriously everything he says. For example such a ‘serious’ thesis, of key importance, is the claim mentioned above that at the basis of what is political lies a deep conflict between specific social classes or groups, a conflict created by the capitalist means of production.

Below I would like to ponder over the degree to which this claim grasps the essence of the phenomenon of the political, or whether it might only indicate a certain aspect of it, one of rather secondary importance? There is no doubt that when he recalls the examples of the Greek demos, the Polish workers or the October revolution, Žižek is pointing out events of exceptional significance for understanding the phenomenon of the political. And this is precisely because the position occupied by all parties to the conflict is untypical when compared with how all sorts of social antagonism are usually resolved within a particular political order. It constitutes a peculiar gap in the rules of the political game defining this order, rules according to which all subjects and ‘objects’ of this game are usually guided.

One should ask whether in his argumentation Žižek is not absolutising the antagonistic structure of this situation, reducing all political strategies for its ‘ennoblement’ to the role of illusory masks striving to shut it out, eliminate it or neutralise it. In keeping with his portrayal, the entire tradition to date of political thought can be boiled down to a simple black-and-white schema, the four figures negating the traumatic dimension of politics on one side (arche-politics, para-politics, meta-politics and ultra-politics), and his own concept acknowledging this as the key dimension on the other. Is this not a simplification?

Putting it yet differently, what is doubtful in Žižek’s argumentative strategy is that he arbitrarily tears the aforesaid situations of deep political conflict from their broader context of the historical process in which they appeared, and only considers them in themselves, in isolation both from the events preceding them as well as the subsequent political consequences they brought about. As a result, his dichotomous portrayal leads to highly simplified thinking about what is political.

Even if we begin with this author’s assumption that political struggle is never only a rational dispute between different standpoints, but is at the same time a battle for the recognition of one’s own voice as an equal (ibid), then a situation where this voice is listened to by the authorities always signifies a kind of lifting of the initial antagonism. This lifting may of course take place in various way; down the path of revolution, as took place in France and Russia, as a result of which the victorious sooner or later establish a new type of regime; through a forced agreement of transitional character, as took place in Poland in 1980; or through the later compromise be-
tween the parties to the conflict, as took place nine years later within the framework of the so-called ‘Round Table’. What is common to all these situations is that the initial political conflict, forcing both parties to redefine their position towards one another, always leads to the formation of new rules for the political game, relatively stable in character, and rules that these parties must comply with. Therefore in this case what is political ceases to function as a ‘trauma’, but is expressed within certain rules, regardless of whether they are rules imposed unilaterally by the regime of the victorious (as in the communist USSR), or the rules of a state organised in a democratic manner, in which both the former opposition and the authorities perform in the roles of political subjects rivalling with each other for power in successive elections.

In a word, even if a conflict is an inalienable moment of what is political, it never occurs in a ‘pure’ state, but always gives rise to the problem of the parties arranging themselves anew and the establishment of a new type of rules for the political game, rules that would ensure relative stability for the society concerned. Regardless of whether these would be the rules of a despotic regime leading to the emergence of a totalitarian state, or the rules of a parliamentary democracy state.

In no respect does this change the fact that these two types of conflict solution differ like fire and water, which Žižek seems to forget. The Leninist solution, which he is obviously fascinated by, assumes the victorious party unilaterally imposing on the whole of society a new state model in which, for ideological and strategic reasons, the dominant position is granted to the ‘party’, meant to represent broad layers of the working class and peasantry. And at the same time to lead a ruthless battle with the social classes that in its view represent a reactionary political tradition and constitute a mortal threat to its authority. The political game played out according to these rules is in essence a constant battle with a real or imaginary opponent, one who should in an ideological and physical sense be annihilated. And it is situated practically right next to Žižek’s ideal of the political. Nay, it would even seem to embody this ideal in the most perfect of manners.

Indeed, this is politics performed in its purest form as trauma, politics born from fear of an internal and external enemy grown to demonic size, politics demanding that the communist authorities remain unceasingly vigilant and active. It is also politics acted out in the very heart of economics, politics of relentless struggle, setting itself the goal of denying this economics its ‘capitalist’ (thus producing social inequalities) character. To achieve this goal industry is nationalised and kolkhoz collective farms established, simultaneously destroying all forms of private ownership and trade, and elim-
inating – often physically – all those responsible for these forms (or only because they are suspected of such intentions). One could of course ponder over whether the Russian revolution really had to bring about such consequences, whether it could have unfolded in other directions. It is worth considering, for example, whether it might have led to the formation of a more democratic form of power (e.g. based on Workers’ Councils), or whether Stalinism was an inevitable consequence, etc..

Anyhow, it remains a fact that the two fundamental determinants of this process, and so the organising of a powerful, hierarchically arranged party organisation in place of the Workers’ Councils – thereby granting the communist authorities a despotic-regime character – and the nationalisation of the entire industry and agriculture, were fundamental for the political strategy of the Father of the revolution. One could therefore say that Lenin’s bringing about of a situation in which the bourgeois parties dominating Russia’s parliament and the Tsar were not only forced to recognise the demands of the ‘demos’, but also to relinquish power, practically signifies the ruling out of any partner-like relations between them of any kind whatsoever.

Instead of that a situation arises in which the ‘part of no part’ totally seizes power, making the fundamental premise of its political strategy the total elimination of social forces supporting the previous power. This is not, though, so much a return to the situation of the initial antagonism as a switch in the roles played to date by the political actors. Whereas the previous authorities, exploiting and victimising the ‘demos’ in diverse ways tolerated its actual existence, the leaders of this ‘demos’ – having acquired power – recognise their fundamental revolutionary task to be the physical elimination of all the previous regime’s collaborators. And so we are dealing with some monstrous caricature of the initial situation of social ‘inequality’, since here it is no longer about just the ‘oppression’ and ‘exploitation’ of the antagonist, but about their physical annihilation. However, this annihilation of the ‘class enemies’ of the communist authorities is taken to be the basic condition for the building of a socialist society of the future, in which all class antagonisms and contradictions disappear.

Therefore, although one may speculate at will today on the direction the Russian revolution took over time, there is no doubt that it was in a historical sense an unavoidable consequence of Lenin’s aforesaid political strategy, and not its later ‘distortion’ by Stalin. The bringing about by Lenin of a situation in which class antagonism in Russia takes on the form of a bloody revolution bore fruit, in the next step, in its total ‘elimination’ within the new political (and economic) order established by the leader of the revolution. As a result, the antagonised class-based society was replaced – in the
ideological sphere – by a uniform communist society, intended to constitute the absolute opposite of the former.

In this case, the demand expressed by the insurgent ‘demos’ preceding the revolutionary coup (and lying at its foundations), that those in power recognise them as a serious political partner / antagonist, did not lead to the emergence of a ‘dialogue’ situation, but to the formation of a new type of political domination practised by the communist party apparatus, initially displaying a despotic-regime demeanour and in time totalitarian traits. In brief: the situation brought about by Lenin, led by his strategic ‘genius’, signified the absolute elimination of the initial class-based antagonism and with it the annihilation of the traumatic dimension of politics as understood by Žižek. And thereby the death of what was at all political. However, if this dimension still defined the ‘revolutionary’ practice of the Party, this was only in the derivative and extremely caricatural, paranoid form of fighting ‘class enemies’ operating covertly, and constituted a degraded form of what Žižek understands as the traumatic dimension of politics.

We were dealing with a totally different type of developmental logic of the revolutionary situation and its ultimate consequences in the case of the August strikes in Poland in 1980 and later events, through to 1989. A fundamental difference is evident right at the first stage, when the effect of the burgeoning wave of strikes is not revolution or a coup, but the Gdańsk Agreement of August 1980, as a result of which the party allowed workers to establish independent trade unions. Whatever one might say about the actual intentions of both negotiating parties, it was evidently a dialogue situation in which the Party, want it or not, had to acknowledge the partnership of the political subject that ‘Solidarity’, representing the interests of those on strike, had become. Although this situation collapses entirely together with Jaruzelski’s declaration of Martial Law in December 1981, eight years later the Party is nevertheless forced under the pressure of the approaching total economic collapse to once again sit down to the negotiating table. As a result of the agreement reached with the opposition regarding partially free elections, it practically loses them, and in effect the rapid process of the disintegration of the Polish People’s Republic’s political system begins, leading to the establishment of a parliamentary democracy system in Poland, and the introduction of the capitalist market economy model into the country’s economics.

When comparing the radically different developmental logic of the initial revolutionary situation in these two cases, I have no intention of glorifying one over the other. I want only to point out that in neither case can the revolutionary situation be considered in isolation of the consequences it brings about, which bear fruit in the elimination of the initial antagonism present
within it. Since there are not even the slightest grounds for not classifying these consequences into the domain of what is political, it would seem that Žižek’s concept of the political centred around the idea of social antagonism portrays the nature of this phenomenon in a highly simplified manner.

At the same time I would like to emphasise that those consequences are totally different in the two cases cited, which in turn implies that even if those governing are faced by the ‘demos’ in different situations, calling for the recognition of its political subjectivity, the political effects of realising this demand may be radically different. In our examples they lead to the formation of political and legal models so extremely different as the Soviet state ruled by a single party and a parliamentary democracy state based on a multi-party model. Both these forms of wielding power should be classed to an equal degree into the order of what is political, regardless of how we value them. And there is more. To some extent they rise out of the situation of the initial antagonism in a natural way as its radically different political solutions. And thereby each in its own way is a form of its abolition through the establishing of such or some other form of political rationality. In the case of the Leninist-Stalinist communist regime, this is a paranoid-demonic rationality, while in the case of parliamentary governments – a rationality deriving from the liberal tradition of the Enlightenment, republican tradition, or conservative, left-wing, etc..

Therefore, by recognising that the traumatic dimension of the class conflict determines the essence of what is political, Žižek performs its unauthorised absolutisation. Meanwhile it usually plays a significant role in the initial ‘revolutionary’ phase of political events. The situation of the demands of the ‘demos’ that he mystifies becomes a typical ‘Malleus Maleficarum’, with which he would like to consider all aspects of the phenomenon of the political. And his scaring of readers with the punishing sword of the approaching revolt, in which a mythical ‘demos’ would assert its rights, today looks rather grotesque.

Capitalism & Antisemitism

The figure of the Jew-bloodsucker functions in an equally simplified and in places downright demagogic manner in Žižek’s works. I have already mentioned that this is tied to two figures discussed above, constituting a certain phantasmal kind of their ‘substantiation’ and background. In keeping with Žižek’s way of understanding, the economic system of capitalism, by its very essence remaining in a state of permanent imbalance, unavoidably generates deep social inequalities. The latter are not only a source of deep class antag-
onisms and conflicts, but also question the very idea of social ‘unity’. And because this idea is inextricably tied to the conviction that society exists as a certain ‘real’ and objectively perceptible being, acknowledging that it is pure fiction is thereby tantamount to stating that ‘society does not exist’.

In this perspective, the figure of the Jew-bloodsucker and cheat constitutes the fundamental phantasm inescapably generated by individuals in capitalist societies. With the help of this phantasm, situated in their subconscious, they project their own aggression linked to their frustrations within the capitalist means of production onto the Jewish community on the one hand, and on the other they justify to themselves the objective absence of social ‘unity’ (after all, the deceitful conniving of the Jews is to blame for everything).

Žižek’s portrayal assumes that antisemitism in the form in which it manifests itself in modern societies is not only a matter of historically and culturally rooted prejudices and superstitions regarding Jews. Its exceptional vitality and strength should be tied to the phantasmal soil on which it grows, and this is – indirectly – determined economically. For this reason it cannot be criticised rationally, unlike other social prejudices and misconceptions. This implies that capitalist societies are unable to achieve ‘emancipation’ from antisemitism, since only by retaining the phantasm of the Jew-bloodsucker in their subconscious can they sustain the illusion of their own (potential) ‘unity’.

The possibility of emancipation in relation to this phantasm would only be able to appear should an economic system arise not generating social inequalities. But there are no signs of this happening today, and as such this option is purely hypothetical. All that remains is to expose the absurdity of antisemitic attitudes by bringing out the mechanism described above of the formation of the Jew-bloodsucker phantasm. In this depiction, the phantasm has a status close to a symptom, i.e. a specific symptom that does not disappear even if interpreted correctly in the analytical process.

If one were to stick to this method of understanding, one should also reach the conclusion that Žižek himself is an unrepentant antisemite. With the only difference being that he knows this. And he is striving to ‘atone’ with earnest passion, laying bare the mechanism behind the formation of antisemitic attitudes in a capitalist society.

Researchers into the history of antisemitism and its contemporary manifestations would probably easily point out a number of simplifications in Žižek’s manner of approaching this phenomenon. For example his underestimation of the roles played by social, cultural and religious factors, the genesis of many of them reaching back to an ancient or mediaeval past. Not to mention the total disregard of what is after all extensive literature in the field. But Žižek could respond to such accusations, and quite rightly so, that
his concept only relates to psychoanalytical portrayals to date of the phenomenon of antisemitism, constituting their radical rephrasing. Which is why in my effort to discuss this, I focus on the assumptions of his arguments.

I shall begin with an argument appealing to common sense. It is quite naturally difficult not to agree with the statement that antisemitism is as old as European civilisation. Or that there is practically no country belonging to this civilisation where it has not occurred. But neither can one ignore the distinct differences in regard to the social scope and intensity of its occurrence in these countries, which mainly social and cultural factors contributed to. In any case, countries where antisemitism was from the 19th century and still is but a marginal phenomenon, are undoubtedly the Anglo-Saxon countries. These are also the countries in which the capitalist model of the economy formed – historically speaking – the earliest, and where it can be seen today in its ‘purest’ liberal version: in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand…

In the meantime, if we were to take Žižek’s arguments seriously, then these are precisely the countries where antisemitic attitudes should be the most prevalent. Yet here as well the capitalist system produces the greatest inequalities and social antagonisms, compelling one to pose dramatic questions about the existence of social ‘unity’. In such a case would the bloodsucking-Jew phantasm not be the best ‘medicine’ here for the social anxieties and frustrations?

So what is responsible for such a paradox? Perhaps it was precisely the reverse. That precisely because in the capitalist model of the economy developing particularly vigorously in Great Britain and later in the United States the Jews were among those ethnic groups that coped best with it, and quickly became one of the main ‘driving forces’. This was also soon realised, with the benefits of this development taken note of above all. Presumably Žižek would respond to this argument that his approach to antisemitism is not about the sphere of social attitudes controlled by the conscious, but about what in capitalist societies lies in the phantasms they are unaware of.

This is indeed a rather dubious argument, but let us assume that it is supported by a truth of some kind. But then doubts of another nature surface. How, in this case, can one explain the fact that in the Soviet Union and countries of the former Eastern Bloc, where the model of the economy was different than capitalist and all ethnic and religious forms of identity were (at least ideologically) acknowledged as an anachronism, antisemitic attitudes were not only not in decline, but even underwent a specific strengthening? Should these two factors, of fundamental importance for the ideology implemented in these countries, of building a ‘socialist economy’ on the one hand and the slogans of communist internationalism on the other, not contribute naturally towards the demise of these attitudes?
After all, regardless of how we might assess the economic effectiveness of this model, it was evidently devised in a manner for it not to produce the class ‘inequalities’ proper to capitalism, deriving from the private ownership of means of production. In addition, many revolutionaries of Jewish descent, if only to mention Rosa Luxemburg or Trotsky, were entirely serious in their demands for the emancipation of Jewish communities, conceived by them as a total departure from religious tradition, customs and way of dress, etc., through to the absolute obliteration of identifying with ‘being a Jew’ (and all the more so of ‘being a Jew’ in the religious sense). In such a case are these attitudes the result of the survival in societies of this region of certain atavisms related to a previous era, when the capitalist economy took root in them? And even if this was so, why over time did these atavisms not vanish, but even began growing in strength?

That is not all. Suffice to recall the manifold examples of communist propaganda in those countries where posters depicting, for example, a disgusting American capitalist in a tail coat and top hat, stealing a sackful of dollars, and with such a nose were the order of the day; one could hardly miss the distinct antisemitic overtone. Not to mention Stalin’s highly advanced plans in the nineteen fifties for carrying out the mass extermination of Jews in the USSR and subordinate countries along the model of Hitler’s ‘final solution’. To think only that had this annihilation actually come about (and allegedly the plan was within barely a few months of commencing), how different all disputes over the differences between fascist and communist totalitarianism would look today. The surviving plans and other materials reveal very explicitly that Stalin’s planned extermination of the Jews was to be a faithful repetition of what Hitler failed to fully bring about. The ‘ideological’ justification of the annihilation planned by Stalin was undoubtedly totally different. But in this perspective does that really matter at all?

Can these examples therefore be treated as something in isolation and of little relevance, blaming them for example only on the paranoid obsession of the Generalissimus? And as such on purely subjective factors? Just as some used to believe that the German Endlösung was but the result of the Führer’s morbid antisemitic obsession? Or could they not testify to the presence in the ‘minds’ of party functionaries of the same antisemitic phantasms as in their Nazi counterparts, except that in this case – as opposed to the societies in countries with ‘rotten’ capitalism referred to above – they were usually articulated in a camouflaged and indirect manner? While they revealed themselves in full force, paradoxically, following the collapse of the USSR, when extreme nationalist, fascist groupings appeared on Russia’s political stage, their core comprising former members of the party and the KGB?
In a word, were they not as in the case of Nazi totalitarianism the essential ‘medium’ serving the communist authorities by lending signs of credibility to the ideology they preached? Yet if the said authorities made use of this ‘medium’, granting it new ideological ‘justification’, then – as with the Nazis – they appealed essentially to superstitions regarding Jews rooted for centuries in social awareness (and therefore since long before the formation of the market economy). And similarly, as with the Nazis, this attitude comprised something of the cynical awareness of the manipulator and a genuine belief that Jews really do threaten the fascist / communist state by their very existence.

In this case, in the light of these facts, can Žižek’s thesis that the vitality of antisemitic attitudes has (indirectly) its roots in the rules of the market economy generating social inequalities and antagonisms, be upheld? Has the typical mechanism of projective identification not taken effect here, according to which one perceives the root of all evil in something ‘other’, in this case in the market economy and its liberal henchmen? By reasoning along these lines, the idea of the Extermination of the Jews that appeared in Hitler’s mind was but a reaction to the aforementioned rules of the market economy. Fascism and Soviet communism were nothing more than a desperate attempt at preventing the devastating consequences of the functioning of these rules. Hitler, Lenin and Stalin were only weak-willed enforcers of the higher forces of history, whose political success was a result of them having created ideologies via which they managed to channel social frustrations related to the real horrors brought by the capitalist system.

This unwieldy dichotomous model of understanding comes very distinctly to the fore in *The Plague of Fantasies*. Žižek attempts here to demonstrate that there is a close relationship between the crimes of genocide perpetrated by Pol Pot’s regime in Cambodia and the Shining Path movement in South America on the one hand, and the character of the capitalist economy, appropriating everything and expanding on the principle of permanent overreaching, as well as the universalistic liberal theories growing from it, on the other. According to Žižek, it was a desperate attempt at drawing up a ‘third way’ that lay at the basis of these revolutionary movements, one that would be at one neither with the capitalist myth of ‘modernisation’ nor with the fundamentalist tendencies seeking support in tradition and constituting only its naïve, internal ‘negation’ (Islamic or Catholic fundamentalism, etc.). This ‘third way’ would involve the rejection by the leaders of these movements of both extreme elements of this false alternative, which is the effect of the capitalist system of production: “these movements represent a desperate attempt to avoid the imbalance constitutive of capitalism without seeking support in some previous tradition supposed to enable us mastery of this
imbalance (the Islamic fundamentalism which remains within this logic is for that reason ultimately a perverted instrument of modernisation). In other words, behind Sendero Luminoso’s endeavour to erase an entire tradition and to begin from the zero-point in an act of creative sublimation, there is the correct insight into the complementary relationship of modernity and tradition: any true return to tradition is today a priori impossible, its role is simply to serve as a shock absorber for the process of modernisation” (Žižek 2001: 80).

Well, poor old poet Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge guard! And the equally unfortunate Abimael Guzman as well, the bloody leader of the Shining Path! Becoming in the name of their chosen ‘third way’, just like Lenin years before them, true butchers of the human masses; they did not realise that in the name of grand revolutionary ideals their attempts to overcome the inhuman nature of the capitalist economy through the physical elimination of those they considered opponents to the building of a new communist society from scratch were doomed to failure from the start. In any event, it was ultimately capitalism that was responsible for the emergence of such radically left-wing movements, so authentic in their desperate gesture of ‘starting anew’. And what’s worse, it is also responsible for it being impossible – for now at least – to draw up some kind of realistic alternative.

However, the fact that the new communist states built by the revolutionary leaders of the ‘third way’ transform into a slaughterhouse of human masses is not of the slightest significance in the light of the ‘ontological’ perspective taken by Žižek in his portrayal. It is sufficient just to adroitly use quotes from Kant and Hegel torn out of context to demonstrate the ‘logically’ justified character of these extreme left-wing political ventures. After all, few read these boring classics of philosophy. And they’re certainly not read by those thousands of students in the lecture halls of (private) American universities, almost in rapture as they drink up every word falling from the Slovenian Master’s lips. From a true Slav of the Balkan borderlands, proclaiming like a pagan priest in mad ecstasy the new political Truth to the frustrated masses of the world of western capitalism as it nears its end: “The Khmer Rouge and the Senderistas therefore function as a kind of ‘infinite judgment’ on late capitalism in the precise Kantian sense of the term: they are to be located in a third domain beyond the inherent antagonism that defines the late-capitalist dynamic (the antagonism between the modernist drive and the fundamental backlash), since they radically reject both poles of the opposition. As such, they are – to put it in Hegelese – an integral part of the notion of late capitalism: if one wants to comprise capitalism as a world-system, one must take into account its inherent nega-
tion, the ‘fundamentalism’, as well as its absolute negation, the infinite judgment on it” (ibid).

But that is not all. According to Žižek, all explicit and clandestine manifestations of enmity and aggression towards ‘foreigners’ in developed countries of the West also fit within a similarly circular logic, so paranoid in its expression, of a ‘never-ending trial of capitalism’ produced by capitalism itself. According to this author, assaults on foreigners and immigrants in Germany by skinheads and various Nazi groups in the nineties were specific proof of this. Although they were rather isolated incidents, they corresponded nevertheless with the silent aversion towards ‘foreigners’ among the country’s bourgeois majority. Members of the party representing this majority publicly condemned all such behaviour and the persecution of ‘foreigners’ as inconsistent with the liberal values of the democratic system. Yet at the same time, they claimed that it was to do with a certain ‘real’ social problem that required a solution, involving the tightening of immigration regulations or various sorts of legislation. This in practice meant even greater discrimination and marginalisation of all minority groups, and as such contradicted the liberal values referred to at the same time.

It is quite naturally difficult not to admit that Žižek was right in exposing the hypocrisy that was (and is) a hallmark of a section of the liberal right-wing – and also left-wing – political elites in contemporary Germany and broad swathes of their voters. Besides, we could witness various signs of such hypocrisy, even more meaningful, in the most recent years of the major crisis, when in various countries of Western Europe tendencies to protect the domestic job market clearly contradicting the principle of economic liberalism became obvious. And these were not only turned against the throngs of immigrants from Africa or Asia, but also workers from countries of the former Soviet bloc, now part of the European Union.

Except that, for a start, it is difficult to perceive in such behaviours an argument against liberalism as a political and economic doctrine. At the most, they prove that when the vested interests of certain politically significant social groups in a specific country are threatened (including the ‘working class’, as a rule represented by trade unions sympathetic of the left), a large portion of the pro-liberal political class in these countries is prepared – due to fear of losing their influence – to behave in a non-liberal manner. Secondly, if one takes a closer look at Žižek’s reasoning, it is unclear what the connection is between the examples from Germany he refers to and the comment preceding them about the ‘third way’ chosen by the Shining Path and Khmer Rouge. Especially that we find practically no reasoning in his arguments supporting the thesis lying behind these ponderings, that the system
of the free-market economy, producing social inequalities, is also responsible for the “postmodern racism which now rages around Europe” (ibid, p. 226).

Our problem seems to derive from reasons that are purely rhetorical, not of substance. It derives from the purely ‘associational’ manner in which his exposition is constructed, frequently seen in Žižek’s works and mentioned above, where intellectual leaps with nothing to justify them are veiled by impressive rhetoric, generating the false appearance of argumentative coherence. Yet when one makes a closer examination of the train of examples he mentions, they turn out to have little in common, because in fact he hurriedly threw them together as if ‘sticking on’ successive images and scenes. Hence the impression mentioned above of a journalistic shallowness to his expositions, in which Lacan and the classics of philosophy only appear in the doubtful role of ornaments lending them credibility.

Summary

In Žižek’s concept of the political, based on similar assumptions, one can single out at least three fundamental types of the political subject, depending on the ‘position’ it occupies in regard to the deep social inequalities and antagonisms generated by the capitalist system.

The first of these positions is the acceptance of a liberal democratic order as a state’s best political form of organisation, with all its deficiencies and weaknesses, but for which no realistic alternative has – yet – been developed. This first subject could be described as liberal-bourgeois, although nowadays this comes in diverse versions, starting from staunch supporters of liberalism, then communitarians, to representatives of the moderate left (such as Habermas, for example) or radical left (Mouffe, Laclau). Although the latter proclaim the necessity for radical transformation of the liberal democratic state model of late capitalism in a socialist spirit, they are in favour of it retaining the rules of the political game that have been in force in it until now.

Essentially those in favour of retaining the ‘bourgeois’ model of the parliamentary democracy state unwittingly see their own interest in this, as they usually belong to social groups playing a dominant role in the said state. This is tied to a certain hypocrisy in their argumentation in favour of the state guaranteeing its citizens a broad range of freedoms, in which they perceive the system’s fundamental determining factor. However, they do not notice (or do not want to notice) that citizens’ access to the said freedoms, and taking advantage of them, varies greatly depending on them belonging to a specific social group or class. Not to mention the glaring discrimination that groups of immigrants are subjected to in the light of the law.
The liberal-bourgeois subject reasoning in this manner is deeply convinced that individuals, granted a broad range of freedoms and living in a parliamentary democracy state, comprise a uniform community based on fundamental political values. Any imperfections or cracks in the system are blamed, on the other hand, on accidental factors that should be overcome via appropriate reforms. In essence, though, in the subconscious, in the phantasmal scheme of their perceptions, they see the cause of such a state of affairs as lying in the deceitful machinations by ‘others’, by people representing ‘enemy’ forces.

For religious, cultural and historical reasons, Jews are naturally the most suitable for the role of those suspect ‘others’. Hence the deep correlation between Nazi or right-wing nationalist groupings of all descriptions, etc., and the phantasmal structure lying at the foundations of identity among bourgeois individuals accepting the market economy and their political representatives of all colours. This is because antisemitism is almost an organic element of this structure, as without the Jew-bloodsucker figure constituting its phantasmal support, the conviction regarding the uniform character of bourgeois society would be untenable.

This portrayal implies that the liberal-bourgeois subject is by nature antisemitic. And even if he or she has no idea of this. Why, this subject is antisemitic even if a Judaeophile or Jew in an ethnic or religious sense, since only in this way may they retain their illusion of social ‘unity’, granting sense to their liberal vision of the political and the state. The antisemitism of the liberal-bourgeois subject, rooted in such a deep phantasmal plane, constitutes the ground on which their entire political identity is supported. And because this ground remains fundamentally unknown, then any rational arguments, attempts at breaking free of it through critical reflection, fighting with prejudices and education, etc., fail in relation to it.

It thus emerges that the liberal-bourgeois subject, despite their most sincere desire, is unable in any way to achieve emancipation from their antisemitism, which at the very best remains deeply hidden within this subject, put to sleep like the dark bottom of a deep well. Because the antisemitism Žižek talks about has little in common with the superstitions regarding Jews that have been around for millennia, but grows from the very heart of the capitalist free-market system. It is a kind of fate that predetermines the political identity of the liberal-bourgeois subject, which the latter is unable to do anything about.

The second type of political subject is the communist subject of ‘absolute negation’. Opposing the model of western civilisation conditioned by the capitalist system of production, oriented towards constantly overreaching
itself and atomising the social community, it is also in opposition to all sorts of fundamentalism. As such it rejects both the aspiration grounded in the market economy for constant civilizational ‘progress’ by breaking free of hitherto forms of production and the shackles of tradition, and the drive to adhere rigorously to traditional values that constitutes a natural reaction to this. However, a feature of both of these extremely dissimilar tendencies is that they are based on an identical logic of ‘excluding the Other’, i.e. the total degradation of any pursuits not fitting their universalistic aspirations. However, according to Žižek, the fundamentalism and nationalisms of today are not so much rooted in tradition as comprise a reaction to the concealed chauvinism of the liberal view of society: “The traditional liberal opposition between ‘open’ pluralist societies and ‘closed’ nationalist-corporatist societies founded on the exclusion of the Other has thus to be brought to its point of self-reference: the liberal gaze itself functions according to the same logic, insofar as it is founded upon the exclusion of the Other to whom one attributes the fundamentalist nationalism, etc. On that account, events in ex-Yugoslavia exemplify perfectly the properly dialectical reversal: something which first appeared within the given set of circumstances as the most backward element, a left-over of the past, all of a sudden, with the shift in the general framework, emerges as the element of the future in the present context, as the premonition of what lies ahead” (Žižek 2001: 78).

And so once again the source of all evil turns out to be political liberalism, glorifying the capitalist system, compared to which the chauvinism of fundamentalist movements constitutes but an ‘internal negation’, its symmetric reversal. In this perspective, the communist subject of ‘absolute negation’ undertakes the truly heroic effort of searching for a ‘third way’, one that would be free of both the simplifications of the uncritical cult of modernity practised by liberals, and the equally uncritical cult of tradition characteristic of fundamentalists. Building everything ‘from the beginning’ is supposed to be this ‘third way’, starting from the creation of a totally new communist economic order and ending with the elimination of all traditional social bonds in the name of creating a new society of the future.

As I have already written, Žižek provides two examples of this kind of communist subject. In his opinion it is epitomised by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the Shining Path in Peru. In his eyes, the leaders of these movements made a desperate attempt at breaking free of the universalistic logic of contemporary capitalism by turning in a direction exactly opposite to that chosen by all fundamentalist movements. Except that these attempts proved equally as ineffective as the strategies adopted by the latter. Here the place of ‘internal negation’ was taken by ‘absolute negation’, which as an
‘infinite judgment on capitalism’ fitted to an equal degree the universalistic logic of capitalism, i.e. finding justification for itself only in what it, through itself, negated.

It would be right to add here that the attempt made by Lenin and other leaders of the Bolsheviks’ party – after having won the revolution in Russia – to build a new communist society fitted within a similar model. And it actually constitutes the archetypical prototype for all ‘third way’ movements, as in this case as well the basic goals were to base the political and state order on entirely new economic principles and set ‘proletariat’ ideals and values against traditional ‘bourgeois’ ideals and values. Also, as in those other movements, rejected tradition returned here in various ways, via the back door. Therefore, if Pol Pot’s regime attempted at the same time as rejecting tradition to relate to the idea of the former Cambodian empire, then likewise the way in which the communist state was organised in the USSR, its foundations created by Lenin, bore numerous traits of the tsarist feudal system in a new costume, while the relation between party nomenklatura and the working class and peasantry resembled, in many respects, that between lord and slave.

The only significant difference lay in the cult of scientific progress and technology. However, one has to note that this was only supported by the state inasmuch as it could directly serve its military goals, coupled with total neglect of sectors of industry serving social consumption. Thus this approach was a kind of caricature of the cult of scientific progress and technology in the form it took in developed capitalist countries, where there was an interdependence between civil and military sectors of the state economy. Which is also one of the main reasons why throughout the duration of the USSR the military sector there, developing mainly on the basis of economic and military intelligence, remained far behind the West and from the nineteen seventies was experiencing genuine regression.

The question that arises here is: how, in that case, does the phantasmal ground of the identity of the communist subject of ‘absolute negation’ look? Despite its main political goal being to break free of the nihilistic ‘logic’ of the capitalist system, is this subject still defined beneath the skin by this ‘logic’, and is it – as is the liberal subject – a subconscious antisemite? Žižek says little on this matter (in fact, he barely says anything). Therefore all that remains is for us – following the logic of his arguments – to give a hypothetical answer to this question.

In the case of a liberal subject, phantasmal antisemitism is tied to the illusory vision of social unity nourished by this subject, a vision that cannot be realised in political practice only because some scheming ‘others’ do ev-
erything to prevent it being established. Thus they are the main enemy to the capitalist system and liberal values.

As for the communist subject of ‘absolute negation’, the enemy comprises both the capitalist system of production together with the liberal ideology rooted in it, and the tradition of a particular community as broadly understood. It would seem therefore that this subject, regardless of how one assesses the ‘third way’ it proposes, is not (and cannot be) in any case an antisemite. Nevertheless, its fundamental goal is to build a political order based on economics radically different to the free market variety – and as such not producing social inequalities (which in Žižek’s portrayal is the main source of contemporary antisemitism).

The problem is that the main enemy in the eyes of this subject, and so the capitalist means of production and its liberal henchmen, is the effect of ‘dirty work by the Jews’. After all, they devised this devilish system in order to get rich at others’ cost, by taking advantage of the social inequalities it generated. This is demonstrated clearly by the antisemitic attitudes exceptionally strong in the Soviet communist party, the crowning of which was to be the abovementioned ‘final solution’ prepared in the nineteen fifties by Stalin and his unquestioning supporters. Admittedly, Žižek could respond to this charge, saying that this is because the supporters of this ‘third way’ do not actually formulate any realistic alternative to the capitalist free market economy, but by totally negating it they are mentally dependent on it. Hence their antisemitism is the result of their programmatic weakness. It is antisemitism they inherited from the liberal subject, and as such secondary antisemitism inherited through transfer. Therefore, if in the first case it was a symptom, it is now a symptom of this symptom.

The third type of political subject is represented by Žižek himself. This is a subject that has not only penetratingly seen through the essence of market economy mechanisms generating social inequalities and the repressive nature of the parliamentary democracy system guaranteeing the dominance of bourgeois parties, but one that has also developed a political strategy by which ‘genuinely’ left-wing parties and groups will be able to shake the foundations of this system and bring their own main demands to fruition. However, what remains vague is whether this will occur by forcing bourgeois parties to make the essential reforms, or through a social revolution. Whatever the case, it should be an Event that introduces an element of discontinuity into the existing political order.

In a word, this is a subject which by laying bare the true face of the bourgeois state of a parliamentary democracy, and condemning the deep antagonisms and conflicts tearing it apart as well as the hypocrisy of the liberal
ideologies sanctioning its economic, political and social order, has an idea for how to make the radical left a serious political force. It is a subject that knows. And when this revolution really does occur, it also knows how party leaders should proceed. They should simply rely spontaneously on their own creativity and intuition, resolving ad hoc all the dilemmas and problems that emerge.

The archetypical model of such a political subject is, in Žižek’s view, Lenin. It was with complete brilliance that he perceived the real opportunities of achieving a revolution in the situation that took shape in the Russia of 1917 and drew up an effective strategy for the party’s activity when making the effort to put the new system’s ideological assumptions into effect. Only that the inertia of the party apparatus, interested mainly in holding on to power, stood in the way of the full implementation of these plans. As such, Lenin’s brilliant ideas and means of functioning were very quickly laid aside, creating a bureaucratic system consumed by opportunism and stagnation. Thus the spirit of his authentically revolutionary transformations was warped, creating a totalitarian monster-state, the living embodiment of which became Stalin.

Žižek does not precisely specify – as I have already mentioned – what this new political order he calls for would involve, since (as he claims) everything is supposed to arise within it in statu nascendi. His chief demands are of a negative nature: a departure from free-market principles and from the rules of the game characteristic of the bourgeois parliamentary democracy state. As for his ‘positive’ demands (rights for immigrants, the elimination of social inequalities, equality of rights for people of different sexual orientation, etc.), no matter how valid they are, they are also too general to be able to say anything at all about the economic and administrative-political keystones of his hypothetically anticipated new order.

As such, even if treating it as yet another left-wing utopia, it is not difficult to criticise his concept, pointing out its rhetorically groundless character. The unparalleled voluntarism in his interpretation of events that unfolded in the first years following the revolution in Russia, and the actual role Lenin played in them, is also striking. But that is a task to be left for a historian.

Another very doubtful measure in his reasoning is supporting it on the backbreaking analogy between the developmental ‘logic’ of revolutionary events, and the corresponding ‘logic’ that defines the Lacan model of the analytical situation. As if the stage of making the patient ‘hysterical’ in the analysis and their passing beyond the phantasm were directly translatable to the plane of collective social behaviours, while the political strategy of the party provoking these behaviours could be treated as a faithful copy of the
strategy of a Lacan analyst towards the patient. These are all analogies plucked entirely ‘from the air’. Although they form intellectually effective constructs, they are at the same time totally abstract, a match in their schematic nature for the digressions of the late mediaeval scholastics.

Quite a separate issue is the manner in which Žižek creates the figure of Lenin in his works, perceiving in him the prototype of (radically) left-wing activity by the political subject. One can see in this a new type of mythicisation of this leader of the Russian revolution. If we bear in mind that every myth emerges as the result of the omission and hiding of various negative attributes of figures or events being sublimated, then this is otherwise understandable behaviour. For example the myth of Rome’s genealogy apparently has nothing in common with the actual beginnings of the Eternal City, which – as historians claim – was initially a settlement inhabited by a variety of cutthroats, thieves and prostitutes. However, one cannot but be surprised that such discourse is the course opted for by a subject so psychoanalytically emancipated as Žižek. And quite naturally it cannot fail to provoke a number of questions and doubts.

So let’s follow Žižek and assume that an authentic left-wing political subject today is the Lenin-subject. Strictly speaking, this is a Lenin who read not only Marx and Engels, but also Lacan (and was perhaps even analysed himself) and strives to make use of certain elements of his psychoanalytical theory for his own political concept. The first strength of such a Lenin-Žižek-subject is that he is intellectually emancipated in regard to the rules defining the mechanisms behind the functioning of the market economy, since he has seen right through their nihilistic character, generating social antagonisms and inequalities. Secondly, he is emancipated in relation to the rules defining the principles of the political game in a liberal democracy state – since he has realised that there is nothing objective and neutral about them, but that their only purpose is to enable bourgeois parties of all shades to hold onto power. And thereby making it impossible for parties that are authentically left-wing, parties that represent the demos, i.e. socially marginalised or excluded groups, to come to power. Thirdly, such a subject, drawing inspiration from the acumen of Lenin’s political sense, already knows with what strategy they should get even with the capitalist state of the liberal democracy. He only does not know – for now – what to do next, but here one should count on the political genius dormant within him, or to put it in Aristotelian terms, his practical sense, his phronesis.

In such a case do all those traits of the political subject of the left, of the Lenin-Žižek-subject who read Lacan and knows how to carry out a revolution, make it possible for him to achieve emancipation in regard to one more
superstition which, according to Žižek, is inseparably connected to the capitalist system: the phantasmal figure of the Jew-bloodsucker? Why, such a Lenin-Žižek-subject has one undoubted strength over the political subject of liberalism: he knows that the true sources of contemporary antisemitism lie within the very essence of the free-market economy.

The problem is that in his concept of antisemitism, Žižek starts from Lacan’s theory of the formation of the subject’s identity, dominated by the ‘ontological’ perspective, i.e. indicating purely psychological processes of universal character, constitutive for human identity. But in this theory, that identity is formed in the face of the subject’s diverse traumatic experiences, which – on the principle of a kind of defensive action – activate various kinds of phantasm in the subject. Because it is these, concealing what is absolutely incomprehensible to the subject (experiencing castration, their parents’ sexual intercourse, etc.) and thereby difficult to accept, that lie at the foundations of the notion of ‘unity’ of the ‘self’, thus making it possible for the subject to function in social space.

In this perspective, the Jew-bloodsucker phantasm is but one of many possible phantasms of the ‘Other’ that appear in the process of formation of the subject’s identity, although in this case its sources are embedded in a specific social and cultural context. In this case it is the context of European culture, comprising its Christian tradition and the contemporary model of the parliamentary democracy state, which has grown from the market economy. This context causes Jews to be particularly predestined to appear in the role of bearers of ‘pure evil’. Firstly, because from the point of view of Christian tradition, they are the ‘killers of Christ’ the Son of God, the prophet of the ‘one true’ religion. Secondly, due to their merchant talents developed since ancient times (and so cheating and the usurious draining of all vital juices from honest people), they thought up an economic system in which these thievish practices bring the biggest benefits for them. Therefore, in European tradition the phantasm of the Jew, killer of Christ, is overlapped by the phantasm of the Jew-bloodsucker, or Jew-capitalist, who by his very nature is inclined towards shady monetary manipulations (it would be right to add here that in societies of Soviet bloc countries the phantasm of the Jew-communist was – and still is – exceptionally animated; its conniving led to the emergence of the totalitarian Stalinist state, aimed against ‘good’, ‘ordinary’ people; however, Žižek makes no mention of this anywhere).

Hence although Žižek writes relatively little about prejudices regarding Jews, reaching back deep into antiquity, in his eyes it was only when the market economy was born that antisemitism in the societies of Europe took on a particularly aggressive form, expressive evidence of which was, for
example, the idea of the ‘final solution’ that arose in fascist Germany. But let us recall that the correct ‘ontological’ foundation of the continuation in European tradition of these two phantasms involving Jews is the manner in which phantasms come into being in the human psyche, as a constitutive element of the formation of human identity as the ‘Self’.

Here we reach the core of the issue. Žižek’s ‘ontological’ perspective regarding the genealogy of the human identity, inherited from Lacan, assumes that it is practically impossible for a subject to get rid of their own phantasms. They may only become aware of them during analysis and attempt to go beyond them, summoning up a kind of distance towards them, but they may never be disposed of. Because without them, the subject would be unable to shape their perception of themselves as a Self, and as such function in social space, adopting defined roles – in family, work, politics, etc.. The case is similar with the phantasms of the Jew-Christ-killer and the Jew-bloodsucker. Although totally absurd, they are deeply rooted in the subconscious of Europeans, a constitutive element of their identity. The European’s total emancipation from antisemitism is in fact therefore impossible.

One may of course hypothetically assume that, as a result of some new, breakthrough historical circumstances arising, Jews will cease to occupy the position of the ‘Other’, of that guilty of everything, on the phantasmal plane. But for a start this is not very likely, as then the entire Christian tradition would have to pass into oblivion, and the market economy system would have to collapse, and secondly their place would unavoidably be taken by some other ‘others’ – also to blame for everything. So even if some new type of society and state comes into being, for example that based on the assumptions of radical left-wing ideas, it is hard to imagine that thereby some totally new type of identity structure in the individuals creating it would form, devoid of its phantasmal basis. To make such a claim would mean to question the very foundations of the Lacan concept of identity that Žižek otherwise constantly refers to.

Ultimately, Žižek’s stance in the issue of antisemitism is deeply fatalistic. Just as the formation of human identity without the phantasms concealing what is traumatic is impossible, equally as impossible is emancipation where antisemitism is concerned. All that remains is to unmask the primitivism of the psychological mechanisms that lie at its base. Yet even he who achieves this with the greatest passion is an antisemite. Practically everybody is antisemitic, even the Jews. After all, can they function in a capitalist society while not simultaneously holding themselves in deep disdain as those who led to its coming into being? And is the most loathsome thing in them not precisely the fact that, although they themselves know well who they are, they continue to act as if they did not know?
In one of his interviews, when revealing various intimate details of his own biography, Žižek mentions that he was raised in a family with an exceptionally antisemitic attitude. This leads one to presume that the issue of antisemitism, which he returns to with downright obsession in his books, constitutes a deeply personal problem for him. And I believe that this is one of few problems (and perhaps the only one) that he approaches in utmost seriousness. However, in no way does this alter the fact that in the eagerness with which he strives to expose the phantasmal roots of antisemitism and to demonstrate how very constitutive it is for the identity of capitalist societies, he shifts unnoticed by himself to positions he has criticised.

This is because this eagerness (or rather overeagerness) commands him to acknowledge quasi fascist identity, constructed around an axis of antisemitism, as the paradigmatic model in portraying all types of identity. He performs a specific universalisation and absolutisation of this identity, acknowledging that what lies at the foundations of all other types of bourgeois identity reveals itself in it with full clarity. In this manner he grants it an ontologically privileged position. This depiction implies that in European societies governed by the market economy model there is practically no escape from this type of identity. Because it is only thanks to it that the subject gains a sense of their own ‘uniform’ self, which corresponds to the notion he has thus saved of a (possible) social unity. And although both these notions are illusory, they enable his being together with other people according to defined rules.

It follows from this that all types of bourgeois identity other than the antisemitic quasi-fascist are in relation to it an aberration, a derivative, something without meaning. It constitutes their true, hidden face, that on which ‘liberal’ bourgeois subjects usually superimpose various types of duplicitous masks, attempting to shut out the Jew-bloodsucker phantasm defining them beneath the skin. Because one way or another, antisemitism is the inevitable destiny of Europeans, and any attempts towards emancipation from it must end in failure.

The manner in which Žižek, radicalising hitherto psychoanalytical concepts, portrays the phantasmal foundations of antisemitism as the starting point, choosing quasi-fascist identity of the national-Catholic (or national-socialist) variety, leads him to a peculiar demonization of this phenomenon. Unnoticeably to himself, he recognises it as a constitutive element of all types of identity. Thus he commits the classic mistake characteristic of all kinds of ‘zealots’. By striving to demonstrate that this phenomenon’s roots lie much deeper than expressed by Freud or Klein – i.e. that it constitutes a phantasmal axis around which bourgeois identity is shaped – he raises it unwittingly
to the rank of an inalienable foundation of all types of identity. The aforementioned quasi-fascist identity becomes for him a paradigm of thinking about the human subject and society as one that in his portrayal only ‘exists’ insomuch as it is antisemitic. Or, to be more precise, one that builds its imagined illusion of its ‘existence’ on the Jew-bloodsucker phantasm it is unaware of.

One of the biggest discoveries in Freud’s psychoanalysis was the demonstration of how very different forms of love only constitute a reversed form of hatred. This led him to maintain that philosemitism, in other words an overly accentuated ‘love’ for Jews, only constituted a reversed form of antisemitism. Therefore a philosemite is somebody who, despite their most sincere desire to ‘be good’ for Jews, is not actually capable of overcoming their own aggression towards them. Somebody for whom their ‘love’ for them is only an external mask behind which is concealed their subconscious hatred of them. The weakness of this attitude is grounded on the philosemite being unable to approach Jews ‘normally’ and treat them the same way as other people, instead distinguishing them ‘lovingly’ as if in this manner escaping in a panic from their own enmity towards them. And thereby unwittingly achieving its displacement into the subconscious. However, this always comes to light later in the masked form of their symptomatic behaviours (e.g. a paranoid suspicion of antisemitism in everybody else).

I believe that Žižek’s approach to the matter of antisemitism is entangled in the typical aporia of the philosemitic stance. Although he cannot be denied ‘good intentions’, he defines them with a kind of vicious circle, one with no way out. In his portrayal the Jew-bloodsucker phantasm is on the one hand a purely illusory and primitive notion growing from the subject’s ousted aggression. But on the other hand, it constitutes an inalienable fundament of the identity of today’s Europeans, deeply established in cultural tradition (Christianity) and the present day (capitalism). However, if we take into consideration that in a cultural and civilizational sense, and due to the globalisation processes underway, the overwhelming majority of the Earth’s human population have become Europeans today, then the irrefutable conclusion hereby arising is that antisemitism as well has become global, and reaches as far in the world as the market economy has spread. Well, perhaps with the exception of North Korea and, partially, Cuba.

References


140


The Microphysics of Power and Microphysics of Resistance in the Depiction of Social Queer Theory*

“Private is political”: the most essential procedures of power consist in the production of subjectivity, submissive identity and submissive bodies. Power is the process of normalisation of everyday gestures, thoughts and desires. That is why the question about the political, the question posed from the perspective of social queer theory, is a question about the rules of reproduction of the social system of domination (gender, sexual, racial, etc.), about the mechanism of involving bodies in normative simulations. Subjectivity from this perspective is a ‘simulation of simulation’, but is not an illusion. Subjectivity produces real, material effects on the surface of bodies and also real effects in the social systems of gender or sexual segregation. Resistance therefore consists in querying (‘queering’) the normative subjectivity, its obviousness, its ‘naturalness’. It consists in liberating bodies from the normative obligations. In this paper I attempt to explain that the practice of queer fight consists in transforming stable, socially constructed subjectivities into unstable, changeable, ‘crossing out’, open, non-logical, inconsistent (non)subjectivities. Power achieves its goals due to the subordination of bodies. The practice of resistance must be the practice of insubordination.

The reception in Poland for queer studies is extremely colourful and, at times, surprising (Mizielińska 2006: 123-142). Within the so-called ‘new humanities’ such studies deal with issues in social non-normative spaces (mainly sexual and gender-related, but not only), the exploration of what is marginal, excluded or ‘abjective’, analysis of mechanisms enforcing normative correctness, the subordination of bodies and the creation of social systems of segregation. There are exceedingly few people in Poland dealing with the queer perspective in social research, and as such few papers and books within the area of queer studies are published. It is therefore all the more surprising that over the last few years the wave of criticism regarding the presence of a queer perspective in research into non-heterosexuality has been intensifying in Poland, as a result of which it is much easier to find criticism than a paper representing

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This criticism, let’s be honest, is of rather poor quality, as it is usually limited to the reiteration of a few anti-queer slogans known from western humanities. Most common among these is the following accusation: that queer studies are too ‘academic’ and theoretical, due to which there is no possibility of translating them into any effective political program leading to cultural and social change in the situation of women, non-heterosexuals or transgender people. Let us leave aside the otherwise relevant issue of verification or even falsification of theories purely by applying pragmatic criteria, and let us also ignore what are undoubtedly ambiguous connections between queer studies and so-called queer activism. This accusation is worth considering, as it draws attention to an important theoretical problem, namely the issue of the effectiveness of the practice of political resistance related to attempts at abolishing the system of male domination (more broadly: the system of gender segregation) or the system of obligatory heterosexualism (more broadly: the system of sexual segregation). However, the search for a formula of effective resistance must be preceded by an attempt to answer the question regarding the nature of the power that is responsible for the formation and reproduction of the heteronormative and phallocentric system of domination.

**Microphysics of Biopower**

The theory of power fundamental to the queer perspective was drawn up by Michel Foucault (1998, 2000). He pointed out that the basic technique of modern power is the production of submissive, disciplined bodies set within the mechanisms of production and reproduction. According to this French philosopher, the pre-modern power over death, expressed in the ruthless right of the sovereign to take life or send to death (war), had been replaced by power over life, where the individual body becomes a ‘resource’ worth fostering, a tool worth improving. This means that the elemental goal of modern power is to appropriate the individual’s body by subjecting it to diverse corrective, ‘orthopaedic’ and disciplinary techniques. A submissive body – that is the stake being played for. The submissiveness of a body is achieved thanks to submissiveness of the soul, by generating individual identities based on a narrative (a ‘truth’) justifying and legitimising norms organising individuals’ gestures, thoughts and desires. The body’s obedience is achieved not by openly commanding or forbidding, through the sovereign’s

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1 I call the system of social stratification based on the enduring exclusion of subjugated gender/sexual subaltern, expressed for example in the institutionalised retention of their cultural, social, political and economic inequality, a system of sex/gender segregation; see: Kochanowski 2009: 162-164.
‘naked power’, but thanks to the concealed interactions of the microphysics of power, thanks to the discrete conditioning of the individual in such a manner that by behaving in keeping with the norm this individual remains convinced that they are fulfilling their own desires, satisfying the needs of their ‘soul’: “It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those and, in a more general way, on those one supervises (...). This real, non-corporeal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power. (...) The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjugation more profound than himself. A ‘soul’ inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body” (Foucault 1998: 30-31).

Identity, the subjective narrative in which the individual tells itself of itself and the surrounding reality, is the fundamental instrument of power. By generating identity comprising meanings manufactured in the apparatus of power/knowledge, inculcating these meanings in the process of socialisation, and blocking (investing) them with the aid of a system of normative control, power produces submissive bodies, bodies obedient to normative dictates, bodies moulded such that they may be located in the appropriate place in social space, appropriate in regard to the goal of stabilising the system of domination. The body is a social product, the tiniest of everyday bodily gestures are mediated by the relations of power. It is in those moments of everyday life when the individual acts in the belief that he or she is implementing his or her own autonomous life project, autonomous as it comes from ‘within’, at these specific moments that his or her basic incapacitation is accomplished. No difference exists between the body and what is social, the ‘external’/’internal’ binarism is an illusion, a simulation. A simulation of freedom, a simulation of subjectivity, a simulation of autonomy, a simulation essential for concealing the fact that the individual’s body does not belong to him/her, that power is achieving its goals by incessantly conditioning and disciplining bodies, and therefore conditioning and disciplining life. A simulation upheld through the painstaking separation of what is ‘private’ and what is ‘public’, by suggesting that politics applies to what is public, while what is private is autonomous, beyond the relations of power. Hence the
illusion that the road to freedom is a road from the outside inwards, from what is social towards what is individual. In the meantime, in Foucault’s opinion, it is precisely within the space of what is individual, on the body’s surface, in the banality of everyday routine and in trivial gestures, that the fundamental incapacitation of the individual takes place. It is the body that is the stake of the political battle, the body and the soul cornering it: “(...) the body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold on it; they invest it, mark it, train it (...) it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection” (Foucault 2008: 27).

The theme of cultural conditioning of the body first appeared in the works of Marcel Mauss (1973). It was he who drew attention to the fact that societies develop diverse prescriptions relating to the functioning of the body and making use of the body as a tool. These prescriptions create a particular type of body ‘map’, of parts useful and useless, ‘high’ and ‘low’, they specify the optimum positions in different body activities, and even define the limits of the body’s capabilities. This thread was also continued in the works of Norbert Elias (1980), who indicated the role of shame as a technique of obtaining the body’s submissiveness, and the changing borders of this shame in different eras. As modern societies developed, so shame embraced ever greater areas of the body and an ever broader scope of actions, meaning that the body was increasingly subjected to normative, cultural conditioning. However, it was only Foucault who precisely drew attention to the fact that this cultural conditioning of the body in modern societies was closely tied to the relations of power, that it had become a rational activity aiming to achieve a normative transformation of the body. The body was a space of cultural cornering and of a particular type of investment. Normatively parcelled out, and subjected to disciplining orthopaedic technologies, the body was supposed to yield a profit thanks to the possibility of entering it into the mechanisms of (re)production and locating it within social space guaranteeing stabilisation of the system of domination. Knowledge, closely linked to power, knowledge containing a normative reinterpretation of the body, was and is an immanent component of these technologies. Convictions implanted in individuals about certain gestures, desires, behaviours and body posi-

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2 Foucault uses the term *investissement* in regard to the body, a term meaning both investment as in investing capital, and besetting; as such, Tadeusz Komendant translated this term as ‘blocking’ (in Polish: ‘blokowanie’); see: Foucault 2000: 25.
tions being proper, rational, healthy and ‘normal’, while others are improper, are a sign of madness or illness and as such are abnormal, make it possible to achieve the perfect tool: of the body obedient not to external dictates but to the internal imperatives of rightness. Of the body beset not by fear of punishment, but by the shame of an improper, unnatural action, something threatening one’s sense of one’s own value. Norbert Elias cited above wrote that together with the rise in the role of shame in mechanisms of self-control, memory of its cultural, normative origin vanished: “Likewise with denudation. Initially, when somebody in some manner exposes oneself to equals or those of a higher standing, it is treated as a gross offence; however, in regard to those of a lower standing it may even constitute proof of special favour. Later, when the differences gradually disappear, it becomes altogether an unacceptable offence. Awareness of the social conditioning behind the feelings of shame and embarrassment fades away. Because social dictate determines that it is forbidden to expose oneself or take care of one’s natural needs in anybody’s presence, and is inculcated in children in this form, it therefore seems to an adult to be their internal principle, and adopts the form of a more or less total and automatically functioning internal compulsion” (Elias 1980: 183).

The deep and early internalisation of normative prescriptions regarding the ‘correct body’ enables their routine and involuntary reproduction. Fear of punishment for incorrect behaviour, of external mechanisms of control, is replaced by shame, an internal mechanism of the body’s self-control, a mechanism blocking the possibility of the body transgressing towards what is non-normative. Individuals cease to pose questions regarding their everyday gestures, everyday way of handling their own body. They live as if in a schizophrenic split in their awareness: on the one hand, they are usually convinced that their body belongs to them, that it is their property, that they control its reflexes, gestures and desires, but on the other hand they do not question and usually do not subject any of these gestures, reflexes or desires to any reflexive supervision. The sense of possessing a body and having full use of it accompanies the non-reflexive reproduction of social meanings on its surface, the shaping and styling of one’s body in accordance with social norms related to the body. Shame is not treated as a socially created mechanism of normative control, but more often as the ‘voice’ of the body itself, an internal voice suggesting the existence of a boundary, the violation of which may be dangerous. In this manner the normative body, the cultural body becomes totally incorporated into the power relations, which inscribe their meanings on its surface and thanks to everyday gestures materialise the
simulations essential for sustaining the system of domination. Such is the essence of politics. Life is completely seized by the relations of power, which in a full sense becomes the power over life, the biopower, the biopolitical technology of the body. Biopolitics enables the establishment of systems of domination and the structuring of social space, writing out on the bodies the meanings that invest them in defined positions and roles desired by power. The perspective of social queer theory is the portrayal linked to the conviction that the fundamental political stake is to gain control over the tools enabling the production of submissive bodies, bodies entangled in the passive reproduction of normative meanings and, via this reproduction, bodies making it possible to establish social systems of segregation, making it possible to close, to immobilise what is social, to make it unambiguous.

The Body Beset by Gender, the Body Beset by Sexuality

The body understood as an object of political intervention is a sign that, thanks to the binary play of difference (diffØrance), enables the establishing of systems of stratification, systems of segregation, based on this binarity. The interpretation and deconstruction of the way in which they mark bodies inside individual clusters of meanings (for example gender-related or sexual) enables disclosure of the principles of political violence responsible for stabilising the structures of social dominance. And this is why, as Ewa Hy¿y writes when referring to Luis Atušser’s concept of interpellation: “(i)n order to move further along the road towards conceptualisation of social activities, one should investigate in what manner bodies articulate political ideas. There is no need in doing so to assume the existence of a ‘pre-discursive’ body, it is sufficient to accept that it is an area and means of symbolisation. From the point of view of our relations with the world, the body constitutes a sign rather than a source” (Hy¿y 2003: 87).

Thus the fundamental political process is the process of marking the body, of entering the body into the normative system of meanings and – with the aid of the technology of disciplinary compulsion – inducing it to materialise these meanings in everyday gestures, to transform these meanings into a simulation of ‘natural’ reality. And simulation “threatens the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false’, the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’” (Baudrillard 2005: 9). The normative narrative about how reality should look thanks to perfor-

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3 I use the concept of ‘structuration’ at this point and hereafter as in the understanding deduced from Anthony Gibbens’ theory of structuration, see: Giddens 2003: 55 – 80.
mative gestures of the body becomes the reality, or more precisely: becomes the socially manufactured pretence of reality with strictly material consequences. The body becomes a special sign, a sign without reference, a sign referring only to itself, a sign establishing what passes for real. In this sense the social system whose existence is possible thanks to the production of submissive bodies, bodies materialising normative meanings, is a social system that becomes a system of simulations, a “gigantic simulacrum – not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference” (ibid, p. 11). Power is thus a process of establishing the body as a sign in such a manner that bodies, referring one another to each other, create a system of meanings establishing a Performance of domination, a social space structured by stable systems of stratification / segregation.4

This process is most easily seen in specific examples, such as the mechanism of establishing the system of gender segregation and, as a consequence, the patriarchal (phallocentric) society. The system of male dominance may be established, stabilised and reproduced only thanks to the existence of submissive bodies that, in their gestures and desires, materialise masculinity and femininity. Judith Butler calls this process the performative establishing of sex, thanks to which gender – cultural norms regarding the proper manner of performing masculinity or femininity – became a simulation of the allegedly natural biological sex: “Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (Butler 2008: 94).

The submissive, routine, involuntary repetition of certain gestures, positions and stylisations considered ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ causes the creation of a simulation of stable, ‘natural’, and biologically conditioned masculinity and femininity. The more this enacting of gender is normative in character, meaning the more precisely the body of the individual adheres to the norms that condition its manner of functioning, the more convincing the gender stylisation and the more stable the system of phallocentric dominance based on the assumption of the existence of explicit gender identities. Of key importance for the creation of this pretence of reality, which is a condition for the existence of a system of dominance based on gender difference

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4 I discuss the issue of establishing what is social as a process of generating a Performance of domination by referring to the concepts of, inter alia, A. Giddens, J. Baudrillard, G. Debord, in: Kochanowski 2009: 79-106.
to be possible, is the writing on the body – via its performative stylisation – of gender meanings. These meanings, as long as they become for the individual their point of normative reference (usually routine and not reflexive), enable the materialisation of gender reality. This is why Judith Butler, citing Monique Wittig, claims: “The ‘naming’ of sex is an act of domination and compulsion, an institutionalised performative that both creates and legislates social reality by requiring the discursive/perceptual construction of bodies in accord with principles of sexual difference” (ibid, p. 216).

In other words, the categories of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ are political categories, as their establishing, implanting, stabilisation and reproduction enables the structuring of social space in such a way to establish it as the space of gender domination. The moment at which this structuration is carried out is the individual’s everyday gesture of stylising their body as ‘male’ or ‘female’, while the space of its structuration is the surface of the gendered individual’s body; of the individual whose body is ‘beset’ by the meanings of gender. What is important is that the meanings of gender are determined within the binary, supplementary play of difference through the mutual but inequivalent self-reference of the meanings of masculinity and femininity. The inequivalence of this reference, implementing the logic of supplementation, lies in the meaning of gender binarism being ‘designed’ from a male perspective and expressing exclusively the sense of masculinity. Femininity on the other hand is but a supplement to masculinity, and embraces such meanings that enable femininity to be constituted as subordination, subjugation and withdrawal, etc. Therefore, if the individual subjugates their gestures to the meanings of (supplementary) femininity or (dominating) masculinity, they are thereby setting their body within the system of imbalance, the system of dominance, while simultaneously performatively establishing it. By this I would like to say that without this individual’s submissiveness, without the creation of a submissive body, without the routine reproduction of normative meanings by the individual in their everyday performance, establishing a social system based on the principle of gender domination would not be possible. Only thanks to the fact that there ‘exist’ women and men, and so only thanks to individuals realising and materialising gender meanings, thereby simulating the existence of a ‘natural’ sex, is it possible to reproduce the system of gender segregation. The body’s surface is the place for establishing what is social.

The case is similar with the establishing of social space as heteronormative space, i.e. based on the principle of obligatory heterosexualism. As with masculinity, heterosexuality lies at the foundations of the processes of gen-
erating what is social. Only bodies marked with the heterosexual matrix exist, are visible, are taken into consideration, are admissible (see: ibid, p. 49). “You will be straight or you will not be” (Wittig 2007: 153). In this instance the process of biopolitical investment involves the rendering impossible of the constituting of the homosexual body (and desire) via the establishing of homosexuality as a non-meaning, or in other words, as the externality in relation to the system of social meanings. The homosexual body does not exist, because meanings that could enable its social visibility, that would lend it sense, facilitate its intelligibility, do not exist. It is for this reason that in their search for a means for the non-normative stylising of their body non-heterosexual people reach for models of (overstated) femininity or overstated masculinity⁵, attempting to express ‘themselves’ with the help of available meanings that may possibly be subversively transcribed. The homosexual body is a homo sacer body, an ‘impossible’ body (and as such non-existent, ‘given to death’, invisible), a body without meaning. Homosexuality, as Foucault indicated (2000: 39-92), is also constructed within the logic of supplementation as the opposite of heterosexuality, its contradiction, its negative. In keeping with the mechanisms of bio-political technologies of the body, the abnormality of homosexuality, expressed in it being ascribed pathological meanings (connections with promiscuity, emotional disorders, gender identification disorders, and even with paedophilia), constituted the condition for heterosexuality to be established as the norm (connected with love, the ability to form long-lasting monogamous relationships, the correct performance of gender roles, and above all the creation and protection of children). Thus the non-normal, pathological, perverted homosexual body was to be the exception setting the rule: “What is at issue in the sovereign exception is not so much the control or neutralisation of an excess as the creation and definition of the very space in which the juridico-political order can have validity. In this sense, the sovereign exception is the fundamental localisation (Ortung), which does not limit itself to distinguishing what is inside from what is outside, but instead traces a threshold (the state of exception) between the two, on the basis of which outside and inside, the normal situation and chaos, enter into those complex topological relations that make the validity of the juridical order possible” (Agamben 2008: 32).

Establishing social space as the space of obligatory heterosexuality demands a paradoxical establishing of the homosexual body as a non-meaning body, a non-existing body, an impossible body, the body of the exception.

⁵ I attempted to describe this process in my first book; see: Kochanowski 2004: 286-300.
The supplementary play of the heterosexuality / homosexuality binarism enables the setting up of a normative instance of sexuality and the ‘(correctly) sexual body’. This is constantly about the same: about the generating of submissive bodies, about the bio-political appropriation of the body, heading towards a “controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes” (Foucault 2000: 123), and as such the instance of sexuality is nothing more than a “set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours, and social relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology” (ibid, p. 113). The sexual body, meaning the body regulated through sticking closely to the normative meanings of sexuality understood as a device of knowledge/power, enables the achieving of the goals of biopower through the normative management of desire. However, it is only possible for this biopolitical mechanism to be effective through everyday self-control by the individual, thanks to the individual supervising their own desires and striving to modify them such for them to be as close as possible to the normative model. This is both about the individual blocking heterosexual desires they consider too ‘perverted’ (submitting to the normative reflexes of shame), and about such stylisation of ways of achieving a non-heterosexual desire (and therefore establishing the homosexual body) so as to achieve the greatest possible similarity to the heteronormative models. The normative conquest is therefore achieved on the surface of the individual’s body, in their everydayness, as the individual organises their desires in such a manner as to adapt them to the sexual norm.

Biopolitics in a Consumption Society

As a way of digression, but digression that I am convinced is essential, it is worth turning attention to the fact that in a postmodern society (or, should one prefer, in a late modern society) the fundamental goal of the mechanisms of biopower is no longer to force bodies into the processes of (re)production and to transform bodies into a submissive tool of production. A more important goal today would seem to be the production of a consuming body: “Within a consumer culture the body is proclaimed as a vehicle of pleasure: it is desirable and desiring and the closer the actual body approximates to the idealised images of youth, health, fitness and beauty, the higher its exchange value. (...) Self-preservation depends upon the preservation of the body within a culture in which the body is the passport to all that is good in life. Health, youth, beauty, sex, fitness are the positive attributes which body care can achieve and preserve. With appearance being taken as a reflex
of the self the penalties of bodily neglect are a lowering of one’s acceptability as a person as well as an indication of laziness, low self-esteem and even moral failure” (Featherstone 2008: 111, 115).

The mechanisms of modern technology of the body are still actual: the body continues to be the fundamental object of influence of the ‘political anatomy’⁶, and the stake continues to be the body’s location in the system of dominance. However, capitalism has changed, as also has the fundamental goal of the body’s cultural conditioning. Today, sustaining consumption is of key importance, and as such the primary goal is to arouse consumption needs justified by the reformed technology of knowledge/power. The modern procedures of biopower were based on systems of knowledge indicating that proceeding in line with normative prescriptions guarantees health, intellect and ‘normalcy’. The bleak figures of perverts, madmen and criminals surged in the background of these justifications, constituting a constant warning to individuals who let their guard down in their everyday supervision over their body. Little has changed in this respect. Concern for the body, in keeping with the normative indications determined this time by the market and advertising, is meant to bring about happiness, a sense of fulfilment. This somewhat undefined happiness is at the same time a goal and a normative obligation. In a consumer society it is our obligation to be happy, to build up our happiness with the assistance of market packages, while being distressed, unhappy or sad is – really – proof of laziness, incompetence and also probably low moral qualifications preventing the development of ‘harmonious relations’ with oneself, with others, with the world outside. Which is why this specific blackmail of ‘being happy’ allows for the establishing of “consumption as total organisation of everyday life, total homogenisation, where everything is taken over and superseded in the ease and translucidity of an abstract ‘happiness’, defined solely by the resolution of tensions” (Baudrillard 2006: 14). The body becomes a hostage of this aspiration for happiness, confirmed and certified by youthful, healthy and fit looks. Suitably stylised in keeping with these norms, the body certainly constitutes an important exchangeable value, guaranteeing or significantly facilitating success in everyday interactions, whilst the body in this sense non-normative becomes an excluded body, a despised body. The market will accept all categories to which it is capable of touting the appropriate packages serving the ‘building of one’s own happiness’ or ‘self-expression’, which it is in a position to rework into a ‘market tribe’, to which one gains access by “purchasing and display-

ing tribal attributes” (Bauman 1996: 212). Was it not for this reason that the free market accepted lesbians and gays with open arms, welcoming them as a new ‘target’ for selling gadgets serving the expression of one’s otherness, and the building of one’s own lifestyle (i.e. own style of consumption), but also serving to fight for one’s rights (e.g. multifarious rainbow accessories useful during ‘gay pride’ parades, with such parades in the countries of Western Europe a lucrative undertaking in themselves)? And is it not also for this reason that the market finds it so difficult to bear any action leading gender equality in a situation where, for a start, the boards of large corporations are dominated by men, whose power may be taken away by the advancing emancipation of women, and secondly where sustaining the existence of explicitly separable gender categories enables the offering and selling of appropriately gendered packages? Market mechanisms are what beset the body today, sustaining the normative system where it pays to do so, and supporting transgression where new profits may arise. The madness of commodification means that everything can be included in a ‘build your own identity’ package. Rebellion, revolution, the struggle for equality; everything can be absorbed by the market, digested and spat out in the form of ready-to-buy accessories.

But there is one condition for everything: that the body remains a passive tool of this market madness, that it will be beset upon by the ‘soul’ manufactured by the market, comprising bundles of needs constantly being implanted into the individual: “Sometimes I am not even aware of being bothered by a need that the latest gimmick is offering to satisfy. (...) Once I’ve learned everything about which I had no idea, then perhaps I’ll want to possess products about whose existence I’ve been informed, in order to satisfy needs I’ve been made aware of, needs that have now begun to insistently demand satisfaction. If I were to now leave everything as it was, I wouldn’t be able to blame it on ignorance. (...) I’ll be made to understand that I’m not showing concern, or that I’m incapable of looking after my loved ones or my own body (…)” (Bauman 1996: 208).

This is the new microphysics of power: generating needs appropriate for acquiring a product, blackmail using concern for the body, the implanting of morals in the buyer, measuring their worth by their ability to quickly earn money and equally as quickly spend it, and the generating of new mechanisms of control in the form of norms in buying new things (“who would dare use a typewriter when everybody uses computers and word processors?” [ibid, p. 209]). This new market biopolitics is only effective thanks to the submissiveness of the individual’s body, the daily obedience to the com-
pulsive pressure to seek self-confirmation in one’s purchasing ability. Biopo-

tical conditioning now embraces not only the imposition of norms, but also the generating of needs. This change in technique signifies undoubted progress, as it enables stimulation to cover not only the body itself, but also everything that allows the individual to express their ‘self’. This technique works by “imposing new uses of the body and a new bodily hexis – the hexis which the new bourgeoisie of the sauna bath, the gymnasium and the ski slope has discovered for itself (...)” (Bourdieu 2005: 196). Nobody orders us to buy a new model of a telephone, computer, or pair of trousers. We do it because a new kind of shame has emerged, corresponding to the new type of biopolitics: the shame of ‘falling behind’ the latest trends, fashions and nov-
elties. Shame now appears not only where a norm is transgressed. Shame appears where an individual is not responding sufficiently ardently to the call of the market. The submissiveness of the body, the submissiveness of the hexis is no longer just passive submissiveness, adapting to meet normative expectations. Submissiveness must be active, it must keep pace with the evolving trends in the stylisation and ‘equipping’ of the body, with novelties in means of self-presentation including in the virtual world (who today would dare not to have a profile on some social networking site?). We also remodel, improve and equip our body in order – or essentially above all – to distinguish ourselves from those who are excluded from this ‘consumption paradise’, who cannot afford the pursuit of trends in electronics as they are preoccupied with struggling to hold onto their jobs and earn enough for their basic needs. The poor, the growing and shameful category of homini sacri, a category doomed to an outside position, to invisibility, because it reveals in too obvious a manner the simulative character of ‘universal prosperity’. The compulsion of consumption is the compulsion of distinction, the compulsion of separating oneself from those who are beyond life (since essence of life is consumption), who are useless and worthless (since they cannot be included in the madness of buying), who are no more than a burden on the system (by not buying, they are not driving the spiral of demand and therefore not helping the economy; on the contrary, they are demanding help and support). The useless and non-meaningful bodies of women, criminals and homosexuals have been replaced by the non-meaningful bodies of the poor and the unemployed. It is no longer above all the correct gender or correct sexuality that determines a body’s worth (since gender or sexual non-normativity can be changed into a commodity and launched onto the market). The body’s worth is determined by its ability to consume, and this ability is the fundamental goal of postmodern biopolitics.
In Search of a Resistance Strategy

“Your body is a battleground” is a catchphrase forming part of a collage by Barbara Kruger in 1989, and is an excellent recapitulation of the theory of power characteristic of the queer perspective. Both in the times of modernity and in the times of the Empire, when large industrial and financial concerns “generate needs, social relations, bodies and minds” (Hardt, Negri 2005: 47), the body remains the primary goal and object of the influence of power, which does not cease to be a micropower, secretly influencing minds and thereby conditioning the everyday gestures of the individual, and also a political technology for producing submissive bodies. The essence of this power is the normative immobilisation of the body by inscribing on its surface meanings besetting its everyday functioning. Micropower immobilises the body in the process of it gradually being incorporated into social, normative structures of meaning. It immobilises it, naming its gestures, reflexes and positions. The body becomes submissive when it is overpowered by the ‘soul’, a narrative implanted in the individual and containing an interpretation of the body, its capabilities and its limits. There is no need to add that this means capabilities convergent with the goals of power, and limits that constitute disruption to these goals. Michel Foucault defined this immobilisation of the body with the term investissement [in English translations: ‘investment’; in Polish – ‘blokowanie’ (lit. ‘blocking’)]: this is because it is about such normative besetting of the body, about the blocking of certain desires and gestures but the stimulation of others, so that the body becomes – in the most general of terms – a resource, a resource used for stabilising the system of male dominance, a resource played in the economics of heteronormativity, a submissive tool of (re)production, a consuming body. Without the subjugation of the body, achieved thanks to subjection, i.e. the creation of a submissive ‘soul’, normative structuration of social space would not be possible. Immobilising and besetting the body – such is the stake of power. Setting the body in motion and liberating it – such is the stake of resistance.

Setting in motion what is settled, and deterritorialisation of what is territorially blocked – such is the microphysics of resistance designed from the perspective of social queer theory. If the goal of power is to produce a submissive body by besetting it with normative meanings, immobilising it via the appropriate stimulation and blocking of its capabilities, then this means that resistance must mean setting the body in motion, breaking it free of the mesh of normative meanings, destabilising these meanings, their reflexive deconstruction and recovery of the right of ownership of one’s own everyday gestures and desires. But this is not simple. The two moments of the
body’s non-meaning that we can experience in our everyday lives are the moment of death (but also a certain intermediate state7 involving a severe, chronic disease restricting the possibilities of the symbolic processing of one’s own body and as such also one’s stylisation) and the moment of ‘erotic excess’ (but only of the kind involving transgression evoking fear, an excess of ‘splitting oneself’ and ‘severing the continuity’ constituting the ‘self’ [see: Bataille 2007: 31-43]). These two moments are moments of disclosure of the ‘naked body’, of the body not ‘covered’ in meanings and as such are embraced by powerful taboos. Death signifies entering into a void of non-existence, and – which may be more terrifying – of senselessness. Erotic excess on the other hand reveals the animal nature of the human body, while the production of the social body, the body beset by the norm, is about hiding this alarming, unrestrained and unpredictable animality, treated as the exterior of ordered, predictable and rational human nature. The biopolitical microphysics of power is “always about confronting animal disorder with perfect humanness, for which the body or animality has ceased to exist. The height of social humanness radically excludes disorder of the senses; negating its natural fundament, it rejects it as a fact, and accepts only the hygienic space of the home (…)” (Bataille 2008: 66). The strategy of resistance must take these two moments of non-meaning of the body into consideration, searching for a way to liberate the body from the compulsive pressure of reproduction of normative meanings. Deconstruction of the binarisms of life/death and humanness/animality is therefore essential. A deconstructive analysis of these notions certainly requires a publication in its own right, more of the dimensions of a monograph than a mere article, and as such I shall limit myself to indicating the fundamental aspect: in both of these binarisms, their supplementarily subjugated elements (death and animality8) signify what is non-social, non-cultural, non-meaningful and non-subjective. They signify chaos, senselessness, silence, loss, destruction and emptiness.

7 This is not about an intermediate state between life and death, but about an intermediate state between the non-meaningful body in death (respect for the corpse is an attempt at placing a taboo on the senselessness of death, a senselessness evident in the difference between the naming of a living body (“this is Jack”) and the body of a deceased (“this is Jack’s body”)), and a body actively reproducing meaning to its full ability. This opens the way to reconceptualization of illness and non-ability as moments of non-normativity, since the body cannot ably reproduce normative meanings, and is in a way ‘forced’ to generate its own meanings. This issue is also tackled, inter alia, in works in the area of queer disability studies, see: Clare 2009, McRuer 2006.

8 Although let us bear in mind that this is not about the kind of animality one could narrativise by observing life, customs and the behaviour of real animals, but about ‘animality’ as a simulative opposite and negation of ‘human nature’, and as such about the animal nature of unrestrained urges, of untamed aggression, savage and destructive animality, therefore about all those traits of – I stress – simulative animality used to frighten children big and small.
One has to admit this is a not very appealing direction one has to take to attempt to extract the body from the regime of biopower’s capillary relations. A direction that out of necessity is nomadic: “Nomadic separation dictated by a play of strength does not imply territoriality, but is deterritorialisation, a ‘movement thanks to which one leaves the territory’. And movement, constant translocation, does not entail closure, does not mark borders, does not lead to the reconstruction of a previously existing territory or the creation of a new one, and does not bring about lasting reterritorialisation. As opposed to the emigrant or settler, it is the activity of a nomad, an uninterrupted process of translocation in which every moment of reterritorialisation is simultaneously deterritorialisation. Unlike a movement from one point to another, unlike the order of the cosmos, logos, the law, it bears the character of rotary, turbulent motion, of chaos or an everlasting return” (Banasiak 1988: 159; internal quote: Deleuze, Guattari 1980: 634).

The body that remains in a network of social relations, that is the body of the functioning individual, as such involving the body in symbolic interactions during which it is subjected to interpretations, a body that is the constitutive element of the individual’s self-identification, such a body cannot reject meanings, it cannot not-mean. The reason is the same as that for which the individual cannot totally reject their identity: it is this identity that establishes the individual as a functioning subject, as a visible me. It is thanks to identity, an undoubted element of which is the socially conditioned body, that the individual can participate effectively in social space as a functioning subject and/or the object of actions performed by other social actors. Thanks to identity and a ‘meaningful body’ the individual can participate in social interactions. If an explicit ‘gesture of refusal’ is not possible, then the only available resistance strategy – the goal of which is the loosening of the normative bodice embracing the body – would seem to be the strategy of the body’s deterritorialisation, setting the body in motion, initially by embracing all everyday gestures with reflexive consideration (and thereby breaking the routine of reproducing the norm), secondly by ‘bracketing’, distancing oneself from the meanings conditioning the everyday stylisation of the body, thanks to which it is possible to develop a ‘cleft’ between the body’s surface and the normative meanings, and thirdly by searching for the possibility of non-normative gestures, rendering it possible for the ‘body to slip’ from the normative meanings. However, it is that ‘bracketing’ that seems to be of key
importance here, i.e. embracing the body’s everyday functioning with reflexivity. It enables destabilisation of the feeling of ‘naturalness’ of the body’s gestures and desires, leads to disclosure of the possibilities – infinitely varied – of its different stylisations, and is therefore a step towards ‘recovering the body’. A step that must be constantly repeated, because a one-off transition from one system of meaning to another signifies renewed closure, the renewed marking of borders, the renewed defining of the exterior. A body that is intended to be a recovered body – and this is the most important goal of the strategy of resistance – must be a body in motion, a body without territory, a body constantly questioned, a body snatched from the cages of sense. Yes, it is most certainly a painful and fearful battle by the individual against oneself, against the settling of layers of normative sense in their ‘soul’ and on the surface of their body. But if we assume that the essence of political processes is the subjection of the body, then the liberation of the body by tearing it from the captivating strength of the ‘soul’, by questioning the ‘soul’ and ‘bracketing’ it, appears as a strategy of fundamental significance.

This is not a matter of grand, revolutionary measures, as they are impossible. Or rather they are accessible only to the ‘saintly’, those who find in themselves the ability to achieve a ‘grand severance’ regardless of the mental and social cost that always comes to be paid for non-normativity. For all the rest, what remains is a strategy that in post-colonial studies is described as a strategy of mimicry, and which involves being ‘just the same, but not entirely’: “(...) colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha 2008:185).

It is therefore about a different type of reflexivity than that projected by Anthony Giddens in his works, when he writes that (in an individual sense) it is a process whereby “self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives” (Giddens 2006: 316). Adopting any narrative whatsoever as a basis, durable to some degree or other, of self-identification leads to the body being yielded to the rule of the procedures in the microphysics of power that language is ‘armed’ with, and therefore leads to immobilisation of the body, to its activity being subjugated to a closed scenario, to the closure of its capabilities within a limited scope. In the meantime the strategy of resistance requires the opposite: not the constitution of identity, but its destabilisation, not the ordering of a narrative, but its decomposition by playing with the meanings creating it. It is about the reflexivity of the difference
in the Derridean sense of this term (see: Derrida 1999: 98), and not reflexive identity, and as such about the disintegration of sense, its spreading (dissemination), and not its stabilising and ordering. A free body is a body that escapes (normative) meanings, that slips over them; it is a body whose gestures and desires ‘blow up’ sense, render it impossible for sense to settle on its surface; it is a body-nomad: in motion, escaping, undefined, ambiguous, deterritorialised.

One cannot characterise a concrete dimension of these strategies through general text, as this is an undertaking that is practical and not theoretical, routine and not special, local and not universal. It is constantly striving anew to question the narratives creating individual identity, or at least an attempt at bracketing them, standing at a distance, withdrawing such that space for difference emerges. A consequence of this strategy is the weakening of the influence the procedures of power have on the body, enabling shifting, changes, and transformations ‘extracting’ the body from its close link with normative narratives. These transformations are always local in character, because it is a matter of microphysics: of the strength of normative violence influencing the specific body of a specific person.

I shall use an example: in regard to a gay, a homosexual man, where liberation of the body is linked to addressing at least two narratives: that regarding ‘masculinity’, and that about ‘homosexuality’. Masculinity is a normative category written – on the principles described above – into the establishing of social space as space of male domination. The submissive performing of normative masculinity registers the body and its desires in this system. Therefore the strategy of liberating the body involves the questioning, the bracketing, of the narrative of masculinity, becoming aware of the difference (the cleft) between the body and this narrative, recognising moments in which the normative masculinity marks, conditions and determines the hexis, i.e. the manner in which the body is used. As Bourdieu points out: “The bodily hexis, a basic dimension of the sense of social orientation, is a practical way of experiencing and expressing one’s own sense of social value. One’s relationship to the social world and to one’s proper place in it is never more clearly expressed (...) in the space one claims with one’s body in physical space, through a bearing and gestures that are self-assured or reserved, expansive or constricted” (Bourdieu 2005: 582).

It is this submissive reproduction of masculinity by bodies performatively marked as male bodies that enables the establishing of the system of male dominance, which becomes materiality, reality in the gestures of the ‘male’ body, beset by normative meanings heading for its explication, towards the “cleansing (...) of everything that is feminine” (Bourdieu 2004: 38).
performing or reproduction of masculinity needs to be disrupted in order to challenge the “principles of the incarnate social order” (Bourdieu 2005: 583). However, this does not mean that a change of stylisation from ‘masculine’ to ‘feminine’ is a sufficient resistance strategy, because femininity is also a normative narrative, and so this is a territorial transition ‘from point to point’. It is a matter of gender deterritorialisation, of the fluctuation between masculinity and femininity (since we are unable, perhaps at present, to imagine a body without gender), of the effort of achieving a state of ‘gender disorderliness’. Particularly important here are not so much private or ludic stylisations (for example at club events), as the manner in which the body is used in social situations from which femininity is being pushed out or drowned out by the ‘inflating’, dominating masculinity. To put it briefly, it is about involving the body in the destabilisation of the explicit distinction of (dominating) masculinity and (subjugated) femininity at the level of everyday gestures and everyday interactions in which the body is involved. A similar strategy is linked to the category of homosexuality: here as well there is a danger of the body ‘sliding’ into one of the normative narratives. The first of these is the heteronormative narrative of perversion, which I wrote about above, and so that identifying homosexuality with promiscuity, the inability to build long-term relationships, and the ‘feminine’ stylisation of the body (in the case of male homosexuals), etc.. The second narrative is its opposite, the narrative of so-called ‘positive gay identity’, where the body is subjected to the regime of the hegemonic model of morality (in regard to sexuality, types of relationship, and also everyday lifestyle), endeavouring to oppose the discourse of perversion. Both of these narrative territories, while treated as a ‘promised land’, signify the trap of depositing normative narratives on the body, narratives immobilising the body in a manner not threatening the system based on obligatory heterosexualism and segregating bodies depending on the degree to which they adhere to the sexual norm. The strategy of the microphysics of resistance is a strategy of oscillation between these two poles of ‘perversion’ and ‘normalness’, oscillation rendering closure impossible. This means – as in the case of gender – presenting every time (as Bhabha wrote) a certain ‘excess’: an excess of ‘perversion’ in regard to normatively ordered desire, and an excess of ‘orderliness’ in relation to anti-normative perversion. In both cases – gender and sexuality – it is about causing a flickering of meanings on the body’s surface, about them changing so quickly (masculine/feminine, perverse/normal) that it becomes impossible to stabilise these meanings and thereby impossible to make an explicit interpretation of the body. And after all the power of interpretation, of explicit normative interpretation, is the fundamental goal of biopolitical body technologies.
Therefore, although no explicit resistance strategy that could be described in detail results from the perspective of social queer theory, the accusation of the political impotency of this perspective is unfounded. The key aspect of the political in this portrayal is the play between the microphysics of power and the microphysics of resistance. This is play, a local battle, taking place in everyday life, on the surface of the bodies of specific individuals in their unique biographic trajectories. This strategy obviously does not exclude measures of a collective, coalition character, measures aimed at destabilising the hegemony of normative narratives conditioning social space. Neither does it exclude work in the institutional reflexivity analysed by Giddens, understood as the “inclusion of new knowledge or new information in the conditions of action, the effect of which is their reconstruction and reorganisation” (Giddens 2006: 316). However, a condition for this is fundamental change in the approach to knowledge, as well as the setting in motion of the processes of generating knowledge/resistance, knowledge based on the experiences of excluded categories, knowledge that is local and polylogic (see: Kochanowski 2009: 167-287). Nevertheless, social queer theory is based on the assumption of a fundamental role of the microphysics of power and biopolitical power over the body in establishing systems of dominance, due to which the basic strategy of resistance in this perspective involves the liberation of the body from normative obligations, its deterritorialisation and unceasing attempts to wipe meanings off of its surface.

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162
The Microphysics of Power and Microphysics of Resistance in the Depiction of Social Queer Theory

“No-policy Policy”:
Immigrant Women in Poland’s Eldercare Sector

The situation of migrant women undertaking work on foreign labour markets is difficult for a number of reasons, since in their case the problems of foreign employees regardless of gender are compounded by the problems that women encounter regardless of their nationality. Until recently, Poland did not have a problem of demand for foreign labour, the number of immigrants flowing into the country was relatively low, and there was no immediate opportunity for the issues pertaining to immigrant policy to arise as a subject of public debate. At the same time, Polish society is aging. Faced with the problem of a shrinking labour force, Poland’s authorities will most likely have to develop some kind of policy encouraging workers representing diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds to come to the country. This article presents research findings concerning immigrants employed as eldercare workers in both the formal and informal elderly care sector in Poland. The research was conducted within the framework of an international research project entitled Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe. The Impact of Contemporary Women’s Movements (FEMCIT). The elderly care sector is, for several reasons, particularly interesting to those who research the issue of women’s migration: firstly, it is predominantly feminized; and secondly, due to the aging of Polish society, the sector will most probably expand and open up to foreign labour. The research conducted within the FEMCIT project allowed the research team to indicate the main obstacles and challenges that policy-makers will need to overcome in designing immigration policy.

Keywords: immigration, elderly care, women’s migration

Introduction

With the rate of change in Poland’s demographic situation as it is, one may anticipate a steadily growing requirement over the coming decades for services addressed to senior citizens, including eldercare services. Just as is happening elsewhere in the European Union, Polish society is aging. The percentage of those aged 65 and above in mid-2000 ranged from approximately 11% to just over 18% in member states. In Poland, the percentage of

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people of post-productive age\textsuperscript{1} in 2005 was 17.2\% (from: GUS 2008); in 2003, Poland was in fourth place in Europe for elderly citizens’ share of the population. Their numbers have been growing steadily since 1990. According to demographic forecasts by the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), the percentage of those aged 65 and above in Poland is going to continue to rise. It is estimated that by the year 2035, senior citizens will account for almost one quarter of Polish society (in 2010 they accounted for 13.5\%). The trends forecast in this respect are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Forecast of 65+ population in Poland from 2010 to 2035

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All (in '000)</th>
<th>Senior citizens (in '000)</th>
<th>Senior citizens (%)\textsuperscript{*}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>38092</td>
<td>5153</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>38016</td>
<td>5929</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>37830</td>
<td>6954</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025</td>
<td>37438</td>
<td>7844</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2030</td>
<td>36796</td>
<td>8195</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2035</td>
<td>35993</td>
<td>8358</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{*} Percentages calculated in relation to the total forecast population.

Source: data from GUS, and own calculations based on GUS data.

Polish senior citizens are frequently not in very good physical condition. Research conducted in early 2000 on a sample of 1000 respondents aged 65 and above revealed that over half (53\%) rated the state of their health as poor (see Halik 2002: 117). “The image of an elderly person as disabled or handicapped is reinforced in the social stereotype. This stereotype is fully justified in the light of statistical data of various kinds” (ibid, p. 93). Own health and frame of mind is the most frequently declared topic of elderly persons’ everyday thoughts and concerns (ibid, p.73).

Quite naturally, the percentage of people affected by various disorders and disabilities rises together with age. Among those in their seventies covered by the research, almost 30\% had impaired vision; however, over half of the respondents aged eighty or more claimed to be experiencing problems with their vision. Hearing difficulties – of a degree classified as a disability – affect 10\% of people aged 60 to 69. Over half those in their seventies have problems moving about, compared to as many as 78\% of those in their eighties (ibid, pp. 96–97). In the long term, the number of disabled elderly persons,

\textsuperscript{1} One must bear in mind that according to GUS methodology, persons of post-productive age in Poland are men aged 65+ and women aged 60+.
and therefore persons most probably requiring assistance in their everyday functioning, will rise.

The provision of help and care for elderly people in Poland is the responsibility of social services as broadly understood, and which in turn constitute part of the social security system. Issues related to the organisation of social services in Poland are regulated by the Social Welfare Act passed on 12 March 2004. Because of the absence of any distinction of institutionalised assistance addressed purely to elderly people (with separate legislation), some participants in the research whose findings are presented in this article questioned whether – in regard to the conditions in Poland – it was right to use the term ‘the sector of elderly care’. “According to current law on social welfare, elderly persons have not been recognised as a risk group, as old age in itself is not a disfunction” (Leszczyńska-Rejchert 2005: 149). As such, care for senior citizens does not function as a distinct pool of tasks for public administration; its provision is in fact ‘inter-sectoral’. Apart from public institutions, there are also non-public entities providing care for the aged, representing the non-governmental and (to a lesser degree) private sectors. As specified by article 57 of the Social Welfare Act, alongside local government bodies such activities are the responsibility of the Catholic Church, other churches and religious denominations, as well as social organisations, foundations and associations, plus individuals and corporate bodies. However, institutional support is considered insufficient, and in practice the job of looking after those in their old age tends to fall on their families (ibid).

Analysis of the demographic data and findings of research on the situation of elderly people in Poland leaves no doubt that over the decades ahead the demand for institutionalised forms of care and support for senior citizens will increase. As is emphasised in literature regarding social policy applying to elderly people (ibid, p. 209), the solutions that will have to be proposed in this respect by Polish makers of this policy should – above all – aim to keep senior citizens in good physical and mental health for as long as possible. “Social policy towards the elderly cannot be purely a policy of organising help for the aged, but should be a policy of help in the organising of their lives” (Bledowski 2002: 231). Currently, though, there is no such policy at all in Poland. And what’s more, “[...] there is no system of geriatric care in Poland, while the health care as it is (including rehabilitative) is in-
consistent, disintegrated and varied, and it does not fulfil the standards of quality or availability, and nor does it fully satisfy patients’ needs, including the services of visiting nurses” (Bojanowska 2009: 209).

Appropriate designing of the sector of elderly care services therefore seems an unavoidable challenge that Poland’s authorities are going to have to face. The shrinking reserves of Polish labour will presumably force an opening for foreign workers who will fill the gaps in the sector. Currently the market for immigrant work in Poland displays noticeable segmentation in regard to gender, with women employed in services related to running households and looking after the elderly and children. Employment in these sectors is largely informal, and as such it is totally beyond the control of any public institutions whatsoever. Organising a sector of care services addressed to the elderly and open to immigrant labour will require the public authorities to thoroughly examine the existing requirements and expectations – both on the part of the potential beneficiaries of such care, and among those rendering services of this nature.

Poles’ Expectations Towards Care for the Elderly

The expectations and attitudes Poles have in regard to institutions providing care for the aged may indicate the direction that solutions within social policy should take in this respect. In addition, information regarding the practice of care for persons of advanced age allows for a reconstruction of the ‘care ideology’ present in Polish society, which may also prove helpful in drawing up conclusions and recommendations concerning future policy.

The first studies into the issues of eldercare in Poland were conducted in the nineteen sixties in Opole (see Pędich 2006: p. 25). Of the respondents aged 60+ covered by the survey, 46% were living with family and 17% were on their own. The majority claimed to be receiving help and care from family members. During the years of the Polish People’s Republic, care for the elderly was supposed to be provided – in keeping with social attitudes – above all by the public health service. In practice, though, public institutions were not up to expectations, and responsibilities in the area of care for senior citizens lay mainly with their families (ibid, pp. 25–26). And in these families, the carers for the elderly were generally women – wives, daughters, daughters-in-law and other women within the family circle; barely a few percent of women of advanced years were cared for by their husbands (ibid).

The political transformation did not bring any significant changes in this respect. Duties related to care of the elderly continued to be the responsibility above all of spouses and other family members, as declared by 88% of respondents to a survey in the mid nineteen nineties conducted by Małgorzata Halicka
and Wojciech Pędich (ibid, p. 28). Barely 13% of the respondents (in a project conducted by Kotlarska and Michalska at the turn of the nineties) had received help from neighbours or provided by institutions (ibid). A new tendency brought about by the transformation was emphasis on self-help; some voiced the pinion that the elderly should begin organising support for one another.

In studies conducted at the turn of 2000, elderly people requiring help in carrying out their basic everyday activities (such respondents accounted for 43% of the sample) were asked questions about the support they were receiving (see Pączkowska 2002: 61–71). As was the case in previous decades, the results of this research also confirmed that care for the elderly was provided most often by family members – by children (for 72% of the respondents), their spouse (for 31%) and – much less often – by neighbours and acquaintances (each mentioned by 14% of the respondents). Barely 3% of the respondents used the social services, and even fewer – just 1% – the services of a visiting nurse. An equally insignificant percentage of the respondents (1%) used the help of privately employed carers; 2% of the respondents received no help, despite needing it (ibid, pp. 61–62).

Studies into care for elderly people in Poland were also conducted in late 2000, this time on a sample covering respondents of varied ages (see Bojanowska 2009). This revealed that – in regard to the basic trends – the ‘ideology of care’ for the elderly in Poland had still not changed significantly. “The majority of respondents, regardless of gender or age, believed that looking after elderly parents was definitely the responsibility of their children (58.8%). […] A view with slightly fewer supporters was that the care of elderly persons was clearly the duty of the entire family (39.6%)” (ibid, p. 212). The view that the best source of help in everyday life for an elderly person is their spouse was voiced more often by men than women (ibid, p. 219). On the other hand, almost 1/3 of the respondents felt that the obligation to care for senior citizens lay with society as a whole, and that such care should be provided by social institutions (30.2%) (ibid). Also worth adding is that institutional help was treated by the respondents on the whole as a means that should be sought in situations where the family has failed – and therefore as a last resort (ibid, p. 213). Nursing homes do not have a very good reputation among Poles; 70.7% of respondents believed that an elderly person should only be sent to such a home when nobody in their family is in a position to look after them. “This solution is only approved of when one is forced to use it” (ibid, p. 215).

The research findings clearly indicate that there is a widespread conviction in Polish society that the family is morally obliged to care for aged fam-

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4 Respondents were able to indicate more than one source of the support they were receiving.
ily members. This conviction is reflected in practice: “despite ever more elderly people living on their own, their family is still the most important institution for satisfying their needs, their main means of support and sense of security, their realm of activity and source of satisfaction in life” (Synak 2000: 14). This is probably due to the institutional shortcomings in Poland, although such a state may also be responsible for a vicious circle effect: widespread beliefs about elderly persons’ families (and their children above all) being primarily responsible for their care may result in no pressure emerging for the formation of a suitable social policy that would be reflected in the development of institutionalised forms of care. The scarcity of the latter reinforces in turn – via ‘feedback’ – the traditional views about the division of responsibilities related to care for senior citizens. Within the family itself, the main burden of care for its elderly members falls mainly on the women. This ‘feminisation’ of care in Poland is also reflected in the employment structure in the social services sector, where – according to our respondents – the vast majority of staff are women.

Does the ‘care ideology’ presented above, linking such activity rather with private life and within which the care duties are ascribed above all to women, have any impact on how the eldercare sector functions in Poland? What are the challenges ahead of those drawing up future policy in this area? The next section of this paper analyses the experiences of those employed in this sector, and seeks answers to the above questions.

The Eldercare Sector in Poland: Staff Experience

Information about studies conducted

In this section of the paper I shall present the findings of qualitative research conducted as part of the multinational project Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe. The Impact of Contemporary Women’s Movements (FEMCIT). Conducted in 2007–2011, the project embraced a broad spectrum of issues related to numerous aspects of the situation of immigrants (covered by the gendered citizenship category) living in Europe. The part of the project within which the research in question was conducted dealt with the economic aspects of the citizenship category. Similar studies were conducted in France and Norway; the respondent type and size of the research sample were defined in advance in the research outlined for all teams. In the

5 The notion of citizenship here means the entirety of rights making it possible for individuals to participate fully in social life.
Polish section of the project, managed by Prof. Małgorzata Fuszara of Warsaw University, a total of 45 interviews were conducted, 17 of them interviews with immigrants representing the sector of non-institutional care for elderly people in Poland (this covers carers carrying out work in their ward’s home, mainly living with the patient, employed directly by the elderly person’s family, and often working illegally; our respondents were Ukrainian women working in this manner in Warsaw) and 28 interviews with those representing the Polish sector of institutionalised eldercare. Within this last group we also attempted to include immigrants working in care homes, but only succeeded in reaching one respondent meeting this condition; the rest of the respondents were Poles. The goal of the research was to diagnose the fundamental problems affecting the functioning of the Polish eldercare sector, including in the context of opening it up to immigrant labour.

Eldercare sector: non-institutionalised care

Immigrants find employment in care services in Poland via so-called migrant networks, informal contacts between foreigners seeking work and Poles offering employment (nota bene, sometimes also legalised), functioning entirely beyond any control by public institutions. These ‘networks’ are trans-border and trans-national, and apart from foreigners also involve Poles helping their friends and acquaintances find persons for specific work. Some of the women covered by our research emphasised that finding work in Poland is effective mainly when going through such informal networks; looking for a job via other methods – official agencies or job ads in the press or Internet – tends not to be effective where immigrant women are concerned:

“Yes, because finding work by yourself is impossible. It’s impossible to find yourself a job. Only when one helps another. Because if you come by yourself, you won’t find work here.”

“Everything’s done through acquaintances of course. Because when you’ve been here for longer you know more people, and that way you can always find work. It’s easier to find. Than by using the papers or the Internet.”

“It’s all via friends, it’s not that I just go looking for a job, it’s all from one to another. It’s about doing it through Poles, they recommend, even Ukrainians recommend to them, and – how to say it – even to Polish families, they recommend people they trust.”

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6 This included 8 interviews with social workers, 19 interviews with carers of elderly persons, and 3 interviews with persons managing institutions rendering elderly care services; two of the latter were simultaneously social workers, and as such were classified simultaneously into two respondent categories.
The usage of informal networks as a way for finding employment renders immigrant work in this sector ‘invisible’, remaining beyond the public realm, ‘domesticated’ and private.

Another factor functioning to the disadvantage of immigrant women working as carers in Poland is the economic pressure they are under. All our respondents came to Poland to work for financial reasons only. None of them talked of their decision as one motivated by the desire to acquire professional experience or to find employment more attractive than in their home country:

“The [Soviet] Union fell apart, there was no work, they either paid the wages or they didn’t... Or you received one wage for three months. So it was really tough. And the family had to be maintained somehow. It was expensive to get to Italy, as plenty of ours were there already, and a friend suggested Poland so I came.”

“[...] I simply lost my job. And didn’t have any money. I have two kids. Well, I had to work to keep them, and I came to Poland. I simply couldn’t find employment in Ukraine. So it was so I’d have enough to feed the kids.”

It seems characteristic of these respondents to frequently work for the maintenance of other family members, and as such they are not the only – or even the main – beneficiaries of their work. They support children who themselves are often already adults, as well as grandchildren and sometimes their husbands – whose income in Ukraine is insufficient to cover the family’s costs. Therefore Ukrainian women often migrate to Poland because of the poverty experienced by loved ones, thus placing the respondents in an exceptionally difficult situation: work is essential for them to have the money to keep the family, but their position is insufficiently strong to be able to effectively negotiate favourable terms of employment with potential employers. Immigrant women are therefore consenting to unfavourable employment conditions and hard work, because they are afraid of not finding anything better or even worse conditions. The interviews suggest that employers frequently realise this and take advantage of the women they employ, systematically adding to their responsibilities without raising their pay, and curtailing or even totally denying them the right to free time. Therefore, in the case of the women immigrants we talked to, the motivation to take employment in Poland translates into a greater susceptibility to discriminatory practices and abuse by the Polish employers.

Another group of problems is tied to the legalisation of one’s stay in Poland. The women immigrants in Poland legally – all but one of those covered by our sample – were in the Republic of Poland on the basis of a visit...
tor’s visa or national visa. The Ukrainian women in Poland on a visitor’s visa had the choice of either coming for three months, following which time they have to return to Ukraine for three months, or staying in Poland for six months and then returning to Ukraine for another six months. A national visa on the other hand entitles the holder to remain in Poland for up to a year; after five years of such residence, an immigrant has the right to apply for a so-called long-term resident card, giving them the right to remain in Poland for five years.

Respondents employed legally, with a job contract, paying national insurance premiums and income tax, are in Poland on a national visa; these respondents have no major problems related to legalisation of their stay. However, a difficulty they did mention was sorting out matters related to extending their stay in Poland:

“It’s a nightmare every year with those papers... Every year I sort it out, and it takes an awful lot of time. For example we started sorting out the formalities in August, and only completed them in January. Not to mention that it’s like that year after year.”

According to the interviews, the proceedings in the office are protracted, while the bureaucratic structure is unclear to both applicants and public officials themselves, who frequently refer the former to other staff. The difficulties derive from the lack of clear information on procedures and no legal assistance whatsoever in the public offices, which is particularly necessary to foreigners not always fluent in Polish and unfamiliar with Polish legislation. One respondent quite rightly complained about the public officials:

“Totally unhelpful [...] I didn’t have the strength to reach an agreement with them. There’s simply nothing you can do... ‘Call,’ they say. And you can call for three days, and either nobody answers or the receiver’s been replaced in such a manner... That’s the worst, really. It’s sick.”

Respondents complained about queues at the office, and talked about what is currently the vanishing practice of paid ‘queue-standers’, who for 20–30 zlotys would stand from 5.00–6.00 a.m. and sell off their places in the queue to applicants:

“Now the queues are smaller, I have to say, but two or three years ago you had to turn up at five to be at least tenth. It was even the case that you could buy [a place], as there were people there, possibly overnight, and you could buy a place in the queue – 30 zlotys, 20 zlotys. You could buy and then I didn’t go at five or six, but could go at eight, and then buy my place in the

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7 See the Act on Aliens, Dz. U. no. 128, 2003, item 1175, with later amendments.
queue. Such people, drunkards were there, and they simply had the time to stand like that.”

On the one hand the respondents considered this practice an abuse, but on the other it made it possible for those who should be at work practically the whole time looking after an elderly person to sort matters out relatively quickly.

A more problematic problem is the situation of women entering the Republic of Poland on a short-term visitor’s visa, resulting in them taking illegal employment for three months, following which their places are taken by other carers. Rotation among carers is not only inconvenient for them themselves, as it means constantly interrupting their employment, but also for employers forced to find replacements for workers leaving the country, and for those being cared for, having problems getting used to carers constantly changing:

“When another lady comes. I leave, and there has to be another lady right away. He looks for one himself. Sometimes we know each other, sometimes we don’t. The women vary, recently they’ve varied. And Mrs K. [her ward] finds it hard to get used to different people passing through her house.”

Respondents in Poland on three-month visas can never be certain that they will manage to arrange the next visa for another three-month stay; they talked about the troublesome procedures related to sorting out visas at the consulate in Lviv, about queues they had to stand in even taking a few days, and their fear related to the uncertainty of their situation and the inability to plan their future long-term:

“Visas are something horrible. Once I stood for three days in the queue, night and day, to get a visa for three months. The kinds of things that go on there, I’d be embarrassed to say what with these onlookers. You don’t give a thousand, you stand still. You have contacts or something…”

Another group of difficulties faced by women Ukrainian immigrants working as carers for the elderly are present in the everyday organisation of their work. A significant problem clearly evident in almost all our respondents’ tales was that of free time, or rather the lack of it. Despite having a contract with an employer – whether formal or verbal – containing the provisions regarding the free time due to the carer, they frequently have no day of rest. Even if they can theoretically go out on a Sunday (in keeping with the contract), the employer or their charge asks them not to leave the house, and to keep the patient company, or they cut short the amount of free time the worker has. Some respondents spoke of disputes or even fights kicked up by their charges when they wanted to enforce their time for rest or even for everyday shopping:
“I have every Sunday free, but there are fights then as well, because he doesn’t want me to go out in my free time. I say that after all I deserve some free time, everybody does, wherever they work.”

“I’ll go to a shop. A shop nearby, but there’s a queue. I have to stand in it, sometimes for 15 minutes, sometimes 20. And he says: ‘What, were they building the shop? Is that what took you so long?’ I go to get some water. That’s just behind the block, across the street. And he says: ‘So, digging for Krynica there?’ Or: ‘The water hasn’t drenched you yet?’ It’s upsetting to hear that.”

“I can’t go anywhere, to the church […], because I can’t leave the lady for so long by herself. She can’t be on her own, even when I go to the shop and take a little longer, a queue or something, she says right away: ‘I understand that you want to get out, but I can’t be here on my own’. And I can’t because maybe she’ll fall out of her bed or something, after all, I’m responsible for that, I can’t afford to go for a walk, no. I don’t have any free time at all.”

The basic problem some of our respondents recalled in regard to their everyday functioning as a carer was the sense of isolation, of being excluded from normal social life, seclusion and living “as if in a prison”. This was due to the lack of free time mentioned above, and the necessity to be almost constantly with their charge, who – due to their advanced age and the related disorders – was frequently unable to be a partner in conversation. The respondents repeatedly emphasised that the loneliness and isolation were very difficult for them to bear:

“I’d say that our work altogether is terribly tough, because lots of women can’t endure it mentally. […] there’s a lot of depression, for example the last time but one when I was there I felt so depressed, but I had to, I’d agreed to and there was nobody to stand in, so I had to work after all. I went to this clinic where a doctor prescribed me some psychiatric medicines. […] Very many women have breakdowns here.”

“I’m in the flat, can’t chat to anybody, and we just sit there. There are no people here, they don’t live here, everything on this floor is unoccupied. There are people living beneath us, but otherwise it’s empty, nobody lives here. […] It’s hard when you have nobody to talk to, even to talk to for just a moment… Yes, in general I’d like to have somebody to talk to, but sadly there’s nobody here.”

The isolation tied to the work coupled with residing with one’s charge is reflected not only in carers having a reduced self-esteem, but also means that – as they do not have contact with others in a similar situation – they are unable to organise themselves to defend their own interests. The work they
carry out is ‘invisible’ to the public authorities, and frequently also for others in the community. A characteristic practice in such employment is for the employers systematically adding to the carers’ responsibilities, although on the whole this does not mean an increase in their pay. Chained to the home and patient, working practically day and night, should any problems occur these immigrants have no access to information regarding the legal protection due to them or about institutions providing assistance. The carers’ isolation and related helplessness therefore make them particularly susceptible to various types of abuse by the Poles employing them.

Institutionalised care for the elderly

Obtaining employment in an institution providing care for the elderly was, in almost all cases among our respondents, more a matter of chance than planning. People with very diverse ‘initial’ education – at a secondary or higher level – work in the sector. Where trained vocations are concerned, then our respondents included e.g. a chef, football coach, dressmaker, paramedic, teacher, librarian, nurse, specialist in Romance languages, employee in tourism, and an accountant. Social employees are required to have the appropriate profiled education in order to practice the profession. A large portion of the respondents – as a result of the changes in the regulations introducing this demand – therefore obtained supplementary training in social work when already working in the sector. Obtaining the appropriate qualifications was therefore often a result of the job they had, and not vice versa.

Why did our respondents opt for work of this kind? Economic motives constituted the most common reasons: they needed employment and its related income, and as such looked out for ‘anything at all’, and work in the sector of social help appeared pretty much by chance, as an ‘opportunity’. Our respondents described their entry into this sector as follows:

“It was really just by chance, although I must say I always had a fondness for elderly people.”

“Because there was no other work. I took ages looking for a job, and there was nothing. A friend persuaded me, and it was the priest who decided. He’d known me and my family for a long time.”

“Quite simply there was nothing else then, no other work I could take, and I’m not bothered by work with the elderly, I even find it very satisfying, I like the job.”

The respondents sometimes stressed that when hiring them for the job, their superiors did not make any particular demands in regard to their qualifications or experience. This lack of exacting expectations towards poten-
tial employees in the eldercare sector is caused – according to the respondents – by the low level of interest in working in the sector, resulting in turn from the wages being below the country average.

When asked about their attitude towards the work they were doing, our respondents were generally ambivalent. On the one hand they talked about sources of gratification, but spoke more broadly – and often more specifically – about the drawbacks related to their job responsibilities. The relative vagueness of their comments regarding the strengths of working in the eldercare sector coupled with greater precision in defining the problems could testify to the drawbacks of this kind of work being experienced more intensely by the respondents. And this in turn may suggest that where this type of employment is concerned, the minuses outweigh the pluses.

The satisfaction the respondents draw from their jobs derives mainly from the fact that their work involves helping other people, making their lives better. Both social workers and carers of elderly persons stressed that the most important source of gratification in their work is their contact with their charges, and the visible changes for the better occurring in their patients as a result of what they are doing. Some of our respondents thus described their favourite moments in this work:

“To begin with your charge arrives at the nursing home dissatisfied, feeling that their family wants to get rid of them, and so they take a long time to adapt. But later on you can see the person showing hope, [aware] that it’s worth living. There’s a big difference to the situation in Germany, where the period of adaptation is more gentle […]. People here are poorer. And it’s nice seeing them looking forward to every subsequent day.”

“The contact with people, with the elderly. When I see that something has worked. For example a new person arrives and I can see they’re withdrawn from social life, just a house somewhere, a dressing gown, going from window to window. But then at a certain point they come to us, and you simply see them beginning to change, starting to live again, starting to go out with us on walks. We take them to the cinema, to the theatre, and at some point they begin liking that, and say: ‘And I wasted so much time!’”

However, when talking about those aspects of their work they liked the least, the respondents on the whole had very highly crystallised opinions. In many cases the carers brought up issues related to their patients’ physiological needs. They complained most often about having to change their charges’ nappies, many of them finding this task particularly repulsive:

“The toughest is changing the nappy […]. You can imagine it. It isn’t pleasant, but of course it has to be done, after all that’s care, so I don’t think it’s senseless. There’s a great deal of sense in it, and somebody has to do it.”
“Well, I guess the least pleasant is when you have people in such a state that they’re lying in bed, not knowing what they are doing, whether it’s due to dementia or other disorders, and with them the toilet is the thing the most... Changing nappies, like with babies [...]. Just now we have a patient who has a tumour, and she doesn’t feel her own needs, so that means changing her nappy every 2-3 hours, so that isn’t particularly pleasant.”

Another problem our respondent carers brought up quite often was the physical strain related to carrying out their nursing duties, especially in the case of patients lying in bed, confined to a wheelchair, or overweight:

“It’s tough to get out somebody who weighs 120 kg, it’s a real struggle to get them onto the bathing trolley, and then there’s the threshold to get over.”

Respondents complained about the institutions they worked in being under-equipped, lacking equipment facilitating care for the infirm; such deficiencies were generally due to budget constraints. In the context of tough work, some respondents mentioned there being too few men employed in eldercare.

Another group of problems our respondents talked about was related to various organisational aspects of their work. Some complained about there being too few people employed in these care homes; criticism of this kind referred above all to non-governmental homes. Staff shortages mean the carers are forced to carry out what they see as too many duties, resulting in turn in them having insufficient time to actually look after the homes’ inmates themselves:

“There are simply too few people. Obviously if there were cleaning ladies or chambermaids, then the carers would only deal with their charges, and that’s what this work should involve. That we sit down and talk to them, or go out somewhere together. Just a few years ago there were more self-reliant people, and they’d go out walking, because there are shops nearby. I think a carer should take those who are fit, 2-3 of them, and devote this half an hour on them doing some shopping.”

Another group of problems tied to work in the sector of care for elderly people was linked to the actual charges. This is because some inmates in nursing homes can be trying, vexing, which may be a result of their difficult personality or old age illnesses:

“I’m not particularly fond of working with those constantly dissatisfied, and some are like that, and there’s a kind of rule that when a family doesn’t want somebody, doesn’t come to visit, then that person is more malicious. And that even takes on an aggressive form, more so towards the lady carers.”

“I don’t like it when they give us trouble, when they accuse us of theft, because you don’t actually know whether some other inmate took it or
whether she just thought it up, and it’s so unpleasant. Most often they just
make up that they’ve lost something.”

Apart from the physically exhausting work duties related to carrying out
the nursing actions, especially in the case of bed-ridden patients, those on
wheelchairs and those who are overweight, as well as the unpleasant situ-
tions resulting from loss of physiological control and the advanced dementia
of the elderly, low wages were indicated as the main drawback of work in
the eldercare sector. Pay in the institutionalised elderly care sector is often
lower than the wages received by immigrants from east of Poland working
in the informal sector. The respondents claimed that their earnings did not
exceed 2,000 zlotys a month, and were often lower. Low wages were also
indicated by our respondents as one of the main reasons why men are un-
willing to work in the sector. According to some respondents, men have the
same or even greater chances than women at finding employment in elder-
care, but are not interested in it:

“It seems to me that even men have bigger chances. I’d be really happy
to employ a male psychologist in the day-care home. But there are none.”

 “[Men] have it better, because they’re stronger, but the wages here are
poor, and they all prefer working on building sites where they earn a few
times as much.”

“Somehow men aren’t flocking to this work, and when you do see one
he tends to be in a managerial position.”

According to some of our respondents, men may also be put off of work-
ing in eldercare because of it being perceived as ‘unmanly’. As one of the
male respondents, working as a carer, said:

“It’s not such laudable work for men. A man should go somewhere and
make money, wear himself out physically, or have a long-term job some-
where, in some office or other. […] I was forced by the situation, as I couldn’t
get school work, and that’s why I came – it wasn’t as if I chose that I really
wanted to work in a nursing home.”

Whereas the small number of men employed in eldercare does not seem
surprising considering the sector’s financial condition and the stereotypes
embedded in Polish society, one may wonder over the almost total absence
of immigrant women in institutions providing care services. As a rule, our
respondents in such institutions had not had any experience working with
foreigners; some had ‘heard’ about Ukrainians working as carers in nursing
homes (notabene the opinions they had heard about these women’s work
were very positive). One respondent had also heard about a ‘black’ man
employed in caring for senior citizens, while another put us in touch with
the only representative of an ethnic minority we managed to reach during
the research. This respondent was from Egypt, and had ended up working in the eldercare sector as he had to earn his keep in Poland, where he is living with his son (the child’s mother is a Pole). He described the situation of a foreigner in the Polish sector of social assistance as follows:

“In England you don’t have the English working in such occupations, they’re all incomers. But here in Poland they pay me and others well and the same, while in England that’s not the case. The English always earn more.”

The large share of immigrants working in the institutionalised eldercare sector in Great Britain was also confirmed by women participating in another of our research studies, conducted as part of the FEMCIT project, on the experiences of women migrating from Poland and Lithuania to Western Europe in order to work in care for the elderly. The respondents’ accounts reveal that a significant ‘side effect’ of the institutionalisation of work among immigrants employed as carers for senior citizens is a phenomenon that could be described as immigrant workers being closed within an ‘occupational ghetto’. Such work is mainly carried out by foreigners (on the whole women, although – as our respondents claimed – men are also welcomed in the occupation because of their greater physical strength) from countries less affluent than Great Britain. The immigrants’ place in the hierarchy in turn was frequently determined by their colour of skin. The respondents described this as follows:

“[…] it turned out that they [Scottish women – author] were actually in the minority; in the staff room it was often that out of six people just one was a Scottish woman or man. The rest were workers from Central and Eastern Europe (Lithuania, Ukraine), Asia (India), Africa (Malawi and other countries), and from the Caribbean. On the other hand they would ask us about what we eat for dinner, would ask about our customs. In general whites were treated more positively than coloured staff.”

“There are no English women here, they don’t work with us, it’s tough work and not much money. So they don’t work here.”

“There aren’t many Englishers at work, there are people from Pakistan, from India, from somewhere in Africa, I can’t remember exactly.”

So let us return to the question: why in the Polish institutionalised eldercare sector, unlike for example in Great Britain, are the staff mainly Poles? One of our respondents suggested the following explanation:

8 In total 19 interviews were conducted with Polish and Lithuanian women working as carers for elderly persons in England, Scotland and Germany.
“I think that they [i.e. immigrants – author] are not that desperate, because the earnings are very low. […] if somebody comes here from Ukraine, then they rather look for work on the sly, and that means work like washing, cleaning, cooking, maybe nappy-changing, but it’s all under the table, I know that there’s something like that.”

Pay in the institutionalised eldercare sector is often lower than the pay those immigrants from east of Poland working in the informal sector receive. Our research with respondents from Ukraine suggests that they earn between 1,000 and just over 2,000 zlotys take-home pay per month, which – coupled with employment in a live-in system – means they can save more than they would be able to put aside working in the sector of institutional care. Financial concerns are therefore an obvious key reason why nursing homes in Poland are not an attractive employment option for immigrants – despite the work there definitely being more stable, and staff being covered by the social security system. One of the respondents summed this up as follows:

“Many people choose that path, and even if they have qualifications recognised in Poland they go somewhere further afield. The financial terms are what matter. Because even if somebody comes to us who can work as a nurse, with a residence permit, they have to have some kind of material security – to rent out a place to live, and it’s all outrageously expensive. And a nurse’s wage is not enough for that.”

Conclusions

The ‘care ideology’ functioning in Poland, according to which ‘primarily’ women are obliged to provide care services, is also distinctly visible in occupational roles related to carrying out care-related tasks. The Polish sector of care services – including eldercare – is in effect dominated by (poorly-paid) work by women. This applies not only to the sector of institutional care, but also the non-institutional and informal sector. Another emerging tendency could be described as ‘ethnic segregation’ of services covered by care for senior citizens: whereas the institutionalised sector employs mainly Poles, in the non-institutional care sector there is an evident presence of immigrant women – although the scale cannot be estimated due to such employment frequently being informal. Poles value their services due to them being relatively inexpensive (compared to Polish women working in institutionalised care), combined with the relative high quality of the care provided. At the same time Polish women are reluctant to take work in the domestic non-institutionalised sector: “[…] if Polish women do decide to work as
home helps, they want to do so in western countries of the European Union, which they have unlimited access to (in regard to travelling to visit and accepting illegal employment) and where the hourly rates are higher.” (Samoraj 2007: 35).

A source of numerous problems related to immigrants carrying out work in the sector of care services is its ‘unofficial’ character: work of this kind is traditionally unpaid, and as such is recognised by most Poles as within the private sphere (Kindler 2008: 213). The ‘private’ character of the employment of immigrants is reinforced by the emotional bonds that form between them and their charges. This emotional involvement coupled with such workers living in with the patient is conducive in turn to a broadening of the carer’s range of duties (not strictly treated as ‘work-related’), as a result of which they are at work practically without a break (see Lasota 2008: 231). Research into the functioning of foreign women employed as home helps enabled identification of the interesting phenomenon of immigrants working in the live-in system redefining the terms of public and private space. “When living with their employers they tend to have very limited privacy. As such, when they leave the house during their free time they perceive public space as their private space. As such there is an interesting reversal in the understanding of what is public space and what private space is” (Praszalowicz 2008: 59). A characteristic feature of the situation of foreign women working in the sector of care services is their total flexibility, which Polish women employed as carers would not agree to.

An additional difficulty related to the legal position of immigrant women working as carers for elderly people is the fact that the illegal employment prevalent in this sector is favourable not only to the Polish employers, but also to the immigrants themselves (mainly for economic reasons), and as such what is essentially an unhealthy situation – the universal evasion of the law and illegal employment – is magnified by the interests of both parties involved. For as long as functioning ‘outside of the law’ is (for whatever reason) more beneficial than legalising one’s employment, any public policy dealing with the situation of immigrants in Poland is likely to remain ineffective.

In the light of the research conducted for the FEMCIT project, one cannot explicitly claim that the ‘ethnic segregation’ of the market of care services, as a result of which carer-immigrants carry out ‘invisible’ work in the informal sector and are almost totally absent in the institutional care sector, is a manifestation of discrimination. As research covering employees in the formal sector goes to prove, work in institutions providing care services is by no means reflected in this sector’s staff being in a significantly better
financial position. In many cases, the women working in nursing homes even have lower earnings than immigrant women employed directly (and frequently illegally) by their charges’ families, while the work is comparably tough. Serious problems that foreign women working as carers face are matters related to employment stability, being unentitled to social security (due to no social security contributions being paid) and the lack of help in the event (far from rare, after all) of abuse by their employers. As some of our respondents claimed, though, women immigrants are frequently totally uninterested in formalising their employment, as work in the grey economy is simply more favourable for them financially. And ultimately, it is the strong economic pressure that is the main – and one could possibly even say that, as a rule, the only – reason why they work in care at all. For many of these women, employment in Poland is even their only way of them protecting their families from extreme poverty. Choosing work enabling higher earnings while at the same time bypassing the bureaucracy (involving e.g. registration of their job) seems in this context entirely rational and obvious.

The sector of elderly care in Poland is, as in other countries of Europe, going to expand, which will be forced by demographic changes. The social workers we interviewed forecast one of the tendencies emerging in the area of social help to be an increasing degree of specialisation: whereas currently one cannot talk of an eldercare ‘sector’ due to such care not being clearly separate from other types, the range of care services for the elderly will in time expand as a separate ‘branch’ of the institutional care sector. However, the ‘initial’ demand in this context is that problems related to old age finally constitute an area of interest among Polish decision-takers. As the aging of Polish society continues, pressure is growing for the public authorities to draw up an appropriate social policy.

What challenges will the authorities have to face? Above all, the fundamental problem closely tied to the likely shortages in Polish labour in the care sector will have to be solved. In this respect, the fact that taking employment in institutionalised eldercare for immigrants arriving in Poland is currently – for various reasons – less profitable than work in the informal sector shall have to be taken into consideration. In addition, foreigners see formalised work in care institutions in Western Europe as more attractive. As such, it would seem correct to anticipate that – unless no measures to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of employment in the area of care services are implemented by the public authorities – then the Polish sector of institutionalised eldercare will not function properly. Care provided informally is linked to the same problem; the demand for such services is going to increase in western countries as well, offering foreigners better terms
of employment. Worth adding is the fact that, to date, the problem of there being no enticements for immigrants to work in the sector of care services in Poland has largely been ignored by decision-takers.

References


Modernisation or Crisis? Transformations in Families of Temporary Migrants

Migration impacts the lives and family relations of those who migrate, and this is also true with regard to circular migration, where the person is in a cycle of going aboard to work and then returning to the home country for some time. On the one hand, as a result of the migration, the entire family has to adjust to the rhythm established by the migrant. On the other, it also makes it necessary for family members to become independent and take over the responsibilities that pre-migration belonged to the migrating husband/wife. Using research completed in the Opole region of Poland, the authors attempt to answer the question of how families adjust to the situation in the different periods, and how gender roles as well as parent-child relations change in such families. The authors focus in particular on the issues of the changes in the families themselves: do they continue as traditionally functioning families (albeit imperfect), or do they shift towards the contemporary model of ‘living apart together’, where each family member independently forges their own path in life?

Keywords: migration, family, husband, wife, father, children

Introduction

In recent years, together with a rise in the mobility and ‘fluidity of the world’, there has also been an intensification in the phenomenon of international migration, both of a more durable and a short-term nature. It is also increasing in Poland, a country with long traditions of migration as well as substantial achievements in sociological research into migration conducted before the Second World War, and as it intensifies so too has the research related to migration and migrants increased. The population census carried out in 2011 showed that approximately 1,940,000 people had been abroad for over 3 months, while estimates spoke of 2/3 of them being abroad for 12 months or longer (GUS 2012).

The changes noticeable in migration structure in recent decades have entailed changes in how migration is researched and analysed, while also...
arousing interest in specific problems embraced by the broad scope of phenomena defined as ‘migration’. One of the fundamental changes to have occurred in this period is related to sex: following a period when research and descriptions applied above all to men, and women were mainly treated in terms of family members ‘joining’ the migrant, an increasing number of papers in recent years have been devoted to migration among women (Slany 2004, 2008; Kindler, Napierała 2010; Warat, Małeck 2010), among other things because women today constitute the majority of people migrating. The latest population census revealed that in Poland women accounted for 51% of migrants (GUS 2012). The migration of women, their work abroad, and the consequences of migration are becoming increasingly important in social terms.

Contemporary analyses and research studies into migration still lack those tackling the perspective of migrants’ family members. This perspective is important for many reasons. Long periods of absence must entail transformations in migrants’ family relations. And this applies in particular to situations where prolonged temporary migration – intended as short-term to improve living conditions or repair the family budget – become over time a way of life, in which periods of ‘being together’ interweave with significantly longer periods of ‘being apart’. Such a situation changes both the relations within the family and the psychological situation of individual family members: wives, children, and – where women are the migrants – their husbands who have stayed at home. These consequences are not yet being systematically researched and analysed, and they reach public opinion mainly in the form of alarmist articles about ‘euro-orphanage’ as an effect of both parents leaving Poland, or the migration of minors’ mothers. Another cause of such a tone in certain press publications is that of changes in the family being seen mainly as a family crisis, or the formation of ‘two families’ of those migrating, who via a manner of functioning described in literature dealing with migration as ‘life on a swing’ create family life, or the pretence of family life, in both places between which they translocate. However, there is a shortage of papers showing everyday life and the micro-world created in a situation in which one person is a ‘long-term absent’ member of the family. How does the family change? Is such a situation only a source of social and psychological problems, or does it also have a certain modernising force, entailing the emancipation of individual family members, simultaneously though unintentionally bringing about a transformation of the traditional model into one closer to contemporary large-city families, with all the faults and strengths of the new family model? It is worth recalling that in the canonical study by William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1976), into the migration of Polish
peasants and residents of small localities to the USA, the transformations the migrants’ families were subjected to occupy an important place. The sudden shift from small rural communities, featuring strong social control and ‘face-to-face’ contacts, to much more anonymous metropolitan American environments devoid of social control, was linked – as the authors then presented it – to the more frequent collapse of families and higher divorce rate. Institutionalised legal assistance, thanks to which divorce was obtained in the case of e.g. domestic violence, also played an important role in this process; in the traditional peasant community this would not have been possible. However, the decision to divorce did not only mean the opportunity to take advantage of what life in the USA had to offer, but also had to be combined with a greater awareness of one’s rights and the economic possibilities of an independent life, something unavailable to women in a traditional community, above all for cultural and economic reasons. Although when analysing the situation and source materials from almost 100 years ago Thomas and Znaniecki defined these transformations in a manner that comes across as explicitly critical, as the disintegration of family life, from today’s perspective the interpretation of these changes that emerges is rather one of a process of emancipation and the individualisation of specific family members, of individuals taking advantage of non-traditional ways of organising private life.

It is this perspective that is of greatest interest to us. The question we are asking is about the transformations occurring in the family of a migrating person. Are they only unfavourable changes, or – particularly today when there are diverse models of family life – can they be emancipative in character for family members and lead to a change in the family model, not settling in advance the directions of these changes or their evaluation? Because migration in Poland comes for the most part from small-town and rural communities, where traditional family relations prevailed and the patriarchal family model predominated, a pertinent question is whether the very fact of men migrating does not also have emancipative force, increasing the scope of women’s power, which could be strengthened further by the fact that men leaving home encounter different family models, where roles are not rigidly ascribed, and frequently witness a greater scope of women’s independence in large urban environments. In other words, this is a question about the modernising impact of migration in a deeper sense, relating to models of intra-family relations and the positions of its individual members, and above all women.

The results of research conducted in 2008 covering school-age children and teenagers revealed that despite the statistically intensifying migration of women, as many of 7 out of 10 parents of the respondents leaving home
temporarily were their fathers (see: Walczak, n/a). Migration of their guardians was experienced the most often by children and teenagers in the Opolskie voivodeship (43% of the respondents). In addition, the percentage of children and teenagers in the Zachodniopomorskie, Podkarpackie, Warmińsko-mazurskie, Świętokrzyskie, Śląskie and Dolnośląskie voivodeships who had at least one parent migrating temporarily was above the country average. An increased share of fathers is seen mainly in the group of those migrating for longer than one year. The research also showed that migration by mothers is linked significantly to the age of the youngest child, while in the case of migrating fathers there is no connection with the children’s age. This means that it is precisely the migration of fathers and its impact on marital and family models that seems particular interesting.

The Opolskie voivodeship, from which the majority of the research material we have gathered derives, deserves particular attention not only due to the fact cited above of children in this region in particular experiencing the migration of their parents. It is also a region where migration has a long tradition, and where it occurs on a large scale. Reports show that in the years 1951–2009 over 237,000 people from this voivodeship emigrated permanently, meaning that almost one quarter of its population left home. In addition, according to estimates, there were approximately another 120,000 seasonal migrants.

As shown by the latest in a series of studies we have been conducting for years on a representative sample of the population of one of this region’s towns (Olesno), almost one in three respondents (32.6%) had left home during the past 5 years for Germany or some other western country for economic reasons. The last such temporary migration for almost half of them (47.4%) lasted for over a month. The fact that most respondents (70%) had close family mainly from this town or its vicinity who were living permanently abroad, and of these the majority (90%) had relatives in Germany, undoubtedly contributed to the ease of migration here. What is striking is that in most cases these were relatives who emigrated before the year 1990 (70%), and in this respect the year 1989 (“twenty years ago”) was particularly intensive (30% of migrations). Leaving home by no means ends in the severance of contacts; 92% of the respondents with family in the West claimed that these relatives come to visit them, which means a steady and mutual influence of the two countries’ cultures. These contacts are tied to a mutual

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1 Special demographic zone project, www.umwo.opole.pl, accessed 27.03.2012.
2 Research conducted by a team under Prof J. Kurczewski and J. Arcimowicz, PhD, in 2009, on a random representative sample of 236 town residents.
exchange of goods and services, as well as reciprocal help: 38% of those with family in the West mentioned help from such relatives, most often financial or material (67%), but there were also some who helped family living abroad (38%). In addition, 33% of migrants talked of their relatives helping in sorting out various formalities (38%) or organising their visits to Olesno, and it is therefore cross-border family cooperation, facilitated initially by dual citizenship, and later by the Schengen treaty.

The main sources on which we have based our conclusions are in-depth interviews conducted with school pedagogues and teachers, social support staff, and also the region’s residents – especially the wives of migrants. They covered a variety of aspects of migration, one of them embracing questions about the non-economic changes occurring in the families of migrating men. In addition we have added comments posted on web forums to the analysis; their authors were women whose husbands were working abroad. Bearing in mind that we do not know where these women live, we may presume that their posts are supra-regional in scope, and thus the issues we are discussing acquire quite a universal character.

However, because the data we gathered applies above all to the Opolskie voivodeship, we shall begin our analysis with a brief commentary regarding traditional families, especially Silesian families, constituting a kind of ‘starting point’, and a system of references for migrants from these areas.

A Few Comments About the Silesian Family

The traditional family is characterised above all by a rigid division of roles that formed during the period of industrialisation, this division strictly connected to the sex and age of family members. The family described by Talcott Parsons, in which adults fulfil specialised roles, is the best example here of such a traditional model in which the women – responsible for expressive functions – do not rival the men, accepting their role as ‘heads of the family’. In this model the men are the providers of a livelihood and the persons wielding the power. Parsons and other authors from the functionalistic school of viewing the division of roles in the family, as well as certain representatives of a traditional approach to the family of today, inferred such a division of roles from biological differences, and as such acknowledged such a model and social order as the best and invariable. Choices regarding model of family life in traditional societies are defined as the “model […] of
unified axiological choices” (Slany 2006), meaning that the vast majority of community members share the same values, which leads to the same or very similar choices, including those related to family life. The traditional, patriarchal Silesian family may constitute here a very good example of the long-prevalent model of unified axiological choices, and the recently indicated transformation of these choices into more individualised choices. Sociologists are unanimous in their description of Silesian families, emphasising the “traditional, patriarchal model of the Silesian family” (Czech 2006: 60), “diligently observing traditional social and moral norms” (Floreńska-Bukowska, citing: Frąckiewicz 1997: 229). Such a family was marked by a far-reaching division of the roles of men and women, in which tasks related above all to the home were designated to the woman – such as looking after children and other family members, or taking care of the home (defined in another perspective as ‘unpaid housework’). Traditionally the women of Silesia did not take paid employment, particularly after getting married and having children. “Because women then didn’t do what they do now. They got married, and lived on what the man brought in. There was no fashion of a woman working somewhere” (Górnikowska-Zwolak 2004: 138, interview with Maria B.). The model of the traditional, coherent Silesian family, staying together for all their lives, may frequently seem rather idyllic: “we all had time, and we loved each other” (ibid, p. 183, interview with Matylda S.), yet many women’s comments testify to reality – especially where the women were concerned – being far from bucolic: “Women had it tough, but they had to endure. They didn’t have jobs, but had to do the work at home. There were no divorces, because every year another child” (ibid, p. 180, interview with Maria T.). Having no income of their own, no job and nowhere else they could live meant that it was impossible for a woman to leave her husband, even in extreme cases: “Many would probably have left their man, if they’d have had a place to go. What could she do? She was dependent on her husband, didn’t have work. What would she live on? And women had it tough. Many times the man would get drunk and beat the woman. That would soon happen in every family. It was common” (ibid, p. 168, interview with Agnieszka J.).

The father’s position in the Silesian family was also special. It was based both on fear and on respect, although it would seem that the sense of fear prevailed. This specific position was acknowledged by all women, including adult daughters. “Even when she was a widow later, she’d never talk back to father, because she feared him. She respected and feared him” (ibid, p. 169, interview with Agnieszka J.).

The traditional family model, established long ago with its strict division of roles between man and woman, and the role of the former as the unques-
tioned ‘head of the family’, did not undergo any major changes during the communist period. One of the reasons for this was the specific employment situation in these lands, where the predominance of heavy industry, and in particular mining, required a woman’s ‘full-time’ work at home, while at the same time it did not create many jobs for the women. Studies conducted in the nineteen seventies revealed even then that little had changed in this area; in mining and steel-working families especially the traditional model was very widespread, and the opposition of a husband not accepting ‘disorder at home’ was sufficient reason for his wife to leave paid employment. Providing financially for the home and family was a constituent of ‘mining honour’, and in exchange men expected to have the household chores done, full ‘service’, and family and home life subordinated to them (Górnikowska-Zwolak 2000). In addition, sociological literature discussing on the basis of empirical research the position of women taking paid employment in working class families emphasised that women’s work outside of the household had on the one hand altered relations within the family, contributing to a certain degree to a different division of roles and men taking on certain household chores, while it had also brought about a broadening of women’s social circles although only to a small degree changing her position in the family. Employment for women was much worse paid, was less certain, and the main source of the family livelihood was still the husband’s job – and he retained his privileged position in the family (Tyszka 1977). On the other hand, though, in studies covering youngsters in Upper Silesia in the nineteen seventies different attitudes were already distinctly making a mark; around half the young men and women then expected that women would also work in paid employment after getting married, although the carrying out of almost all household chores was still ascribed to women (Górnikowska-Zwolak 2000). One could therefore talk of certain changes in the models of roles fulfilled by women in Silesia, although slow, and also of slow changes in the family model.

The traditional family model was acknowledged as one of the major causes of the difficulties the residents of Silesia faced during the period of transformation. An important factor in this period was the (it must be said that relative) economic degradation of mining families. In the communist period, earnings among miners were over twice the national average, compared to 1.3-1.5 times the earnings in other sectors in the year 1995. Their economic advantage over other regions and lines of work was also manifested in them being able to do shopping in special shops using coupons issued to miners (known as gewex coupons), as well as these workers having the option of holidays in their own holiday centres, run at a relatively high standard (Szcze-
Such privileges and other economic gains of this kind were treated by the Silesian population as ‘decent wages’ for extracting ‘black gold’, i.e. the coal, then one of the country’s best export products. Women in Silesia were much less occupationally active than men, and apart from tradition other reasons for this were the high fertility rate, the exceptionally labour-intensive nature of household chores (time-consuming meals, prepared entirely at home; difficulty keeping the home clean in polluted regions), and the necessity of matching the rhythm of the day to the multi-shift nature of the men’s work, difficult to reconcile with the work of women following a different rhythm (Górnikowska-Zwolak 2000). In this system, women were valued almost exclusively for fulfilling the roles of wife and mother, which was reinforced with a special means of rewarding, e.g. awarding medals to mothers with three sons working beneath the ground in a mine. The period of transformation, when among other things heavy industry (i.e. mining as well) lost in importance, brought about enormous change, not only economic but also psychological. In many cases this was manifested in attempts by women to find paid employment. But in this region there were exceptionally few jobs for women, in addition to which the women were poorly educated, which became one of the reasons for their limited prospects on the labour market (Szczepański 1997).

Biographical research studies show that the separation of women’s jobs that men do not do has, in some cases, remained true to this day: “And those various home jobs were done by girls. It was for them, not for the boys. And to this day Damian, Basia’s man, […] he neither washes nor tidies in the home” (Górnikowska-Zwolak 2000: 185, interview with Agnieszka J.). Some respondents noticed differences between their own (older) and today’s generation: “When a man got up for work, the woman had to get up even earlier, to make his sandwiches for work. But now? Why isn’t it like that now? The women sleep while the men get ready for work by themselves. I don’t like that!” (ibid, pp. 154–155, interview with Maria B.).

Although certain changes in women’s situation have undoubtedly taken place, the observations and evaluations revealed if only in those last quotes indicate a continuation of traditional models of relations between men and women in Silesia.

Migration of the husband, of the ‘head of the family’, generates a totally new situation. A woman, even if brought up in a traditional family and sharing the values behind it, must to a large degree become the ‘head of the family’ during her husband’s absence. And the man realises that the family can function without his constant presence. What does this mean for the men and women? How does it change everyday life, and does it change the family model?
In the world today one can encounter many alternative family models, among them that of living apart together, a model that would suit this, one that out of necessity caused by the migration is practiced by many families. Is it accepted? Is it being chosen with increasing deliberation? We shall attempt to answer these questions based on the research material gathered.

The Psychological Consequences of Temporary Migration by Husbands

The metaphor ‘life on a swing’ has been used for many years in papers on migration (Jaźwińska, Okółski 2001), meaning that although migration is temporary in character, a fixed aspect is the recurrence of leaving and returning, resulting in an interweaving of periods of life ‘away’ and periods of life ‘at home’. Usually this metaphor relates to the migrants themselves and is intended to describe their lifestyle, but it is easy to notice that it can also be applied to the migrant’s entire family, and especially to migrants’ wives. Just as the daily rhythm in the traditional Silesian family was subordinated to the husband’s work in the mine or steelworks, the shift-work character of this job and the effort it involved, in the case of a man leaving the country for employment abroad the rhythm of the woman’s life is largely determined on the one hand by the absence of her husband at home, and on the other – by these returns occurring every so often, when practically everything has to be subordinated to them: the daily rhythm, activities, way of life. In literature on the subject it is stressed that “absent migrants are always present” (Kandel and Massem, citing: Iglicka 2010: 124). As we shall yet see, this is reflected not only in the subordination of the rhythm of one’s life to the departures and returns of the ‘head of the family’, but also in numerous other relations the wives of migrating men either enter or cannot enter.

The predominant feeling the wives of migrating husbands talk about is their loneliness, described best by the word ‘absence’. This applies to various planes: emotional, sexual, and social:

“[…] money, in smaller or larger amounts, definitely does not make up for this absence – absence of emotions, of the person, of their touch, of hugging, anything. The absence of closeness with that person” (interview 4).

“Of course I miss the closeness, the sex, and there’s the fact that I’m by myself and have nobody I can pour out my grief to…” (group interview, respondent 2).

“When you’re on your own, you just wait…. You won’t believe it, but I simply want to cry when I think of it. A word such as longing doesn’t even reflect one hundredth of what I feel then” (group interview 1, respondent 1).
This problem also appears in many posts on web forums\(^4\), used as meeting grounds by women whose men work abroad:

“[… ] I’ve shed so many tears already that I must have filled a pretty decent-sized swimming pool by now. […] I used to think the first days were the worst, but that’s not true, not in my case anyway, every day is horrible, although we talk over the phone for hours every day, but I bawl at the phone as soon as I’ve put it down, it’s like that every day” (forum, Kikacosta).

“[…] what a life, an empty bed, empty everywhere… I’m going mad, so what that I hear his voice every day on the phone when I can’t cuddle up to him” (forum, Tisza).

“I want to live normally, I mean not only from one trip to the next, I want to wake up with him at my side every day, and not constantly bawl at nights, feel really down, and think about him cheating on me” (forum, Kwiaatek).

The intention is for periods when the husband returns home to be a time when everything is back to normal, when bonds form between husband and wife, when family life flourishes.

“Christmas soon, and I’m thinking how we’ll all enjoy our boys for a few days, for that much at least I’ll be able to enjoy the full family for a week, then there’s that parting again. For now I’m happy my husband’s coming back” (forum, yju)\(^5\).

It turns out, though, that the expectations held by men and women in regard to this time of ‘normal being together’ are frequently incompatible. The man, often exhausted by his heavy work, wants above all to rest at home, and not to be involved in and to solve numerous problems that have arisen during his absence. On the other hand, all those living ‘here’ expect him to visit them during his short stay in the country, to give them his time, help them, give his advice, intervene; and these are not only his wife and children, but his parents as well, and in particular his pals. The man cannot fulfil all these expectations, and sometimes does not even want to:

“When father appears here once every so often, then it’s a problem. Domestic problems are altogether beyond them, right? He’d ideally come back as if to a hotel […] for there to be no problems at home, nothing that needs fixing, no problems with the kids…. To get some rest, right? But he arrives, and all those things have piled up. There’s loads of them – a kid wants

\(^4\) An example of a web forum on ‘When the husband works abroad’ can be found at: http://dzidziusiowo.pl
\(^5\) Comments signed Kika, Tisza and KikaCosta come from the forums at dzidziusiowo.pl; Kwiaatek, yju, Rusalka from the forum ‘Gdy mąż pracuje za granicą’ [lit. ‘When the husband works abroad’].

194
Modernisation or Crisis? Transformations in Families of Temporary Migrants

this, his wife that, and there’s something else as well that needs to be done, and quite simply later on there are conflict-type situations” (interview 5).

Such recurring experiences of mismatched and unfulfilled expectations often lead to their modification, while the sense of loneliness begins to be a more universal experience, embracing the entire life of the migrant’s wife:

“[…] when the husband returns, they want to lean on his masculine shoulder, pour out their sorrows, just like they used to when the man was the stronger one who took the decisions. But here it turns out that the husband has been working hard physically for three months, and isn’t thinking about problems, but just about resting, and he rejects the woman and she continues to feel alone” (interview 2).

The repetitive nature of such experiences means that the period of being together ceases to be the anticipated ‘normality’, and the husband’s absence becomes the ‘normality’ while his returns – instead of being a delight – start becoming increasingly annoying. In many cases the feeling of loneliness gives way to a sense of drifting apart from one another, an impression of being with a stranger starts to dominate along with the feeling that the spouse, in returning home, is getting in the way of everyday life that has now been organised well without him:

“[…] they quite simply become unaccustomed to one another. Although it’s rare, some admit that their husband gets in the way. That right now he’s in my way, and I’m coping great in this situation as it is […] and he doesn’t have to be here at all, […] women say we’ve become strangers to each other” (interview 1).

“[…] these women don’t even want to have husbands at home. Many of them – both among my relatives and friends – simply want to have husbands, but ones who don’t mess up their daily schedule, their everyday practices, but are just there, because they want to have the feeling that they have husbands but at the same time want to be at home by themselves” (interview 1).

“She [a neighbour] said a year ago at Christmas: ‘God, when’s 2 January going to arrive, when’s he going to go!’ It wasn’t that she has somebody, no, just that she’s got used to that and so have the children, you often see that” (group interview 2).

A similar feeling of loss of familiarity and estrangement is experienced by the men returning home: they are happy to be home and with the family upon arrival, but are so used to a different environment and way of life, that they themselves aim to leave again before long:

“[…] the way I see it, it works like this, that Dad’s home and for two days everything’s great, but on the third day he starts getting annoyed, by the fourth or fifth he’d most gladly pack his bags, have it all over with and escape” (interview 5).
The situation mentioned above also means that despite a verbalised intention to return home, such a return will be very difficult, if not impossible, for many:

“My friend at work has just come back from her husband, she’d gone there to save their marriage. She said that even in that Polish enclave she felt different. A different outlook, a different view of the world, of marriage. [...] She told me that in her opinion they won’t find their place back here. That returning to the earlier model is impossible” (interview 2).

The fundamental problem in regard to those remaining behind in Poland, and above all women, is – apart from the intense feeling of loneliness and absence of closeness and support – a phenomenon one could call the ‘syndrome of waiting for life after migration’, which means a sense of temporariness, of the inauthenticity of life at present, and choosing escape strategies in place of development strategies. The basic escape strategy is one described by many respondents, of ‘escape in the bottle’, of ‘drowning sorrows’ and loneliness in alcohol. As the vast majority of the respondents talked about this, it seems to be a very serious problem. Respondents drew attention to the fact that migrants’ wives are under immense social pressure and control, but this control applies to their relations with other people, and in particular with other men. Nobody on the other hand controls the fact that women drink. As one of the respondents said: “Nobody will say it, because there is nobody to say it. The mirror?” It is worth pointing out that a similar problem was encountered in families living in the suburbs of the United States in the nineteen sixties and seventies. Many hours of solitude, social isolation, and the monotony of household chores induced middle-class wives with no paid employment towards escape behaviour, taking on the form of frequent consumption of alcohol on their own. The respondents of today describe this as follows:

“They usually cope from morning to noon, when there’s work – whether paid work or household work, and there are children needing help with their homework, dinner, and supervision. But in the evening there’s nothing left to do, the kids are asleep and there’s nobody to talk to. And then these women fall into alcoholism” (interview 2).

“Those young girls, or women really, they literally drown their sorrows in alcohol” (interview 3).

“They get terribly drunk. After all, what can they do after such a beautiful start to the day... You know. Sometimes they’re already tipsy in the early afternoon. And when a few get together, they have fun. But social control [...] is strong here, so she won’t go to a bar, as there might be a man there, or something. No, they stick to themselves” (group interview 2).
During the research it was not the lonely women who talked about this, but observers: neighbours, teachers and researchers. However, traces of such behaviour are to be found on web forums: “Oh, I guess I’d most gladly get drunk today” (forum, Tisza), followed by an answer from another woman: “Damn, me too, but I’d get so legless I’d probably spend half the night hanging over the toilet bowl” (forum, KikaCosta).

For analysing the situation of migrants’ wives, it is worth applying the categories distinguished in relation to those living alone, because despite evident differences (migrants’ wives are most often bringing up children, and as such are not living alone) the absence of their partner makes their everyday situation similar to that experienced by those living by themselves. Analyses covering models of living in solitude distinguish four categories of such people: 1) yearning – those who want to live with their partner, who are critical of living life on one’s own; 2) ambivalent – wanting to have a partner, but speaking positively of life in solitude; 3) regretting – and as such wanting to live alone, but at the same time unfavourably disposed towards life on one’s own; 4) satisfied – wanting to live on their own and with a positive opinion about such a way of life (Hoorn, citing: Slany 2002). Our research shows that the vast majority of migrants’ wives portray themselves as persons belonging to the ‘yearning’ category, assessing life together positively and looking forward to being in such a situation again, and very critical of living apart. Simultaneously, in many cases they shift as their husband’s absence extends into the category of ‘regretting’, i.e. those critical of life on one’s own, seeing and pointing out its faults, while at the same time wanting to live alone, though frequently not admitting such, especially within their community. They become convinced that organising their family life differently is becoming practically unrealistic, no longer for economic reasons so much as due to psychological reasons.

Women remaining in Poland very clearly search for support; not only do they maintain ‘face-to-face’ contacts, they also provide mutual support via correspondence over the Internet. However, no such web forums were found where opinions would be shared by the husbands of migrating women, or by men migrating and spending time away from home. There could be a variety of reasons for this; perhaps men abroad maintain bonds with one another, i.e. within a group of men in similar situations, and this constitutes sufficient support for them. Cultural differences could also be a cause; women tend more often to seek support and empathy, while men are incapable of admitting to problems or seeking others’ support. Or it may be that men do not experience solitude so strongly, that their emotional problems related to being apart are less intense, and in extreme cases they form relationships with oth-
Women and live their lives in two families. The scale and burden of these problems remains unknown. Wives’ comments on the matter vary – from those claiming that their husbands also have a hard time – “not only we back here miss our partners” – to the picture of a situation in which the men do indeed work hard, but only for a few hours a day, while they have the rest of the day to themselves and enjoy life and leisure, go out together for a beer, their lives similar to those of single men, as opposed to the women who are absorbed the entire time with problems at work, home, and in bringing up their children.

The Social Consequences of the Migration of Husbands

The most opportunities for the emancipation of migrants’ wives and a change in their position are generated by the social consequences of temporary migration among men. The woman has to take on numerous roles, activities and jobs which in a traditional family were carried out by the man, while at the same time fulfilling all roles and chores ascribed to her in the traditional family. In everyday life she does not have to take any account of the decisions of another person, including her husband, but neither can she count on his support or joint involvement in her decisions. In certain respects this brings their situation close to that of single mothers (Rymsza, Raclaw 2001), and although economically life is significantly easier for them, then paradoxically for social reasons it is sometimes even more complex and sometimes more difficult. Temporary migration for work is accompanied by plans of ‘improving one’s lot’, most often involving the construction of a house, refurbishment, and similar jobs, which the woman remaining at home has to organise, supervise and keep a watch over. And this imposes numerous obligations on her:

“[… ] the woman has more responsibilities [… ] must realise that [… ] the wife is responsible for everything [… ] and she’s a kind of head of the family, must sort out all those typically male matters, bring up the children and of course run the home and look after those kids, make sure it all functions somehow” (interview 6).

“It’s burdening the wife with responsibilities, and as far as I can see not all women cope” (interview 4).

Such a forced situation means not only additional responsibilities, but also new opportunities – some women come to realise they have skills and competences that until then had no chance of surfacing. They are not only forced to take measures themselves in many diverse areas of life, but their situation has also made it possible for them to take such steps. Could this
lead to their emancipation? Some respondents believe so, and have observed certain signs of this emancipation:

“Some of these women [...] have become self-reliant. More so. They are able to sort everything out themselves. [...] everything’s on their shoulders. And that means home refurbishment as well; the husband leaves the money, and the wife decides how to spend it [...] and such momentous decisions for the family’s future or later for the children’s education are... but it’s the women who take the decisions here” (interview 1).

“They definitely become more independent, I’m not saying that fully so because after all they’re married, but in a sense independent. They certainly have to learn many men’s things, and they get their driving licence” (interview 4).

This is confirmed by the observations of a researcher⁶ who in the course of 3 minutes, by a town’s main street at 7.45 am, counted 124 vehicles (18 lorries, 2 buses, 11 minibuses and 93 cars), over half of them – 74 – driven by women (6 minibuses, 68 cars), and the predominance of women drivers was even higher when excluding lorries and buses from the observation; then women proved to be the drivers of 71% of minibuses and cars. And so there is definitely an acceleration in certain emancipative processes, and in time women also build their own lives not limiting themselves to home and waiting for their husband’s return:

“I was looking for a job, to get away at least a bit from the work at home. Simply so I wouldn’t be such a stay-at-home housewife, but also for somebody to show me some appreciation, right? And especially my husband, he said: listen, you’ll go to work, earn some pennies, but above all you’ll be appreciated, boost your self-esteem” (interview 6).

Web forums also provide examples showing that sometimes there is an almost ‘total’ emancipation among the wives. However, on occasions this occurs not due to a change in the relations within the family, through the woman’s greater independence and raised position in the family, but because each spouse begins living their own life, and over time their relationship ceases to exist:

“Right from the start my husband was working abroad, he was away more than he was at home. I told myself that was how it had to be, we had to live on something, keep the house and kids. Drifting apart took 14 years, I was constantly on my own at home with two kids, with the problems a young mum has. We had left our part of the country for a place where we were strangers, and before long my husband went away to work, I was on my own

⁶ Calculations by Dr Marta Trębaczsawska.
again, but this time totally alone. After a while I found a job, started studying, got my driving licence – on my own – with his FINANCIAL support. Love and trust, it was all there – definitely on my part. But we lived apart, he there and me here, each with their own problems. We’re not together” (forum, Rusalka).

However, the majority of our respondents doubted in the emancipation of migrants’ wives, above all due to women being totally dependent economically on their husbands earning an income abroad. This makes their situation similar to that described by respondents quoted earlier on, talking about Silesian families in the past in which women could not count on changing their fortunes even in the event of the husband being violent towards her, as they did not have their own sources of income. This mechanism was described quite similarly by respondents describing the current situation among migrants’ wives:

“They cannot become independent since the whole time everything is centred on their husband and the money he gives. Although they seem to be doing everything by themselves, the truth is that it’s all along the lines of: what would my husband think, would my husband like it” (interview 4).

“I think that it’s so deeply-rooted in tradition here that for the time when the husband returns then everything returns. Women are not really in a hurry to start a revolution. […] Besides, let’s not forget that it’s the husband’s money the whole time, that he’s keeping her – her and the children. So he has that power over her the whole time, even when he’s not there. I mean how can she be independent since he’s the one earning the whole time?” (group interview 2).

One of the social and psychological consequences of husbands migrating is the necessity for their wives to fulfil both parents’ roles. Admittedly, this is not a unique situation; in today’s world long working hours and the practical absence of the father, or even both parents, is rather the norm than an exception to the rule. In addition, as already mentioned, the children in traditional Silesian families never were accustomed to fathers being involved on a daily basis in their upbringing. Yet in the traditional family the father was respected and feared, and as such his role was that of the ‘final word’ in the case of problems with the children. Today as well women experiencing problems rearing their children revert to similar methods of using the ‘father’s authority’, making the children fearful of the father’s reaction: “When Dad comes home, he’ll show you!” (interview 1).

Guardians, teachers and pedagogues cited a whole list of problems the children of migrating parents experience, including anorexia and self-destructive behaviour, as well as lower school grades and aspirations, and signs
of degeneracy or crime. However, there is no certainty that migration is the cause of all these behavioural and other problems. Our respondents frequently made clear that they did not want to demonize migration and the absence of parents as the cause of the problems, but they had no doubts that migration contributed at least in part to their emergence:

“There’s no class that doesn’t have a child with some kind of problem, whether behavioural or with learning. And when probing, it turns out that at least one of the parents is absent from home” (interview 3).

These problems come to light especially when both parents leave to work abroad, although also occur frequently when only one migrates. It is quite obvious that the mother, expected to bring up the children independently and by herself, while also coping with all the duties related to investments planned as an effect of the family’s better financial situation thanks to the work abroad, finds it very difficult to manage as the only guardian and only person bringing up the children.

We were surprised to find that another aspect in the solitary life led by the wives of migrating men is the powerful social control that affects them. In many communities, and in particular those of a traditional nature, a woman living on her own is subjected to intensified control and suspicion, which blocks not only her self-reliance but also entails a life in social isolation. As a result of living under the pressure of increased social control, and in fear of backbiting and ‘unfavourable testimony’ reaching the ears of her husband returning home from time to time, women live to a large degree entirely on their own:

“When the husband returns […] he asks around among friends and family, hears that his wife is good, at home, looking after the children and not seeing anybody” (interview 2).

“You could say it’s a kind of tradition with us, that the husbands leave so our women here manage to look after themselves. Somebody would always be found to help if the husband’s away, but nothing of the sort here, oh no, don’t you believe it, if she were to want to get together with a neighbour, she’d be skinned alive. Everybody here knows what everybody else is doing, so no” (group interview 3).

Once again the ‘constant presence of the absent’ husbands (migrants) is very clearly making its mark. Women also frequently experience this as a wrongful imbalance between the two partners, as men abroad are not controlled to any degree at all, and are rather suspected of building their life away from home ‘in parallel’ to the life they have in Poland. As such the wife who remains in the country is overworked, has to depend on herself, is lonely, and is subjected to substantial social control, while the husband abroad is
shaping his life without constraint, beyond any control by his wife and family back home. In the interviews and especially on web forums we have an enormous number of examples of such ‘alternative and parallel’ families the migrants’ wives find out about very late on:

“[…] barely six months ago I wrote the following here: my husband emigrated 4 years ago, we miss each other, love each other, call and visit, but it’s OK. But today I’ll write this: my husband emigrated 4 years ago, we missed and loved each other, called and visited, until I received a hint, from above I guess, that something’s not right, he comes back and what do I discover? That he’s been with another woman for two years. Two years of double living, two years of talk of love and longing, two years for nothing, no more trust and faith…” (web cafe, Maż za granicą, Kajamaja7).

“Last week I happened to hear my husband on the phone, you could say it was nothing, but it made my heart thump. And I pushed him till he admitted he has somebody else. He’s been working abroad for 3 years. It was weird this year, he wasn’t texting, saying that he loved me, but assured me everything was OK and I was just making things up. I can’t stand that phrase. He can’t imagine returning to Poland. And what’s worse, he doesn’t know if he wants to come back to his family. I’ve shed a sea of tears, and can’t imagine what’s going to come next. I’m 47, I haven’t worked, and I’ve been treating depression for 7 years. I’ve been left on ice – and that’s putting it mildly. My daughter doesn’t know yet. I guess he wants to have a child with her. She’s 35, childless, single, lives not far from him” (ibid, Margareta 777).

Because such stories are published in the press and on web forms, and migrants talk about them, the feeling of imbalance is frequently accompanied by barely-contained suspicion and fear among migrants’ wives:

“I’ve heard a million stories already about husbands who emigrated. That they get up to all sorts of things, that five live together and bring in the hookers, that they drink and smoke weed, that they talk badly of their wives, that sometimes they even start another family and neither knows of the other. I think there has to be trust, as otherwise one would go absolutely mad!!!” (group interview 1, respondent 2).

“I don’t want to talk to him about the fact that I have my doubts, although to be honest my trust in him is decreasing day by day. He’s an attractive man, maybe that’s why. After all guys are constantly talking about sex being important to them, and how are we women supposed to trust them if they’re away for a few months” (group interview 1, respondent 3).

7 Comments signed Kajamaja, Margareta 777, Ewepras from the web café ‘Maż za granicą’ [lit. Husband Abroad].
The inequality in chances for sorting out one’s life in some other way, with another person, derives not only from the social control not allowing for migrants’ wives to form other relationships, but also (as in the case of divorced women, who enter new relationships significantly less often than men following a divorce) from them being burdened with numerous duties leaving them no time for a private life:

“[…] I don’t know, if it continues that way he’ll probably find somebody there, with 2 children I don’t have a chance of meeting anybody… and I don’t even have the strength or will to think about it, with the children, home and work all so absorbing” (web cafe, Ewepras).

However, research shows that not only double standards are the cause of such imbalance in the appraisal of sexual behaviour among men and women. Leaving home means the person migrating is beyond control, and women migrants also talk of such women cheating on their husbands (Krasnodębska 2008).

The social consequences of the migration of men cannot be appraised unambiguously. Nobody doubts the improvement in families’ economic situation. In a country such as Poland, in which the aspirations of many citizens are shaped by models prevalent in wealthier countries, attempts to improve one’s financial status become understandable and many people are certain to continue making such attempts. However, this betterment also has ambiguous consequences. Respondents told us repeatedly about the ‘empty home syndrome’, about homes built with the future in mind, about life ‘put on hold for later’, when they’ll start ‘normal life’ in financially better conditions after the period of separation and temporary migration. It turns out that just like emigrants in the past, contemporary Polish temporary migrants also plan to return home, but the return doesn’t happen. A migrant does not invest in improving his living conditions away from home, which has a significant impact on his family’s situation. The lack of a clear goal (e.g. building a house) following which he returns home results in the temporary nature of the migration frequently evolving into something more enduring, and migrants get caught in the ‘noose of the migration trap’ (Iglicka 2010), from which there is practically no way out other than leaving home again and again. Changing this is very difficult, for many reasons; losing touch with previous contacts and working abroad below one’s skill level means that back in Poland they are unable to find work, their financial expectations in regard to employment are steadily rising, and spouses drift apart, no longer able to build everyday life together. The focusing of parents’ aspirations around financial gains entails consumption-based attitudes among their children, who focus their own ambitions around acquiring
material goods, and who undertake employment early on – including abroad – while limiting their educational aspirations. The absence of the father, and his incompatibility with the conditions of life ‘here’ that becomes increasingly evident over time, often causes transformation in the relationships between father and children in traditional families, and these transformations require attention.

The Impact of Migration on Relationships Between Fathers and Children

The fundamental trait of the patriarchal family is the high position of the husband-father, who has power and authority over the remaining family members. According to our Silesian respondents, such a model continues to function to this day:

“But despite the woman having hold of a lot of power, it’s still the father here who’s perceived as the most important person in the family” (interview 1).

“Here in Silesia a guy is a guy, there’s a kind of cult of the father, the man. [...] I say something, that something should be done such and such a way, and he tells me that his father said otherwise, and that’s how it will be. And when I hear that ‘father said’, then I know I won’t teach him a thing. On the other hand, if a pupil were to insult me and I were to make a complaint, then the next day he’d come and apologise, because his father told him he had to apologise” (group interview 3).

Such a definition of this role embraces not only power, but also remaining within the range of activities and tasks defined as ‘masculine’, which could mean both not getting involved in household chores, in bringing up the children, and no contact with the school and little involvement in anything which in the traditional division was among women’s activities and tasks. Analyses from feministic and masculinist research indicate that in traditional communities in particular, masculinity is formed through the negation of femininity, while the material gathered confirms that this is also happening today – limiting men’s roles in the everyday rearing of children:

“[…] the father does nothing that in the children’s eyes would bring him any dishonour, and well, some think women’s things are for women, and that’s it” (group interview 3).

In addition the traditional model means that the father is a person who rarely has contact with the children, with these contacts restricted to special occasions, and they are also distinctly asymmetric in character. It might seem that the role of the man-father thus defined could be reconciled with fathers leaving home for periods to earn some money, as his ‘special occasion’ role
can still be fulfilled. But it turns out that, for various reasons, it is hard in practice for a migrating husband and father to fulfil this ‘extraordinary’ role as well, one meaning rare but effective intervention based on obedience and authority. But even a father’s good intentions may in time lose sense, since he practically does not know his own children, and from his wife’s perspective he gets in the way rather than helps in the upbringing:

“[…] he meddles in the children’s upbringing (although he sees them 3 times a year, a week at a time), questions my rules, interferes in everything (he supposedly wants to help, but doesn’t know anything – what the children like, how they do things, how they spend their time, what they like or don’t like playing, who their friends are, etc.)” (web cafe, Ewepras).

We mentioned earlier the problems deriving from the fact that men returning home expect rest and a time free of troubles at home, and as such it is difficult for them to fulfil the expectation related to enforcing obedience or intervening at school if the mother, left on her own with the children, cannot cope. Migrating fathers sometimes try to meet these expectations, to solve various problems during their short stay in the country, including those appearing in regard to school. In the descriptions given by school teachers and pedagogues, the interventions by such fathers are rather caricatural:

“Dad’s away for most of the time, then he comes home for Friday-Saturday-Sunday, and his wife says: ‘Our child isn’t learning, has such and such remarks on his school reports, and I can’t cope so you go to the school.’ And these dads come to the school, and before or even instead of any sort of ‘good morning’, they make such a face; and they insult the school as unable to educate, that it’s the teacher’s fault, etc., and before I manage to answer that the school has a different role, and nobody’s going to do the bringing up in the father’s place, I hear the door slamming. And dad’s happy because, after all, he’s sorted it out. But he can’t sort anything out in three days. He’d have to be here every day, see how the child misses his father or mother” (interview 3).

Such attempts at blaming the school for all educational difficulties, especially those that appear in cases of migrating parents, might help those migrating reduce their own sense of guilt, but they are obviously not a solution to any problem that might derive from migration.

Another way of building up relations with one’s children, apart from strictness and the desire to make up for one’s ‘educational role’, known not only from descriptions of the father-migrant’s situation but also from descriptions of how the role of a parent is fulfilled by a divorced person not responsible for a child’s everyday care, involves attempts at forming a bond through presents, by providing entertainment:
“[…] they want to make up for this absence of real life contact […] with things, with presents. That’s also one of the approaches. Especially among fathers, that then there’s that time for their children, but it’s entertainment time, as if they wanted to make up for everything in this short time. Then there’s shopping, trips, the swimming pool, various forms of enjoyment put together. So a kind of dad, or mum, for enjoyment, for presents. While the other parent is bad, as they stay at home and are the enforcer of certain rules. So above all there’s a kind of tangible absence of contact” (interview 1).

In such a situation the mother is the only person bringing up the child and who has authentic contact with the child, but also the only one imposing and enforcing responsibilities, while the father builds up his contact with the child via associations with pleasure.

In the modern world a father’s lack of contact with his children, and the man’s role being reduced to a ‘provider of money’ and ‘three-day dad’, is not only a problem among migrating fathers, as very similar cases are described in regard to those very busy in their jobs, and divorced men not looking after their children on an everyday basis. Paradoxically, though, in Silesia – where the man did not have a large everyday family role – such a situation may contribute significantly to a change in the father’s position, since his power and authority on which his traditional role was based is vanishing. When the father is present he can impose responsibilities, enforce decisions, shape life patterns, pass on norms or values, and even if he does not do this often – his authority is unquestionable. However, when he leaves the country this authority becomes ever weaker, and in time even illusory. One may presume that fathers’ role and influence is greater when sons follow in their footsteps – migrating early on, forming similar families, and as such adopting their fathers’ lifestyle, inheriting their occupations, barely moving up at all in the social hierarchy of occupations and prestige. However, this is rather the influence of the father’s life pattern and not an effect of his authority, which in the case of young working adults achieving early emancipation is insignificant. When children have greater occupational ambitions the situation is different:

“At high school age the father can no longer scare his children, and the traditional Silesian role of father ceases to function. With such a child, the father may no longer have any say at all. He has nothing he can impress the child with, and this is particularly so for those offspring who want to study, want to stay here, complete their studies and settle here” (interview 2).

A migrating father and his life pattern not only have little impact on such children, but may also constitute an anti-pattern, one the children distance themselves from, at the same time distancing themselves from their father.
The lack of contact between father and children impacts the shape of relationships within the family, the situation of the mother striving to cope with bringing up the children, and the children. The topic of no father-child relationship, their mutual unfamiliarity, repeatedly appears on web forums and in the interviews. Men frequently do not know their own children, they are incapable of understanding their needs, and where small children are concerned this frequently leads to the children not recognising their fathers:

“[… the person migrating is most often the father, he has no contact with the child, has no patience for the child” (interview 5).

“Last year our boy was 3. Maciek (the child’s father) left after Easter and came back at Christmas. And he comes in, all happy, arms wide open, but the little kid hides behind my legs. He didn’t recognise his dad. I don’t think I’ll ever forget Maciek’s face. It almost brought him to tears” (group interview 1, respondent 4).

This gives rise to additional emotional problems, since a child who comes to accept this father then has to come to terms once again with him leaving. Another consequence is the deficiency of models of family life, and frequently also a model of a man who during his short stays at home is aggressive, subjugating everything and everybody to his will:

“What kind of marriage will a girl not knowing what marriage involves on a daily basis be able to form? If she was only with her mother the whole time, she doesn’t even know what such everyday life looks like, she only knows it from films. Later her image of this has nothing in common with reality. And on the other hand, how can a boy know how a man relates to his wife, since all he sees is his father shouting once every three months that there’s something at home not as he wants it?” (interview 3).

Thus the migration of men entails a distinct reduction in their family role. The lack of contact between father and children frequently results in children forgetting their father, in the father not knowing his own children at all. In addition the inter-generation bond is broken, this manifested both in fathers’ total non-participation in their children’s lives, and also in fathers not passing on family history or traditions. This is all contributing largely – as noticed by numerous researchers (see: Czech 2006) – to a change in the family and the man’s position in the family. A father who remains with the family, although his role today is also changing, seems to retain significantly more attributes of the traditional authority and position in the family.

Conclusion. Migration Culture and its Impact on the Family

The concept of ‘migration culture’ emerged to define the complicated and manifold consequences occurring as a result of migration in a commu-
małgorzata fuszara, jacek kurczewski

nity where a relatively large number of its members go abroad for work (kandel and massey, citing: iglicka 2010). This applies particularly to those communities in which migration has a long tradition, and the periods spent abroad are long-lasting. As such this suits well the situation in Poland, and especially the reality in those regions of the country where the level of migration is high and such processes have a long-lasting tradition. Migration culture forms via changes in three planes: thanks to the exchange of goods, technology and symbols in a region sending out migrants, a new culture is formed, different to that to date, but also different to that to which these migrants leave Poland for. Secondly, a specific attitude towards migration, migrants and social mobility forms in such a region, frequently different to the attitudes in other regions. Finally, and this is what we are most interested in, migration entails deep cultural change resulting from the necessity of reconciling everyday ‘life here’ without the migrant with his ‘presence at a distance’ and his returns home: “[...] this concept also means that due to the absence of the migrants, the communities must change their lifestyle and tailor it to ‘those who are absent’. This applies to the family, the household, [...] and the local community of the region sending out migrants” (iglicka 2010: 125).

Changes of the first kind, involving change occurring via a transfer of goods and technologies, and in the entire cultural sphere related to them, are the easiest to observe. Although the fact that there is a transfer of goods gives no rise to doubts, there is a question mark over the related creation of a new culture. Respondents repeatedly indicated – in this research and studies we conducted later in the podlasie region – the ‘empty home syndrome’ in these regions. Those leaving for work and their families have a goal, which is to improve their financial situation, to buy a flat or house. Economic reasons are the predominant if not the only reasons for family members to choose migration. Whereas in the case of young, single migrants the reasons for them leaving the country identified by researchers (slany 2004) are varied, in the case of family members migrating and particularly those from small localities, there is practically only one goal – of a material nature (łukowski 2001; kaczmarczyk 2001). For some families this is a so-called survival strategy, adopted when the family is in very poor financial condition, when they are unable to find work or their earnings are so low that they are unable to satisfy the family’s fundamental needs. If migration is a means of solving an underlying problem, e.g. long-term unemployment and shortage of money for satisfying basic needs, it is not only a functional solution but can also ward off the unfavourable consequences of unemployment and life in poverty, despite migration itself sometimes entailing high social costs.
However, in Poland today migration is not a survival strategy for the majority of those going abroad to work, but a means of acquiring wealth, a strategy for obtaining many goods not necessarily of a basic nature. This profit from migration, even if it really is attained, has its other less favourable side. Because these are ways of life and strategies that entail rather paradoxical consequences. Migrants striving to improve their situation and raise their standard of living spend years as immigrants living in very tough, primitive conditions, frequently significantly worse than what they have left behind in Poland, and although thanks to their sacrifices they often achieve their goal they rarely have the opportunity of ‘consuming’ it – newly-built houses stand empty, in everyday life there’s a sense of temporariness and the postponement of ‘normal life’ till ‘after migration’. It is also increasingly difficult to imagine what this ‘normal life’ would involve after returning home:

“[…] wives, women… when they chat, they’re often waiting for something. That it will be over one day, that they’ll be back and they’ll live normally. Except what does normal mean? Work from 7 to 3 and at weekends them watching football and drinking beer with their mates? Or they wait to earn a little more and then they’ll come home and everything will sort itself out – first of all for a flat, then a house, a car, university for the kids, and so on and so on with no end, constantly in such a state of waiting” (group interview 1, respondent 4).

However, the few research studies regarding patterns of life among migrants returning permanently to Poland indicate distinct changes in these patterns, manifested in greater attention being focused on free time, on the family and on friends. Those coming back focus their lives within their local community, and spend their holidays in Poland. It may appear surprising that their pattern of consumption shows a departure from luxury consumption, and being satisfied with lower earnings but coupled with shorter working hours (Jończy 2010). And so those returning are those for whom migration really was a transitional and temporary state, following which they consciously turn back to their chosen lifestyle and model of living. But for the majority, i.e. for those continuing the model of ‘life on a swing’, such a model is inaccessible.

If we can talk about a cultural change occurring under the impact of the transfer of goods, technologies and values, it would rather be that of migrants and their loved ones remaining in Poland joining the ‘consumer culture’ omnipresent in the modern world. In the case of Silesia, though, a question mark should be placed over the change occurring in this respect. The cult of hard work present in Silesian culture, thanks to which the family is provided for, is not only not contradictory to but even reinforces the goals
the migrants have. The importance of durables acquired thanks to hard work is not a new value, one introduced into traditional culture through the influence of migration, but a traditional value. And to a large degree this heightens doubts about whether this migration is contributing to the modernisation of traditional communities. Existing literature does not explicitly resolve the question about whether migration has effects of a modernising character, or whether the consequences are predominantly negative (Okólski 2011).

On the other hand the change influenced by migration and migrants in the local community is noticeable and explicit, and there are not really any doubts about its modernising character. One of the indicators of these changes is that of women becoming part (though slowly) of the public sphere, including growing acceptance for women holding public functions. In earlier studies, a woman in local government in the region concerned observed: “Men are going abroad for work more and more often. The effect is such that women are in charge, and not only here. Women are already in charge throughout Silesia” (Fuszara 2006; Kurczewski 2007). And indeed, of the 18 local councillor posts in the commune in which we conducted the research, the majority – 10 – were occupied during the study by women. However, this is only happening at the lowest rung of authority, and it is worth bearing in mind that for various reasons such positions have lost their attractiveness to men (Fuszara 2007). At the commune council level, men are in the clear majority. But, as commented by one of the councillors: “In our council there are 4 women, including one in the countryside. I don’t know how many were in the previous one, but I believe that just a few years ago there were none at all. That’s caused partially by the migration” (ibid).

Migration, migrants and their interaction with other countries is also contributing to change in the relations between the authorities and the citizen, and this could be described as a greater ‘citizenisation’ of local community members. Migrants “expect what is due to them and what they know they can get, because since they have it elsewhere, they can here as well” (interview 2). Influenced by the culture of the countries they’ve spent time in, migrants are growing more aware of their rights, they voice more expectations towards the authorities, and their attitude towards the authorities is more demanding.

A change in behaviour in public space is also visible in less fundamental issues, but ones also important for the local community, e.g. in how people celebrate:

“They also behave differently. There used to be fetes lasting a few hours, everything over at 5 when everybody would go home. But now […] you can
see entire families sitting at tables, singing, loud, satisfied, all of them drinking litres of beer because they’ve seen this at the October Fest, and they liked what they saw so they’re bringing it here. I’m not saying it’s bad, don’t misunderstand me” (interview 2).

On the border of the transformations in public space and changes in the family are those related to improving the prospects for one’s children. Parents’ expectations towards schools are increasing, while attention is also noticeably given to ensuring children a better start via extracurricular activities and the elimination of obstacles, e.g. resulting from speech defects or educational problems. This attention – absent in traditional Silesian culture where education was not valued to the same degree as hard work – is recognised in the region in question to be an effect of the cultural changes influenced by migration.

The complicated changes taking place as a result of migration in the migrants’ families and in the position women have in the family are the most difficult to present unambiguously, let alone to appraise. As we wrote above, the fundamental and most general motive encouraging people to migrate is the desire to improve the living conditions of one’s family, and as such it is the good of the family that seems to guide migration. However, literature indicates that – paradoxically – it is precisely such action intentionally taken ‘for the good of the family’ that brings about many consequences detrimental to the family: “what’s supposed to serve the family may turn against it” (Gocko 2005: 191), and the issue of the threats migration entails for families is underestimated (Wojaczek 2005). Questionnaire-based surveys conducted in Silesia prove that among the negative effects of migration, that mentioned in particular was being apart from the family (Kaltbach 2005).

There is no doubt that changes occur in migrants’ families, adapting the rhythm of family life to those who are absent, to their returns and departures. The families of people migrating may definitely be defined as untypical, but it must be noted that today they are not the only examples of such relationships, largely functioning ‘at a distance’. The American experience of married couples often living at two ends of the continent because of work, or alternative and increasingly common forms of the family in which people constitute a couple but do not live together (living apart together), are not only examples of migrants’ families, but also certain contemporary forms of the family, seen more and more in many countries and particularly in large cities. But a problem in the communities we investigated is the fact that families are not prepared for the necessity of the changes that must be made in the hitherto family model due to the migration. Migrants and their families seem to believe that they can reconcile their family model to date with the
migration of one member, and in most cases they do not accept change in the family. Although over time it becomes necessary to adjust to the new situation, and the model practised is that of the family ‘living apart together’, this is not the model they chose but one forced on them by the situation, often regarded a deviation from the traditional model of the ‘ideal family’ treated as the most correct. As such, one cannot be surprised that it is not recommended:

“[…] if it were along the lines of young people arranging something from the start, planning, establishing that either like this or like that, then I wouldn’t recommend that to anybody. Because I simply know what I went through to begin with, and nobody warned me before I got married that it would be like that. But having lived like this for so many years now, then personally I can’t imagine any other model. I simply don’t know any other, and I guess I’m too old now to put some other form into effect. So I only know this kind, and prefer it. But I can remember how hard it was for me at the start” (interview 4).

The situation when such a model of living is treated as admissible and a consciously accepted option for organising one’s private and family life is totally different:

“I guess my situation is actually a little different. I’ve long become used to my husband’s absence […] we’ve been together but separate practically the whole time. […] Why do I say my situation is probably different? […] I […] don’t just wait. I mean I look forward to my husband’s visits, but I don’t sit waiting for his return, because we decided that he’d simply be working there. And since he has a good and satisfying job, and he’s developing and earning appropriately for his skills, then there’s no point changing that for some kind of undefined ‘after he’s back’. […] I decided to have children without him at home, because I knew that one way or another I’d cope. I’m a translator, I do translations in person and online, sometimes I give private lessons for school exams, individual lessons, so I’m coping pretty well myself as well. And I also have my parents here, my mum really helps me […] I look after myself and the children and […] I’ve found my place in this situation, and I’m taking maximum advantage of it” (group interview 1, respondent 4).

It is not easy to reconcile the ‘living together apart’ family model with Silesian tradition, but it does not necessarily have to be viewed as a ‘crisis’ or the ‘collapse’ of the family. Although it is a fundamental change in relation to the former model, and in this sense does mean even the ‘end’ of the family in its previous form, nevertheless – as we have already ascertained – these ‘new’ forms of the family are known to many people today from experience. The fundamental problem in traditional communities experiencing intense migration lies in the fact that such a model differs diametrically from traditional family patterns, and the latter are still accepted and constitute a cer-
tain ‘ideal’ considered worth achieving. Where choices and preferences are concerned, then the traditional family model still seems to predominate in many communities, e.g. in Silesia, although now in a somewhat more modern form. Such a family model was chosen as obvious in communities in which unified axiological choices prevailed. To a certain degree the families of migrants fulfil this traditional model, since the man is the family breadwinner, while the woman is focused on bringing up the children and organizing everyday life. As such they often practice a badly functioning traditional family model and not a modern model, with newly defined roles, tasks and relations. But these choices become increasingly individualised under the pressure of reality altered by migration and through interaction with other life patterns, including family life, while certain migrants’ families shape their roles and relations differently, sometimes consciously practicing a model close to that of living apart together. In these families strategic decisions regarding investments and important undertakings are taken together, and the bond is maintained, although on a daily basis the spouses live separately. As such a new family model is emerging, sometimes to the approval of both spouses, involving modified roles for men and women. Influenced by the culture of the country where the migrant is working, there is distinct change and a departure from the rigid division of roles:

“[…when my husband’s here, then I rest. He sees to the kitchen and all that, as he’s learned that there, in the West” (interview 4).

Women on the other hand are adopting certain ‘male’ roles – although frequently out of necessity, but in the longer term this may prove the beginning of social change. Due to the absent men ‘giving way’, women are slowly but noticeably beginning to exist in the public realm. In certain families one could talk about the conscious choice of such a lifestyle, in which there is no rigid definition of roles for men and women, and the formation of a kind of model closest to that of living apart together. This means both spouses consciously and in agreement building a family model other than the traditional variety, with individually shaped roles, aspirations and habitus, a model tailored not to a schema or cultural pattern, but to their own individual lives.

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214


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The Problems of Immigrants and Refugees in Poland Based on Selected Media Accounts

This text is based on the analysis of articles in the daily press, the Gazeta Wyborcza from 1990-2008 and Super Express from 2004-2008. The paper has been enhanced with a description of how foreigners are presented in Polish soap operas and other television series. This media analysis provides an insight into how, over the years covered, the issue of immigrants and refugees was presented in Poland, and how Poland has been coping with this issue. In general, the image of immigrants – both those awaiting decisions regarding their future, and those granted refugee status in Poland – is not too cheerful. The media image of foreigners from the East differs from that of foreigners from the West. The former, regardless of their education, tend to take the simplest jobs (with pay below the pay offered to Poles), often work in the grey zone, and either fall victim to conmen exploiting their difficult financial situation, or run fraudulent operations themselves. Immigrants from the West, on the other hand, are presented very favourably, are well educated, and cope well in Poland, gaining friends in the process.

Keywords: immigrant, refugee, media image, work

Almost since time immemorial, people have been migrating, although in the last century Poland tended to be a country people emigrated from rather than a country accepting immigrants. This situation changed radically after 1989. Refugees constitute a specific category of immigrants. According to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR), signed in Geneva on 28 July 1951, a refugee is a person who “[...] owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”1.

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Poland has not drawn up international legislation regarding refugees, and practically from the time following World War II to the end of the Polish People’s Republic did not experience any problems with foreigners wishing to settle in the country. However, a provision was made in the Constitution of 1952 that: “The Polish People’s Republic shall grant asylum to nationals of other countries persecuted in connection with defending the interests of the working people, the struggle for social progress, activities in defence of peace, the struggle for national liberation, or as a result of scientific activities”\(^2\). Such help was granted in our country to supporters of the communist parties of Greece, Spain and Chile.

Following its political transformation, Poland was recognised by western countries as a safe state for refugees, and if they reached those countries by crossing the Polish border they were returned to Poland. This occurred for the first time in 1990, when Sweden sent a group of almost one thousand foreigners who had crossed the Polish-Swedish border without documents back to Poland. As such, Poland was forced to deal with the problem of refugees within its territory, to establish the appropriate institutions and draw up new legislation, and in 1991 it also joined the aforementioned convention (the CRSR). The political transformation also contributed to an increase in the number of foreigners, mainly from beyond the eastern border, arriving and remaining in Poland long-term but without applying for refugee status.

In the modern world, the mass media respond the fastest to various kinds of new social development, reporting on and interpreting them, promoting or criticising them. In this respect, monitoring how issues regarding foreigners and refugees searching for a place for themselves in Poland is reflected in the daily press and other media accounts reaching a broad audience seems interesting. I have analysed two daily newspapers, \textit{Gazeta Wyborcza (GW)} from 1990–2008, and \textit{Super Express (SE)} from 2004–2008, as well as the current affairs weekly \textit{Polityka} from 1999–2010. This covered over 400 articles in the GW, some long and others short, and over 30 generally shorter articles in the SE, plus 39 comprehensive articles in Polityka. I opted to analyse \textit{Gazeta Wyborcza} and \textit{Super Express} as two different and most popular dailies, while I chose \textit{Polityka} from the various current affairs weeklies due to it having the richest and longest-running online archives. In addition I have enhanced this paper with a description of ways in which foreigners have been presented in Polish soap operas. Analysis of these serials was carried out for a totally different reason, and covered episodes from the serials’ first instalment to the end of 2008. The serials covered included: \textit{Barwy}

\(^2\) \textit{Constitution of the Polish People’s Republic} of 22 July 1952 (Dz.U. 1952 No. 33, item 232).
In analysing the diverse media accounts, I would like to answer the following questions: What was written about immigrants and refugees in specific years, and how? How were they portrayed? What immigrant groups appeared in the media accounts? Do their images differ?

News Items

Analysis of press articles makes it possible to monitor the portrayal of immigrant and refugee issues in Poland in specific years, and how Poland coped and is coping with this problem. One of the fundamental functions of the media is to provide information, to clarify, to comment on and to interpret events (see Mrozowski 2001). Some of the articles analysed are of precisely such informational character. They mainly publish data regarding new legislation applying to foreigners arriving in Poland. The year 1997 saw the presentation of the basic guidelines of the new act regarding foreigners, according to which in order to enter Poland a foreigner had to have a passport and (if required) a visa, an invitation or a sum of money – defined by a regulation – for entry, for each day in the country, and upon exiting. Border Guards may decide not to admit those not meeting these terms into Poland. In the case of a foreigner arriving on invitation from a Pole, the person inviting was obliged to accept the costs of their stay and – if necessary – treatment in or deportation from Poland. However, the deportation of a foreigner working illegally in the country had to be paid for by the employer. The new act introduced the possibility of obtaining a visa for a specified length of time, and a foreigner wishing to remain in Poland for longer than a year had to apply for a ‘permit to reside for a predetermined time’. This could be extended to a maximum of ten years, and in order to obtain one it was necessary to give reasons justifying the necessity of prolonging one’s stay in Poland, e.g. having a job, running a business, study, or marriage with a person holding Polish citizenship. The act also introduced the institution of a ‘settlement permit’. This was available to those showing lasting, family-related or economic bonds with Poland, with accommodation and a living, spending at least three years in the country. According to the amended act, it would be easier to deport illegal foreigners from Poland and refuse re-entry to those deported, but a foreigner could not be returned to a country where there was a threat of persecution.

In 2003, information was published in the press about a new act regarding foreigners. Thanks to this legislation they would be able not only to
apply (as they could already do) for refugee status, which was tied to fulfilling strictly defined conditions, but could also obtain permission for a ‘tolerated stay’. This permit gave the holder the right to work without having to apply for a work permit, the right to social care, and to primary health care.

There were a few articles in September 2003 regarding the coming into effect of an abolition, thanks to which foreigners living illegally in Poland were able to reveal themselves without fear of sanctions. They explained what this abolition involved, and what potential benefits it offered to immigrants in Poland illegally. However, the press articles suggested that foreigners frequently knew nothing whatsoever about this, or were sceptical of the matter. They did not believe that they had the chance to legalise their stay, and were afraid that if after showing themselves they would not obtain the right for residence, they would have to leave Poland – and as such they opted to keep their stay illegal, risking deportation in the event of this fact being discovered.

The Image of Immigrants and Refugees in the Press – Ethic Differentiation, Causes of Migration

The first articles dealing with immigrants and refugees appeared in 1991 and 1992. In those years, following the tightening of immigration law in Scandinavia, and in particular Sweden, foreigners wishing to leave Poland for Scandinavia remained in Poland. The refugees were predominantly from the former Yugoslavia, from Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh, from countries of the Middle East such as Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, Syria and Turkey, and also from Africa – from Somalia, Ethiopia and Angola. Poland was meant to be but a transit country for them, but this was not what happened, and in 1990 the first 800 or so refugees were placed in refugee centres in Jachranka by Zegrze Lake. In 1992 Gazeta Wyborcza reported that they had already been there in a state of ‘suspension’ for over two years, i.e. they were given accommodation, three meals a day and a small amount of pocket money, but were without work, and planned to leave Poland permanently for the West, which some managed to do through measures to join family members. Articles published in 1992 presented a picture of refugees as a problem Poland was unable to cope with. The Polish Red Cross and social welfare centres provided help for them, and makeshift refugee centres were organised through the conversion of holiday centres or military barracks. It is pretty clear from the press articles that the vast majority of refugees were not interested in remaining in Poland, and were not making attempts to legalise their stay in the country. Another category of refugees
accepted legally into Poland in the early nineteen nineties, for temporary stay, was that of children from Bosnia. In subsequent years Poland also took in Albanians from Kosovo for a few months, providing them with accommodation in holiday centres or workers’ hostels, board, medical assistance, a small amount of spending money and education for children. Articles informing about the arrival of war refugees frequently reported about schools, social organisations and institutions conducting collections for money and material goods for refugees, and sometimes appealed to readers to participate in such fund-raising events.

The weekly Polityka published accounts describing disputes arising between different groups of immigrants. Albanians from Kosovo were hostile towards a group called Gypsies whom they accused of collaborating with the Serbs. A holiday centre in Golkowice housed Albanians in camping cabins, while Gypsies were accommodated in a single-storey pavilion. As the article’s author wrote, the two groups “[…] are divided by an imaginary border, an invisible demarcation line. The cabins have two phone booths, the pavilion has just one. The cabins take walks to the left, the pavilion – to the right. And they eat their meals in the canteen separately” (Pytlakowski 1999: 31). A problem considered on this occasion was that of how difficult it was for countries accepting refugees to determine fully objective criteria for the qualification and verification of refugees, and that there was a risk of Serbian agents infiltrating the refugee communities since many refugees had no papers, and as such there could be those among them posing as people they were not.

The Albanian and Bosnian war refugees are the only categories of immigrants whose return to their homelands was reported on by the press. Following their temporary stay in Poland, those who did not leave illegally for the West returned home, furnished with various gifts from Poland – mainly clothing, school equipment for children, or basic everyday utensils. Press articles frequently emphasised the refugees’ gratitude for the Polish help, and the opinion that Poland had done as much as it could considering its modest capabilities.

Towards the end of the nineties there were articles in the press about Romanian immigrants, begging, occupying abandoned buildings earmarked for demolition, and camping out at railway stations. There were also a few items on police measures clearing away illegal camps of Romanians, and informing about the deportation of Romanian citizens in the country illegally. This problem resurfaced after Poland joined Schengen in late 2007, when journalists once again began reporting on groups of Romanians organising begging by women and children on the streets of Poland’s cities. Press arti-
cles also explicitly suggested that such activities were frequently linked to the trafficking of children, constituting a kind of ‘transitory good’. Women beggars were reported to be stuffing infants with sedatives to keep them from crying, while slightly older children were forced to beg themselves, and after reaching their teens were abandoned to the streets with nothing to live on.

The nineties also saw numerous articles dealing with further detentions and deportations of Pakistanis, Sri Lankans and Bangladeshis staying illegally in various places in Poland, most often in Warsaw or the Mazowieckie voivodeship, although accounts also spoke of detentions of foreigners in Łódź, Piotrków and Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. In 1996 the number of illegal immigrants from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Liberia, Cameroon and Algeria was so high that – according to the press – there was insufficient room in the deportation detention facilities. Immigrants were therefore being released increasingly often, as there was nowhere to put them. The police spoke of this with indignation in the columns of Gazeta Wyborcza: “[…] the situation is a scandal. Nobody is concerned about these people. Nobody cares what happens to them. They’ve just been left to themselves” (Stasik 1996: 1).

The number of immigrants from Vietnam and China, portrayed by the press as foreigners mainly applying for residence visas and not refugee status, began rising at the turn of the nineties. Upon arriving in Poland, these Asians were opening up legal businesses, such as restaurants, stalls and shops. The Gazeta Wyborcza informed that – according to Border Guard estimates – some 6,649 Vietnamese and 6,411 Chinese arrived in Poland in 1992. According to information provided by the Vietnam Embassy there were approximately 4,000 of their citizens permanently resident in Poland. The Vietnamese themselves believed there were some 8-10,000 more in the country, illegally. The press reported several times on fictitious weddings between Vietnamese and Polish citizens, weddings they paid several thousand zlotys for, and sometimes paying sums of from 150 to 300 zlotys for each successive month of the marriage – until after 18 months they were able to divorce. This practice became so common that – as we could read in Polityka in 1998 – in certain registry offices in the Pomorskie Voivodeship, Polish-Vietnamese weddings accounted for as much as 20–30% of all weddings conducted, while at the Registry Office in Trzebownisko, a small village near Rzeszów, 200 such marriages were solemnised in the space of six months. The weekly Polityka provided a few accounts presenting the problems experienced by Poles agreeing to such fictitious weddings with Vietnamese citizens. Some had problems locating their spouses in order to obtain a divorce, and as a result were unable to enter a new marital relationship. Even more
serious complications occurred when women who had been in a fictitious marriage gave birth; where no divorce had been secured, the baby was automatically registered under the name of the Vietnamese husband, deemed to be the child’s father. To change this, the presumed father (or mother) of the child had to file a lawsuit for the negation of the fatherhood. If a woman did not do this within 6 months of her baby’s birth, matters became more complicated – and had to be sorted out not only through the courts, but also with the involvement of the public prosecution service. Women entering a fictitious marriage before giving birth are not given the same treatment as single mothers, even if bringing up children by themselves, and are not entitled to social support.

Another ethnic group in Poland whose numbers are hard to estimate is the Chinese. According to Gazeta Wyborcza, in 1992 there were half as many of them as the Vietnamese. The picture that emerges from the press articles is that of Chinese usually involved in small trade or catering in Poland. They mainly had money for starting a business from family settled in the West, since starting a small firm in Poland required much less capital than in western countries. After the year 2000 all the newspapers analysed wrote increasingly often about Chinese investments in Poland, including the Chinese Wholesale Centre in Wólka Kossowska near Warsaw, established in 1994 and expanding rapidly as the largest distribution centre for Asian goods in Central and Eastern Europe.

Articles in the nineties wrote most often about foreigners reaching Poland on their way to the West, and not wishing to remain in our country. The press then frequently published statements along the following lines: “For the majority of refugees, Poland still does not constitute the dream country for settling in. They rarely choose it for their second home. Such was the case at the start of 1990, when hundreds of refugees who were turned back from Sweden found themselves stuck in Poland, and such is the case now as well” (Pur Rahnama 1997: 5).

The Chechens constituted such a group of refugees. From the year 2000 the number of articles dealing with them rose distinctly, reporting on the fortunes of individual families escaping Grozny or the vicinity, the cruel treatment of the Chechens by Russian forces, and the constant tormenting, arrests, torturing and threats. Following the attack on the school in Beslan in September 2004, matters related to Chechen refugees were once again frequently dealt with in the Polish press; this was because of a drastic rise in the number of refugees, the refugee centres not having that many places, and obtaining refugee status in Poland was becoming very difficult. More and more articles were about Poland refusing to grant Chechens refugee status,
since officially they were not threatened with persecution following the end of the war. In these articles it was suggested that Poland was not accepting the interpretations from human rights organisations, that Russia was persecuting Chechens for the very fact of belonging to this ethnic group. In Poland, only those Chechens able to prove that persecution affected them personally were treated as refugees. Such interpretation was also accepted by the European Union – as it was in the EU’s interests for not too large a group of Chechens to receive refugee status, because they would then have the right to enter any country in the Union. Hence the tone of many press articles was critical about not only our stance towards Chechen refugees but that of Europe as well. For example: “From the point of view of the EU, Poland is therefore fulfilling well the function of a ‘bulwark’ beyond which guests unwanted in the Union remain. However, this does not mean that refugees from Chechenia are only our problem. They are a problem for the whole of Europe, both in a moral and in a practical sense. There is no reason for Poland to have to wrestle with this problem alone. The very least of solidarity should involve us being granted EU funds for helping the allegedly non-refugee Chechens. To give them a roof, medical care and training to help them find some kind of work” (ibid). The problems Chechens faced with finding work or accommodation were reported in Gazeta Wyborcza on many occasions, also frequently showing that apart from problems with language or useful occupational qualifications common among foreigners, they also had to overcome prejudices and stereotype perceptions of the Chechen-terrorist, the ‘bearded guy with a machine gun’. In later years the press reported on the numbers Chechens detained on the Polish-German border, attempting to get to the West illegally. They were holders of so-called temporary foreigner identification certificates, and applying for refugee status. As such they were allowed to move freely around Poland, but did not have the right to leave the country.

One of the cases described more widely was the refusal of refugee status for the grandson of a Polish exile. The reason given for this refusal was that his Chechen citizenship could not be confirmed, as he lived in Moscow in the nineteen eighties, and in addition he was not serious about remaining in Poland as he had attempted to cross into Germany. However, the person concerned explained to a journalist that he had gone to Germany to take his daughter there for treatment as she had a heart disorder, while he came back to Poland; apart from this he had spent most of his life in Grozny, his father was Chechen and on his mother’s side he was half-Polish. However, he had not taken his documents confirming this fact, and before he received them from Chechenia his application for refugee status was turned down.
A second group frequently appearing in the press in 2001 was that of Afghans escaping the war in their country, usually finding their way to Poland illegally, swindled by smugglers. In the last year in the period investigated isolated articles dealt with refugees arriving in Poland from Tibet and a small group of immigrants from Iraq, threatened with death in their home country for collaborating with and helping Polish forces. Working as guides or interpreters for the Polish soldiers, they were thoroughly investigated to rule out any double-dealing before they left Iraq. In late 2008 information emerged about the Iraqis being disappointed with their situation in Poland, because apart from being allocated accommodation the governmental assistance program had little to offer them, particularly in regard to employment possibilities. It was reported that: “The Iraqis are well-educated, most have university degrees. They were counting on work that would make use of their skills and knowledge of Arab countries” (Górka, Zadworny 2008: 5); however, this was sadly not happening, as the operation as a whole had not been prepared particularly well.

Foreigners from east of Poland constitute a category of immigrants covered by the press throughout the period analysed. A fair amount of attention focused on immigrants from Belarus, who in 1996 – as was reported in one of the articles – founded a Coordination Centre of Belarusian Political Emigration in Poland, helping Belarusian immigrants in Poland with their political adaptation. A portion of the articles dealt with the illegal employment of foreigners in Poland, mainly from the East, working in building sites, refurbishment jobs or in trade. According to articles published in the late nineties, hundreds of women from Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus were attracted to Poland by the trade in a former stadium serving as a huge market (where the National Stadium is today) – finding illegal employment in dozens of sewing rooms concealed in sheds in Warsaw’s satellite towns such as Marki, Ząbki and Wólomin. The women were exploited, worked in dreadful conditions, and were forbidden to go outside – so as not to draw the attention of police or neighbours. It is pretty certain from the articles published over the years that, despite growing numbers of deportations due to illegal work, few foreigners were opting for legal employment, less financially appealing and necessitating many formalities. Illegal employment in Poland continued to provide Ukrainians and Belarusians with a much higher income than work in their home countries, and as it also paid off for employers to hire them, it was easy for them to find such work. In 2006 there were articles in the press about the partial opening of the Polish labour market for Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians due to a shortage of workers in certain sectors of the Polish economy: “[...] despite unemployment levels
exceeding 17%, Poles do not want to take cleaning jobs, work in care for elderly people, or lay bricks for low wages. They prefer to earn an income in this way for example in Great Britain. And Ukrainians are taking their place in Poland” (Kuźnicz 2006: 14). However, this still does not mean that our eastern neighbours began to obtain legal employment. No doubt is left by the information given in the press that acquiring permission for legal work and the legal employment of a foreigner was a lengthy and laborious process, involving much bureaucracy, costly for the employers and financially unappealing to those securing such employment. And this, according to a journalist writing for Polityka, was why: “[…] we have not yet managed to create the conditions for legal employment [of foreigners]. Very rough estimates suggest that approximately 300,000 people from the East are working illegally in Poland, mainly from Ukraine and Belarus. But according to other estimates the real number could even be over 400,000” (Wilczak 2007: 4).

The articles’ authors frequently raised the issue of employers in Poland exploiting foreigners from the East, and the exceptionally low wages for their work and their very tough living conditions, while also drawing attention to the condescending, contemptuous or even inhuman treatment they received from the Poles. This is illustrated particularly well by the following fragment: “Living conditions vary. Those working on large building sites sleep in the building they’re putting up. Most Ukrainians in Piaseczno live in garages. A landlady has four corrugated iron huts in her courtyard specially for the Russkies. Eight to ten of them live in a single hut. Inside they’re lined with polystyrene. Pallet sofa-beds by the walls, checked blankets, sleeping bags, a narrow passage between them. Their belongings under their heads – plastic bags, a patterned jumper, tracksuit bottoms, underwear. In the winter the garage is heated with the hot air from a ‘blower’. The landlady charges 7 zł a day, and even makes a pretty good living from it. But similar places to sleep can be found for 5 zł as well. Sometimes Poles come to the market and offer garages, barns and cellars […]. In the evening, those who went for one day will trudge back to Piaseczno. The employer usually only takes them in one direction, and when he does it’s a fair walk to the main road, but enough for them to find their way” (Miecik 2000: 2). A reporter with Polityka wrote frankly: “The Polish black job market is primitive and increasingly brutal. The landscape has changed over the last decade. Organised groups and touts are now moving in. Wage terror rules here, an agent pays. […] You could guess that Poland also has work camps similar to those Poles went to in Italy. It’s no secret that workers from across our eastern border live in dismal conditions, in the orchards and plantations, they eat badly, get poor sleep and the work is often excessive” (Wilczak 2007: 3–4). From November 2003
an additional problem for our eastern neighbours was the necessity to obtain a Polish entry visa, which the European Union obliged us to introduce. According to the press, Poland’s consulates were ill-prepared for the new tasks and at least in the initial period following the introduction of this new regulation obtaining a visa meant standing around in long queues.

A separate category of immigrants tackled by the press comprised persons of Polish descent. Various unfavourable examples were presented, in an extremely critical tone, of bad legislation and bureaucratic obstacles making it difficult for Poles living beyond the country’s eastern border to acquire Polish citizenship. They frequently had legal employment in Poland, but unlike repatriates from Kazakhstan were only given permanent residence cards, and not citizenship, making it impossible to bring their families to Poland and settle here permanently. Problems with obtaining citizenship were experienced by Poles in the former USSR, even those well-educated and not expecting any help whatsoever from the Polish state. One of the articles presenting this problem ended with the statement that: “It is shameful that we are incapable of suitably receiving our kinsmen wanting to return to their homeland. There are not that many of them, after all. They are not a huge burden on the budget, and they are also somehow managing to cope by themselves in Poland. Could it be that we have forgotten how Western Europe helped our refugees in the 1980s? These bureaucratic impediments created by our administration are humiliating” (Brzuszkiewicz, Spasiewicz 2002: 1).

Certain articles in the press were interventional in character, and the ‘media buzz’ around issues involving specific refugees with Polish roots sometimes helped in getting their problems sorted out positively. Such was the nature of an article written in response to a dramatic letter addressed to various media, including Gazeta Wyborcza, by a Polish woman who decided many years after being exiled during the Second World War deep into the Soviet Union, later living with her husband in Armenia, to return to Poland. With the help of family she succeeded in bringing her daughter, son-in-law, and grandson – just a few years old – from Armenia into Poland, but when they began applying for refugee status a few years later their applications were turned town as persons working illegally and unable to confirm their income in Poland. In this situation her daughter’s family were in danger of being deported, despite their son having been brought up in Poland, going to school in Poland, and having no connection at all with Armenia. Media publicity for the matter managed to halt the deportation decision, and the application for refugee status was referred for reconsideration.

Some of the press articles reported on foreigners from various countries who were cheated and exploited by intermediaries, who brought them ille-
gally into the country, frequently involving a journey of many days in terrible conditions. There were reports of the smuggling of entire families, often with young children; although they planned to reach the West, they ended their travels in Poland. An article from 1998 described the two-week journey of a few Tamils, whose agent transported them to Warsaw for 15,000 marks, and then vanished – tricking them into believing they had reached Berlin. In 1999 smugglers offered a way across the unprotected border into Germany for Albanians from Kosovo living in Polish refugee centres. Some decided to take the opportunity – but their troubles mainly ended in them losing their money and returning to the centre, with only some succeeding in joining relatives in the West. In 2000 there was the story of a dozen or so Afghans who sold everything they owned to pay smugglers to get them to London, but were ultimately evicted from the vehicle on a Polish motorway near Chojnów. And two years later reports included one of the foiled smuggling to the West of 9 people from India, transported in a trailer loaded with straw.

The year 2003 saw numerous articles describing groups of around a dozen or so refugees from Pakistan, India, Somalia and Afghanistan attempting to cross the Polish border illegally, or detained deep inside the country already sure they were in Germany. Another account was of a few hundred Asians smuggled across the Polish border, transported 50 to a delivery van. Another article the same year reported on the foiled attempt to smuggle 76 citizens of Ukraine and Moldavia to Holland, concealed in a lorry trailer. Reporters revealed that foreigners were being transported across the border in cars and lorries, that they were crossing on foot at night – most often through forest or in the mountains, that they were swimming or rafting across rivers: across the Bug to get into Poland, and the Odra to get to the West.

In 2004 the press reported on 30 Vietnamese and 5 Chinese found in the Bieszczady mountains by the Border Guard. Almost half of them were teenagers, around 17 years old, and there were also two children aged 8 and 13. They had spent a few days in the forest, without food or warm clothing, had only drunk water from a stream and were hungry and exhausted to the extreme. Several of them were hospitalised. That same year 13 illegal immigrants from Armenia were caught attempting to cross the unprotected border.

In 2006 journalists described the capture of a Polish smuggler attempting to transport 12 Chinese immigrants across the Polish-German border in a van, in conditions making a mock of human dignity. A group of 17 Chechens and Indians, 8 of them children, were also detained the same year on their way to Italy; they were being transported in a lorry full of timber, crowded into a few metres of free space, and in constant danger of being crushed by the cargo in the event of any sudden braking.
And in 2008 we could read about a group of Vietnamese and a family from Moldavia who wanted to get into Western Europe, and for a few thousand dollars were led by a Ukrainian smuggler from Ukraine into Poland. They had no documents or money, were absolutely soaked through and bitterly cold. The press analysed for this paper gave accounts of the smuggling of foreigners whose journey to Poland even took a couple of weeks, with breaks for the night spent in crowded flats or country sheds, unable to satisfy their most basic needs, to communicate, or to obtain any information whatsoever. One such report was published in Polityka: “They took us by lorry […]. They gave us nothing to eat, charged a dollar for a sip of water. Those bad people knew two words in our language: quiet and wait” (Miecik 2003: 25). Such illegal travel to Western Europe, costing from a few to well over ten thousand dollars, would sometimes end in Poland or with detention at the border and the threat of deportation to their country of origin. Articles dealing with people-smuggling also included information about Polish smugglers, about them being detained or the penalties they faced for the illegal smuggling of people. Sadly, it turned out that Polish border guards were also sometimes involved in smuggling people.

The most desperate case of the unprotected border being crossed was described in the papers in September 2007, when a Chechen women with four children roamed the forests for four days on her way from either Ukraine or Slovakia to Poland. Her three daughters, each only a few years old, died in the forest of exhaustion, hunger and the cold, and she managed to save only her youngest son, carrying him in her arms. Subsequent articles revealed the later fortunes of this woman, who was joined by her husband. They decided together to apply for refugee status in Poland, obtaining a monthly benefit from the Office For Foreigners, while also receiving medical and psychological help. Because of their specific situation, they were not accommodated in a refugee centre but in a family therapeutic centre. When reporting on this desperate story, Super Express emphasised the significance of the help given by the First Lady, Mrs Kaczyńska, who met the Chechen woman while still in hospital, brought presents for her and her son and also promised help in the future, especially if the Chechen family decided to remain in Poland. The next issue of SE described the help Maria Kaczyńska gave to a young Chechen refugee who lost a leg during the battles, providing the missing amount required for his prosthesis; as a result he was able to function independently. Both Gazeta Wyborcza and Polityka published very critical opinions of Poland’s policy towards Chechen refugees, who were treated with suspicion and had to prove they were discriminated against in order to obtain refugee status, which in practice was often very difficult. One of the
articles dealing with Chechens escaping their country for Poland began with the statement: “If not for the war, we would never have left our country” (Stachowiak 2007: 136).

Critical Press Image of Polish Measures Regarding Refugees and Immigrants

The press analysed here also gave reports about the poor treatment of refugees in Poland and about their rights being violated. The authors of these articles criticised various measures taken by Polish institutions dealing with refugees. For example they criticised the disclosure of information about the persons applying for refugee status to the consulates of the countries they were from. Such a situation occurred in 1998 in relation to the Tamils and Iraqis. The press reported critically on the deportation of people applying for refugee status, e.g. Tamils were deported to war-torn Sri Lanka in 1998. Poland’s Ministry of the Interior insisted that they were in no danger of any reprisals, and that their reasons for emigrating were economic. In addition the press presented the cases of Tamils whose refusal of refugee status was handed to them immediately prior to boarding a flight about to deport them to their home country, thus giving them no opportunity to appeal against the decision, which – according to Polish legislation – they had the right to.

Articles of a similar nature were published about teenage refugees from China, threatened with deportation from Poland, who upon return to their home country could have ended up in jail or a labour camp, or could even have been sentenced to death.

There was an article in 2005 describing an early-morning police operation in a refugee centre near Lublin, during which an anti-terrorist squad searched refugees' rooms, allegedly aimed their weapons at children only a few years old, and drove the men out into the freezing cold, not allowing them to dress appropriately. As the police explained later, these measures were taken following reliable signals regarding a terrorist threat posed by persons of Chechen nationality. However, no confirmation of such signals was obtained during the search of the centre and interrogation of the refugees.

In 2008 the press published information about the interrogation of detained Vietnamese refugees by representatives of the Vietnamese security services visiting Poland on the basis of an agreement regarding the mutual handing over of citizens, signed by the two countries in 2004. Journalists suggested that refugees were being intimidated and persuaded to collaborate and expose Vietnamese oppositionists residing in Poland. A brutal operation carried out by the Border Guards in one of the refugee centres to uncover,
detain and possibly deport illegal immigrants from Vietnam was also report-
ed on. In 2010, following the shooting of a Nigerian trader by a policeman, there was an article in *Polityka* that began with the words: “A policeman kills a Nigerian, Chechens protest against bad treatment by Polish officials and Vietnamese complain about ticket inspectors in trams. They came to Poland in search of a better life. They found a country that treats them as enemies” (Kołodziejczyk, Pytlakowski 2010: 22). The report gives numerous examples of foreigners being treated badly, cheated, or their difficult situation being taken advantage of by the police, municipal police, and ticket controllers in public transport.

The press reported on various social forms of pressure exerted on the Office for Repatriation and Aliens in matters related to the granting of refugee status, which was meant to show explicitly that refusals were considered unjustified. In 2004, a letter signed by 150 intellectuals was sent to the president, premier and the marshals of the Sejm and Senate in defence of six Vietnamese, members of the émigré Association for Pluralism and Democracy in Vietnam, who were refused refugee status. In 2005, the ‘Damy radę’ [lit. ‘We’ll manage’] association stood out in defence of a Chechen woman with two children, whose right for tolerated residence had been withdrawn.

Articles published in the press described protests by foreigners who failed to obtain refugee status. For example about a 15-day hunger strike by a Turkish Kurd, detained when illegally crossing the Polish-German border. He claimed to have been persecuted for his political views, and applied for refugee status so that he could legally join his wife living in Germany. When his application for refugee status was turned down, he went on a hunger strike, claiming he would continue until successful. Hunger strike was also the form of protest chosen by a citizen of Belarus, arrested in Poland on the basis of an arrest warrant issued by the Belarusian public prosecution service. The Belarusian businessman had applied for refugee status, explaining that his company did not pass the verification process as a result of persecution for activities supporting the opposition, and was forced into bankruptcy, while the bank withdrew an order placed with his company and called on the owner to immediately pay back the loan, and when he was unable to do this accused him of appropriating the bank’s money, and a warrant was sent out for his arrest. The Belarusian’s hunger protest was a form of struggle for his case to be considered by a Polish court, and for the extradition process to be halted. Chechens organised a demonstration and together with Poles from the Komitet Wolny Kaukaz [lit. Free Caucasus Committee] protested outside the Office for Repatriation and Aliens on ul. Koszykowa in Warsaw, claiming that too few people were granted refugee status assisting in starting
a new life. The press also reported on a hunger protest by 50 people detained at the Border Guard facility in Szczecin, who demanded hot water, better food, and above all that their applications be considered by the Office for Repatriation and Aliens.

Among other things, there were articles criticising the breaking up of families of immigrants arriving in Poland at different times. For example, if part of a family arrived earlier and had their residence legalised through abolition, then the remaining members who joined them – but did not have the right to legal residence – could be deported to their country of origin. Examples were given in the press of the deportation of Poles’ spouses, despite having children with them, or of foreigners in informal relationships with Poles and having children with them. Apart from articles presenting the problem itself, there were also accounts showing the situations specific refugees were in. For example about a Vietnamese man who, after his application for a visa extension was turned down and he was ordered to leave Poland, did not leave, and then while in the country illegally met a Polish woman whom he married. He tried to extend his visa after the wedding, but unsuccessfully, and was ordered to leave Poland immediately. The couple appealed to the Ministry of the Interior, which sustained the voivoda’s decision. Another account told the story of a Sri Lankan citizen who was planning his future in Poland and applied for refugee status. He took up residence with his Polish girlfriend, but the couple’s plans were destroyed by his refugee status being turned down, the refusal handed to him on board the aircraft deporting him to his country of origin.

Articles in the press also criticised Polish legislation regarding refugees, according to which those applying for such status could not undertake legal paid employment, while the procedure itself for granting such status sometimes took a few years. Among others, they described the situations specific foreigners were in. They had jobs, rented accommodation and saw to their children’s education as holders of permits for temporary residence in Poland, but when they applied for refugee status they had to leave their jobs and move – together with their family – to a refugee centre to await the decision. Foreigners residing and working legally in Poland being unable to have health insurance was presented in an equally critical light in articles in 2000 and 2001. One of the newspapers analysed here described the case of an Englishman working legally in the country, teaching English in a high school, who was forced to pay for an operation in a Polish hospital. Although the article ended with the suggestion that Poland’s Sejm was working on an amendment to the act on universal health insurance, including the right to such insurance for foreigners in Poland, the Englishman in question
had to pay for the treatment himself due to a legal loophole before the new law came into effect. Another article revealed an even more dramatic situation of an immigrant from Somalia refused refugee status, who in a state of depression made an attempt to commit suicide that resulted in paralysis, but no Polish hospital wanted to admit him as he had no insurance.

According to the press, medical care constitutes an even greater problem, especially the hospital treatment for foreigners in Poland illegally, for those without a settlement permit, whose resident visa has expired, or who crossed the border illegally and have not legalised their residence. “Warsaw’s hospitals are spending hundreds of thousands of zlotys to save uninsured foreigners. And they’re counting their losses” (Pochrzest 2008: 6).

Operations carried out by the Border Guards and other services, aimed at deporting immigrants in Poland illegally, were also described in the press. In early 2004 *Gazeta Wyborcza* published an account from an operation conducted at an infamous market on the site of a former stadium in Warsaw, as a result of which over one hundred Bulgarians, Armenians and Vietnamese were detained and deported to their countries of origin. The reporters also wrote about the deportation detention centres – home mainly to immigrants arriving illegally in Poland. If they were also without a passport, they could neither apply for refugee status nor be deported until such a passport was issued, which frequently proved a lengthy procedure, resulting in them often spending several months in such a detention centre.

In the last years covered here numerous articles showed that Poland was providing insufficient help for the political refugees it granted such status to. The shortage of social housing, high costs of accommodation rental and high level of unemployment caused difficulties that refugees proved unable to cope with, expecting more support from the local authorities or initial employment and a place to live. The press in 2008 reported on evictions from refugee centres of families who had received refugee status and who as such should have left the centre three months after this decision, found themselves a place to live and started to live their own lives. Various programmes addressed to immigrants, intended to stimulate them and get them to take steps to take care of their own futures without overusing the help offered by Poland, were also mentioned in these articles.

Press Image of Adverse Reaction Towards Immigrants and Refugees in Society

Articles in the press also reported on the unfavourable reactions shown by Poles, especially those living in poverty or unemployed, to the growing
number of Chechen refugees given free accommodation and board by Pol-
land while there were hungry and homeless Poles in need of help. On several
occasions they wrote about the problem of Chechens selling sausages or
yoghurt at very low prices, after receiving them for free in their refugee cen-
tres. Those living in the centres’ vicinity, as well as their personnel, were outr-
raged, while the Chechens said they were trading food they didn’t eat for
religious reasons or because of nutritional habits different to ours, so that they
could get the money to buy what they could eat, e.g. mutton and vegetables.

Poles also reacted negatively to the presence of other foreigners in Po-
land. An example: “Why Poles living on ul. Klimczoka did not love the
Chechens. They were most outraged by the rumour that foreigners get 70 zł
da day for their own expenditure from EU funds (in fact they receive 70 zł,
but for a whole month) […]. Because according to the locals it’s like this:
following the closure of the steelworks and mine, many families experienced
upheavals. Nobody reached out to help them. And the foreigners get every-
ting for free” (Danilewicz 2009: 24). The press analysed here also had
examples of ethnic discrimination, and described racist behaviour – such as
beatings and insults – encountered very frequently in Poland by refugees
from Africa, including those living here for many years. For example the
Gazeta Wyborcza reported on the severe beating and injuries suffered by a
dark-skinned refugee participating in the International Theatre Festival in
Węgajty. Asked by their victim why he was being attacked, they answered:
“Because you’re black”. Following the attacks on the World Trade Center
the press reported on broken windows in the Gdańsk mosque or hostility
towards Arabs living in Poland. There were also examples of hostile behav-
iour towards refugees living in centres. They wrote about a few Chechens
from the centre in Moszna near Pruszków being beaten on the street, or a
Molotov cocktail being thrown into a hotel rented for refugees; this resulted
in a fire that the refugees extinguished themselves. In another article there
was information about posters put up at bus-stops in Poznań, with such slo-
gans as: “Join us. Support white resistance!” and posters similar in content
and style that appeared on public transport stops in Poznań’s Wilda district.
The poster bore the slogan “Stop immigrants!!!” as well as a warning about
foreigners taking Poles’ jobs. Another article reported on the case of a knif-
ing of a refugee from the centre in Siekierki and racist slogans appearing on
the bus stops in the centre’s vicinity. There was also criticism of the Wrocław
authorities, who gave permission for a demonstration by the far right against
‘coloured immigrants’ in March 2007. The Gazeta Wyborcza criticised quotes
from a free LPR (League of Polish Families) publication, Goniec Lubelski:
“100 years from now the average Pole could be a black-skinned Muslim,
calling other Poles to morning prayers at the mosque” (Andrusiewicz 2006: 3). According to the GW, the League of Polish Families warned in its publication about our country being flooded by immigrants, and criticised Poland giving them shelter, financial and medical aid, insisting that immigrants were harmful to Polish society.

The press also reported on how the opening of refugee centres sometimes evoked protests from nearby residents. People were afraid of their properties losing value, of crime rates rising, or epidemics of infectious diseases following their opening.

Reports published in the Gazeta Wyborcza, in Super Express, and in Polityka described the lives of foreigners housed in refugee centres. This was often presented from the point of view of their inmates, who felt that life was monotonous, as they were constantly waiting for decisions from omnipotent state officials. They complained about tough living conditions, the food, the lack of prospects and the shortage of help from Poland’s public offices, expecting them to prove that they had been persecuted in their home countries. A depressing picture of life among the immigrants emerges from these reports, something frequently contributed to by their companions in misery, since disputes, thievery and physical violence were also very common.

Press Reports on Crime Among Foreigners in Poland

Several articles informing readers about crimes committed by illegal immigrants and other foreigners in Poland were published in the press analysed here. Such reports were much more common in Super Express than in Gazeta Wyborcza. There were accounts of involvement in fights, in kidnappings, in car thefts, and also relating to the smuggling of people across the border. In 1999 the GW described the trial of an international gang that had smuggled over 3800 people into Germany in the course of three years, earning over 10 m dollars in the process. There was a trial in 2000 of an immigrant from the Caucasus who had killed and scalped his father in a village just outside of Kraków. That same year the press informed of a 19-person gang comprising citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine who stole, disassembled and sold cars while also dealing in drugs. A year later there were articles about a gang of four Vietnamese who were kidnapping kinsmen smuggled illegally into Poland, holding them for ransom. In 2004 there was an article about a Vietnamese man illegally in Poland who, when drunk, beat up his brother and threatened his mother with a knife, before attacking police called to the scene. Super Express, referring to a confidential report by Poland’s Central Bureau of Investigations, revealed in 2005 that there were
Chechen, Russian, Turkish, Albanian and Arab mafia groups operating in Poland. Foreigners were also involved in drug dealing and people smuggling, and were also suspected of having links with Islamic terrorist groups; attention was drawn to the serious threat this posed to our country. According to this article: “Poland should be a hospitable country for people of other nations and faiths. But not everybody can be admitted. And those suspected of not accepting the values subscribed to in our country must be deported” (Zieliński 2005). In 2008, the SE published an account of how an anti-terrorism squad apprehended a Chechen staying in Warsaw, suspected of participation in and the organisation of an assassination attempt on the deputy mayor of Moscow. The same paper also published profiles of the most dangerous criminals sought by the police, among them a few gangsters from Ukraine and Russia operating in Poland. There was also information about a fight that broke out between Ukrainians in a refugee centre. In Polityka, the issue of crime among foreigners appeared on several occasions, most often in the context of criminal groups comprising foreigners and smuggling people across the border or collecting protection money from other foreigners working in Poland. The following description was given in an article in 2000: “Belarussians control the marketplace. This isn’t a place where you just turn up. You have to buy the right to stand there [to trade], and you buy it from them. Every man pays 50 zł a week. Women can get in for free, just sometimes they’re asked to contribute to their vodka. If they see somebody there for the first time, they take him aside. Leather jacket? They take it. Or his passport. Now he can stand in the market, now he has to work. When he pays 300 zł he’ll get his passport back. […] The first are waiting at the bus station in Warsaw where coaches arrive from Belarus and Ukraine. Everybody of course has to have that 125 dollars to show at the border. They have to hand over 50 right away upon leaving the coach. […] they come regularly, always on pay day. And they’re well aware of when to come. They came for one lad from the market in two Mercedes cars, storming into the courtyard where he lived in a garage with seven other Ukrainians, dragged him out and beat him up with piping. Apparently he howled horrifically. Now he’s in hospital, they barely managed to save him” (Miecik 2000: 23). Analysis of the press suggests that there was a drop in such crimes in the later years covered. The authors of one article in 2010 wrote: “There is a shadowy number of criminal incidents never reported to the police. They are most often protection payments forced from foreigners by their kinsmen. Individual ethnic groups form hermetic enclaves; Chechen gangs prey on the Chechens, Armenian ones deal with the Armenians, Ukrainians the Ukrainians. But this is now only the criminal margins, unlike it was in the 90s” (Kołodziejczyk, Pytlakowski 2010: 22).
Press Image of Positive Measures Helping Refugees and Immigrants

At the turn of the millennium, articles describing various forms of aid for foreigners granted shelter by Poland became increasingly common. The press reported on various governmental measures, e.g. an inter-ministerial team for the integration of foreigners, responsible for the coordination of policy regarding immigrants and refugees in regard to education, social assistance and work. Other items spoke of spontaneous social campaigns as well as organised aid. For example there was an article about material assistance organised out of compassion for a young Chechen woman, who dissatisfied with the very tough conditions in the Polish refugee camp wanted to leave the country to join her family in France; however, she was turned back at the border, and on her return journey gave birth to her daughter on a Poznań motorway. She left the Poznań hospital equipped with presents — a pram, a starting set of items for her baby, stocks of nappies, supplements, and food products, etc.

Press articles in the later years covered here also mentioned language courses, employment workshops, psychological and legal aid for refugees, education, day-care activities, computer courses for children, and various programs aimed at facilitating refugees’ integration into their new environment. Schools ran integration programs for children in which specially employed assistants helped foreigners’ children in their schoolwork. Gazeta Wyborcza reported on a primary school implementing a program for Roma and Chechen children, and a kindergarten that took in Chechen children. Information regarding various types of empowering programmes involving activities shared by refugees and the local community became increasingly frequent in the press. On several occasions the GW described children attending Polish schools, coping well with the language and frequently acting as translators for their parents, while also achieving pretty good results in their school education. The picture that emerges from articles about the Vietnamese is one of refugees for whom their children’s education was very important, as they frequently planned to remain in Poland, while Chechens began their education in Polish schools but usually interrupted it, as they still rarely treated Poland as their destination country. An article in Polityka on the education of foreigners’ children in Polish schools presented the difficulties related to measures of this kind: few training opportunities preparing teachers for working in multi-ethnic classes, no textbooks for these children’s learning, no textbooks for learning Polish, a shortage of funds for employing teachers’ assistants knowing both Polish and the children’s native tongue.
Each year in the press analysed there were articles about Refugee Day, celebrated in Poland since 1995. They were usually reports about various social campaigns intended to sensitise Poles in regard to the issue of refugees, although they also informed readers about events promoting and providing insights into the cultures of foreigners residing in Poland. As such there was information about exhibitions, films, sports tournaments, folk dancing, African or Asian cuisine, and fairs from which takings went to help refugees. The Warsaw office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Refugees, the Polish Humanitarian Organisation and the Polish Scouts Union also organised art and writing competitions for high schools, intended to draw attention to refugees’ problems and encourage various steps to help them. Year by year there were more articles presenting successive efforts in various places in Poland. Press articles included those describing not only occasional efforts but also systematic work by local schools, parishes and non-governmental organisations aimed at getting local communities more familiar with the refugees living in the centres, helping them understand the refugees’ legal situation, their native culture and customs, and in order to improve everyday contacts between refugees and Poles. Accounts of initiatives taken by refugees from the refugee centres and the local communities where they were located became increasingly common. There were articles about Polish and Chechen children playing together in a renovated local playground, or teenage football matches played out between Poles and Chechen or Somalian refugees residing in the centre in Linin. However, sometimes the articles reporting on Refugee Day suggested that such a day was only an opportunity for one-off interest shown in the refugees’ fates. One such article ended with a quote from a Chechen woman whose family had been living in Poland for six years, and had to live in the refugee centre while waiting for a permanent residence permit: “We feel humiliated that we have to live in the centre. Refugees are treated like lepers in Poland. Refugee Day won’t change much. Once the music dies away at the festivals organised that day, everybody will forget about us again” (Refugees on Refugee Day 2001: 13).

The Press Image of Foreigners Adapting to Life in Poland

Articles in the press also included those describing families of foreigners living for years in Poland, well-adapted, working, and educating their children. For example Polityka wrote about Armenians, “[...] almost 50,000 of whom have settled in Poland. They’re coping the best of all the ethnic groups. They’re finding accommodation, trading, sending their children to school,
The Problems of Immigrants and Refugees in Poland Based on Selected Media Accounts

and not asking anybody for money”. Articles published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Polityka* informed their readers about the Vietnamese living in Warsaw, who contrary to stereotypical images were not only working in trade and catering, but were also translators, artists and journalists, and had a lively cultural scene. For example: “Not far from the stadium there’s a Vietnamese culture centre, with a photographic studio, pool tables and Internet access. There are also several music bands and a school teaching traditional Vietnamese dance. A few Vietnamese periodicals are published in Warsaw (the largest, ‘Que Viet’, has a print-run of about 1000), and other publications are imported from Vietnam. The Vietnamese living here have already published three volumes of poetry, and one of their writers, Nguyen Dinh (member of the Pen Club) is compiling a Polish-Vietnamese and Vietnamese-Polish dictionary” (Henzler 2003: 40). Many articles dealt with incomers of other ethnic origins – e.g. Sudanese collaborating with the Polish Humanitarian Organisation, or a Cameroonian running an outlet of the German Loco chain with an Internet café, photocopying service and international call centre. The press wrote about foreigners opening oriental bars, shops and companies in Poland, or who took jobs Poles were unwilling to do, for example in fruit-farming.

The weekly *Polityka* devoted several articles to foreigners from Western Europe choosing increasingly often to settle in Poland. Some of them were investing in Polish real estate, treating it as a capital investment or profitable business, renting out premises to foreign companies. Others were buying land, with the intention of farming in Poland. For example: “In Lower Silesia there’s a population exchange underway. The locals have headed off to the West for work. And the Flemish, Dutch, English and German are coming here to the local farmsteads, granges and palaces. They claim to be able to live very ecologically here for only a few euros, i.e. beautifully and cheaply. But life doesn’t always work that way” (Gańko 2007: 4). The article’s author then proceeded to reveal problems that had to be tackled in Poland by foreigners wanting to settle here to grow crops or breed livestock. For a start, they were often cheated by estate agents, laying out before them a vision of cheap and attractive purchases that did not always work out. Secondly, in order to legally buy land they had to obtain permission from the minister of agriculture and minister of internal affairs and administration, on top of which they frequently had to overcome local prejudices and aversion. The most patient and determined refurbished historic manors and palaces, ran environmentally friendly farms providing employment for locals and giving a good example of modern farming, simultaneously cultivating cultural activities, sightseeing and tourism.
Another category of incomers from Western Europe settling in Poland was that of foreigners coming to work in Poland to teach their native language. They obtained job permits the quickest, due to the constant high demand for teachers of foreign languages, and especially for native speakers. According to one article: “Poland is becoming a paradise for single Brits. Even moderately good-looking Brits with an average entrepreneurial flair live like kings here” (Bzowska 2007: 52).

In Gazeta Wyborcza a few articles were dedicated to the Nigerian footballer Emmanuel Olisadebe, who was granted Polish citizenship and played for Poland’s national team, but after switching to the Greek club Panathinaikos failed to turn up for international matches despite being called up for Poland’s team by the coach. Although the player claimed it was because of health problems, his behaviour was criticised by fans and certain other footballers, and he was accused of taking advantage of our country to obtain its citizenship while not displaying any gratitude in return. In their commentary, the journalists at GW softened this criticism, insisting that granting Olisadebe Polish citizenship was no selfless act on our part, but the result of calculation as Poland’s team needed a fast-scoring striker in the World Cup qualifiers, and Olisadebe did not disappoint the hopes people had in him.

One article in Polityka tackled the issue of foreigners cultivating diverse artistic activities in Poland. Examples given by the piece’s author were the Lithuanian artist Stasys Eidrigevicius, the Russian director Eugeniusz Korin, the Hungarian director Marta Meszaros, the Russian violinist Vadim Brodsky and the Ukrainian soprano Olga Pasichnyk. He showed that there were more and more such cases over the last decades, although usually settling in Poland was not a planned choice, but the result of chance or marriage. Over the few years covered here, a dozen or so articles were published in Gazeta Wyborcza and Super Express about refugees promoting their home countries in Poland, and involved in artistic or social activities. Gazeta Wyborcza presented the Chechen political refugee, Issa Adger-Adajew, an expert on the culture of the Caucasus and author of Kamienie mówią. Dzieje i kultura Czeczenów [lit. Stones Can Speak. The History and Culture of the Chechens]. Articles were also written about theatre plays produced as part of the ‘Artists without borders’ project, run by the Stowarzyszenie Praktyków Dramy STOP-KLATKA [STOP-KLATKA Association of Drama Practitioners], its actors immigrants and young Polish actors. The main character featuring in several articles was Simon Mol, a refugee from Cameroon. In articles published by GW in 2005 he was presented as an African oppositionist and journalist: “Simon Mol is a one-man institution: secretary of the Association of Refugees in the Republic of Poland, head and director of the refugee theatre
The Problems of Immigrants and Refugees in Poland Based on Selected Media Accounts

troupe, Migrator Theatre, author of all four plays the theatre has in its repertory, and on top of all that the editor-in-chief of the magazine Głos Uchodźcy (Voice of Exile)” (Woźniczko 2005: 4). Articles in the press over the following years provided accounts of moving performances by the Migrator Theatre, the actors of which were amateurs, mainly refugees from different parts of the world. S. Mol was quoted by the press following various acts of racism against African immigrants. In 2007 there were articles about him being arrested and accused of deliberately infecting people with the HIV virus. In describing this case, Super Express drew attention to the activities of Roman Giertych, who as the lawyer for women infected by Mol wanted the charges to be changed to attempted murder. In addition the SE emphasised that the Cameroon had faked his CV, and referred to him as an ‘alleged refugee’. On this occasion the GW also drew attention to the media highlighting the fact that the accused was dark-skinned, and how this had contributed to an increase in racist attitudes in Polish society. Other immigrants from Africa living in Poland spoke out in the paper’s columns, insisting that Mol’s origin and nationality were of no significance in this story, but would regardless cement the perception of Africans as potential HIV carriers, as a threat to others. An article on Simon Mol similar in tone was published in Polityka, and ended with the statement: “It would be banal to talk about the echo Mol’s black PR is going to have on those he fought for” (Gietka, Mirecka 2007: 22).

Press Image of Refugees and Immigrants

The picture of immigrants to Poland that emerges from the coverage in the press analysed here is varied, showing the diversity of foreigners coming to Poland. For some, mainly from the East, Poland was a country for temporary residence and legal or illegal work paying them more than they would earn at home. A group standing out from this category was that of the Belarusians, often not only economic migrants but political refugees, undertaking various measures in Poland furthering their home country’s independence. For the majority of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, Asia, Africa and the Far East, Poland was a transit country from which they attempt both legally (by obtaining refugee status in Poland) and illegally (crossing the unprotected border) to reach the countries of Western Europe. The Vietnamese constituted a certain exception here, more and more frequently opting to settle permanently in Poland, working here legally or in the grey zone, educating their children here and tying their own futures with Poland.

It would be hard based on the press covered here to define what the proportions by gender were among immigrants and refugees. Articles de-
scribing the lives of refugees in the refugee centres usually spoke of whole families. Sometimes items informing readers about the number of refugees would mention how many of them were children and women. Only in regard to temporary refugees from former Yugoslavia could one sometimes read that most were mothers with their children. As for all the remaining refugees, including the Chechens appearing in the greatest numbers in the press in the last years covered here, the articles were equally as often about men and women. One could get the impression, especially in articles about crossing Poland’s eastern or western borders illegally, that men featured slightly more often. And only men were the culprits behind the crimes described in the press; I did not come across a single article describing a female immigrant who had committed a crime of some sort in Poland, while members of both sexes were reported as working or staying in Poland illegally. And in the press analysed, women were presented more often as victims of exploitation and physical violence from Poles or other immigrants.

Essentially, the picture that emerges, both of those immigrants waiting for decisions regarding their future and those who had been granted refugee status in Poland, is not a cheerful one. Despite a rise in the later years of the number of diverse educational programs, assisting and empowering refugees, the support given still seemed insufficient, and they appeared to be coping with difficulty in our country. The situation was not helped by prejudices and stereotypes functioning in Poland or the relatively low standard of living, resulting in frustration in a large section of a society not accepting help for foreigners when there were numerous unsolved social problems in the country, such as unemployment, poverty and homelessness.

The Image of Foreigners in Polish Soap Operas

Issues related to immigrants are also reflected in Polish soap operas, with almost all of them having some kind of theme involving repatriates, immigrants, refugees or other foreigners living or residing temporarily in Poland. It is relatively common for repatriates from the East to be presented in such Polish serials. This theme has appeared in Klan, Złotopolscy and Plebania. In Klan we get to know Stanisława Dorobczyk, an elderly Polish woman transported during the War to Kazakhstan and invited for Christmas by the serial’s main characters’ family. Following a very enjoyable get-together, the two sides remain in touch, the Polish family supporting the older lady with parcels of medicines for her severely ill sister, and when her sister dies they propose that she come to live with them, as she is on her own. Once in Poland the lady applies for a repatriation visa, is granted one, and settles permanently, run-
The Problems of Immigrants and Refugees in Poland Based on Selected Media Accounts

ning the home of the family that invited her. She looks after the family’s
doyen, helps bring up the grandchildren, and in time practically becomes a
member of the family; everybody calls her ‘Aunt Stasia’. She is portrayed as
an exceptionally kind, obliging, hardworking, religious and modest person,
and she is boundlessly grateful for the help shown her. Other repatriates are
long-lost relatives of the serials’ main characters. For example we have repa-
triates from Kazakhstan, the descendants of Siberian exiles. One such per-
son, looking for her family, appears in the soap opera Złotopolscy, and when
she locates her kin she informs another resident of Złotopolice about a rel-
ative from Kazakhstan, and helps him locate him and bring him to Poland.
In Plebania, a distant cousin from deepest Russia comes to visit one of the
main characters on Christmas Eve. It turns out that when her husband died
she sold everything she had to escape poverty, and together with her hus-
band’s brother decided to try her luck in Poland. Thanks to the help of a
relative she finds a job, returns briefly to Russia to extend her visa, and after
returning to Poland once again gets married and settles here permanently. In
all the cases presented the repatriates obtain help from relatives or acquaint-
tances, but at the same time they provoke an antipathetic response from
others, and the start of their stay in Poland is very difficult. Despite being of
Polish origin, they are frequently called ‘Russkies’, and treated with reserve.
In Klan the young grandson of the head of the family that invited the Polish
woman from Kazakhstan is initially strongly opposed to her living in his
parents’ house, repeatedly saying that he doesn’t like strangers roaming about
the house. He even says: “What kind of idea was that with that Russky,
couldn’t granddad have found a servant living nearby?”3 Despite his initial
aversion, the repatriate’s kindness, patience and helpfulness soon wins over
the youngster’s heart, and she becomes his favourite aunt, whose help and
understanding he can repeatedly count on. The repatriates in Plebania and
Złotopolscy are also treated with much reserve to start with. The character
who arrived from Kazakhstan becomes the main suspect when one of the
village’s residents loses a large sum of money. And the woman from Irkutsk
meets with hostility because, in such a small place with a high level of unem-
ployment, she is seen as a rival on the job market. However, over time the
local community begins to like them and respect them as honest, friendly
and hardworking people.

Immigrants from countries neighbouring Poland to the east – i.e. Ukraini-
nians, Russians and Belarusians – appear just as often as repatriates in Polish
soap operas. We mainly see such women employed to clean or run homes,

3 Klan, soap opera on TVP 1, quoting Michal Chojnicki, episode 376.
frequently learn about their difficult financial situation back at home, and that they have to help their family still living there – ill parents or children without any prospects. None of these characters find it easy at first in Poland. In the serial *Barwy szczęścia* we get to know two Ukrainian women travelling to work. Both of them are working illegally, one in a greengrocer’s while the other holds a few different jobs, as a cleaner in a fitness club, running the home of a lonely widower, and cleaning at night in a nightclub, all to be able to afford treatment for her severely ill son. These women help a Polish acquaintance who suddenly lost his wife, discretely relieving him of his everyday chores, supporting him emotionally. In the serial *Na Wspólnej* there’s a Ukrainian woman who works as a cleaning lady to support her elderly, ailing parents. When she’s able – thanks to her Polish employers – to bring over her daughter as well and get her into music school, she is enormously grateful, – and frequently emphasises how she has never encountered so much selfless kindness. In the soap opera *Plebania* we meet a young Russian woman who comes to Poland on the invitation of a man, ostensibly for marriage. However, he turns out to be a fraud and a lot older than he claimed in the letters, and expects sexual services from her as well as unpaid work on the farm. Thanks to the help of a compatriot living permanently in Poland, the girl manages to free herself from the cheat, and finds a prospective husband and happiness.

Women cheated by intermediaries, their promises of legal employment in Poland turning out to be lies, appear a few times in these serials. In *Plebania*, women transported into the country from Ukraine are employed in an illegal sewing shop. Having had their passports confiscated at the border, they are forced to work very long shifts for only a symbolic wage and denied any contact whatsoever with the outside world – shut away in the building housing the sewing shop, practically imprisoned. Only when one of them is injured at work and requires medical attention does she inform the doctor about the sewing shop, and thanks to the doctor’s husband (a policeman) she manages to escape and then assists in locating the illegal business. They set free the other women working there, while the organiser behind it is arrested and charged with people-smuggling and illegal production. In the serials *Samo życie* and *Pierwsza miłość* young women from east of Poland end up against their plans in Polish escort agencies; sometimes they run them, collaborating with the mafia. Only a few girls manage to escape (usually thanks to the help of Poles), while the rest are either forced into prostitution or choose to accept this as a way of repaying their debts with the agents, or are blackmailed by them. Also a young Ukrainian girl in *Klan*, who came to Poland to study, receives a strange offer from a Polish businessman when
looking for a job. It turns out that he expects her to participate in evening meetings with his business clients, and afterwards give them an enjoyable time. When the girl wants to leave this job after some time, she is blackmailed, and only thanks to the help of her Polish friends does she manage to break free from her pushy employer. All characters from countries east of Poland portrayed in these serials are in difficult financial situations, regardless of whether they came to Poland to look for work or to study. This is also the case for a Ukrainian student of Polish studies in the soap opera *M jak miłość*, who although she fell in love with a Pole she met on holiday actually marries a businessman from her own country, due to a debt of gratitude for the help he showed her family. The vast majority of eastern immigrants appearing in these serials are hardworking people, resourceful, honest, accepting life’s adversities with dignity, while at the same time warm and sociable, likeable people.

Of the immigrants from the East, men are presented in greater variety in the serials investigated. And so we meet Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians who came to Poland short-term, to find work and better wages. Although they most often work on building sites, they are also happy to take on any jobs providing an income, and usually work for rates far below what Poles are paid, and in addition are mainly cheated by their employers. The soap opera *Plebania*, set in the east of Poland, featured a marketplace in a small town where every day incomers from the East would wait in the morning for Poles to turn up and offer short-term illegal employment. The employers choose their workers at their own discretion, treat them condescendingly, and as they feel there are always more people keen on taking their work than there is work, they dictate the terms.

In the serials concerned, immigrants from the East are also presented as criminals involved in shady dealings in Poland, as gangsters ambushing lorries loaded with various goods, or as bandits collaborating with the Polish mafia in kidnapping and smuggling people (*Plebania, Złotopolscy, Pierwsza miłość*). There are several incidents of illegal immigrants whose visas expired while they remained in the country, working in constant fear of deportation (*Plebania, Na dobre i na złe*). On two occasions we see how men wanting to secure legal residence in Poland opt for fictitious paid marriages with a Polish woman. One of them is a Russian coming to the end of his studies in Poland (*M jak miłość*), and the other – a Belarusian bard who has fallen foul of the authorities back home and cannot return (*Pensjonat pod Różą*). The theme of opposition activities by a citizen of Belarus also appears in another serial, in which a young Belarusian takes part in anti-governmental demonstrations during his studies in Lublin, and after graduating marries
a Pole despite protests from his family, in particular his father – the director of an industrial plant loyal to the Belarusian authorities. With the aid of the Belarusian security services, the father attempts to detain his son and later have him brought back from Poland. However, he fails, and his son remains in Poland and starts working for an anti-regime Belarusian paper published in Poland.

Immigrants from the East are also sometimes presented in a different light. In the serials in question there are businessmen involved in various profitable activities in their home countries, people who are successful and who are temporarily in Poland, also doing business in the country or tying their futures, in business and private life, to Poland (Złotopolscy, Na Wspólnjej, Na dobre i na złe, M jak miłość). On a few occasions we also meet incomers from neighbouring eastern countries who have made their career in Poland, e.g. Russian professors of medicine in Samo życie and Na dobre i na złe, or a Ukrainian dancer in Egzamin z życia.

Other foreigners appearing in these serials include the Vietnamese. In the soap opera Na dobre i na złe we meet a Vietnamese family choosing not to see a doctor due to concerns about the high costs of treatment, although the mother and child both have a fever. When they ultimately end up in hospital, the mother’s life is saved at the last moment, and because their lives were in immediate danger the patients do not have to pay for the operations or the hospitalisation. There is a Vietnamese family in the serial Pogo-da na piątek working at Warsaw’s stadium market. And Plebania shows a group of young Vietnamese women illegally smuggled into Poland in a lorry loaded with goods, and then sold to Italian brothels by the Polish criminals organising the smuggling. This comes as a shock, and they are unaware of what is going to happen to them, as they had paid for their illegal transport into Poland counting on a better life here. One of the girls had been brought up in Poland and knows the language, but together with her entire family had been deported as they were in Poland illegally. She was attempting to return to Poland, has relatives in the country, and this was why she chose to pay to be smuggled in. The organiser behind the smuggling decides not to send her to Italy, but to keep her with him. He imprisons her in his home, treats her as an unpaid servant and prostitute, constantly threatening to send her to an Italian brothel. With the help of the local curate she manages to escape from the criminal and find her way to relatives living in Warsaw.

The theme of Chechen immigrants who entered Poland illegally also appears in the serials in question. In the soap opera Na dobre i na złe a refrigerator truck’s driver sees a police blockade on the road and drives into the forest where he abandons the vehicle. The police find the refrigerator
The Problems of Immigrants and Refugees in Poland Based on Selected Media Accounts

truck and discover several Chechens inside, including a woman and children. The refugees were on their way to Germany or Austria, counting on asylum being easier to obtain there than in Poland. They are all frozen and terrified, one of the men is dead, the feet of a boy just a few years old are totally frostbitten. A doctor who speaks Russian in the hospital explains that the woman with the infant lost her brother in the war, her father was executed and her husband was tortured, so they decided to run away – but her husband did not survive the journey in the truck. The doctor, who wants to make both patients and doctors more aware of the problem of refugees, organises the showing of a film at the hospital about refugees from various parts of the world.

The problem of building a centre for refugees was portrayed in the soap opera Plebania. When the idea for such a centre is accepted by the local authorities, a parish council activist is outraged and vows to do everything to prevent such a centre being opened in their locality. However, the involvement of the local parish priest, as well as the woman’s son (also a priest), but above all their description of the fortunes of unwanted refugees likened to the fate of Christ, whose pregnant mother nobody wanted to grant shelter in Bethlehem, results in the woman transforming from a fierce opponent to the top advocate for the centre’s construction, and through her example drawing others to the cause. Although in the end the centre is not built for financial reasons, the local population begin to show more understanding for the issue of refugees in Poland.

Foreigners from the West are portrayed entirely differently. In the serials in question there are a dozen or so foreigners from Western Europe and the United States. Some of them are shown as people in Poland temporarily, for work. They tend usually to be specialists in a variety of areas, collaborating with Polish institutions, making careers for themselves; they are successful in Poland (e.g. an Italian university lecturer in Barwy szczęścia, British professor of medicine in Na dobre i na złe, and French boss of an advertising agency in Klan). Other foreigners have some kind of family connection with Poland, and come here to learn more about their ancestors’ country, and do not rule out staying here for longer or permanently. In most cases these characters have higher education or decide to study in Poland, they have their own businesses, or they find legal employment in our country without any major problems. Even if not working in their trained occupations, they cope well as teachers of their native languages, most often English (Pierwsza miłość, Warto kochać, Złotopolscy). Unfortunately their contact with real life in Poland is not always pleasant at the start, for example in the case of a young American in the soap opera Pierwsza miłość, who is cheated, beaten up and
robbed by the taxi-driver who picks him up from the airport. However, all
ends well, as Poles are keen to help this USA citizen. Foreigners from the
West are presented with a distinct fondness, as people striving to learn about
Polish culture, highly sociable, and finding it easy to make friends. In the
soap opera *M jak miłość*, when a young German leases some land and cul-
tivates a crop of potatoes on it, he initially causes concern in the local com-
community, not happy to have foreigners taking over their land. In time, though,
this likeable and obliging man comes to be liked by his neighbours and makes
friends with a young Polish man; the two run a pub together, and support
each other in difficult situations in life. Even an underage German criminal
appearing in the soap opera *Plebania*, who comes to Poland as part of his
social rehabilitation, despite his aggressive behaviour and educational prob-
lems he causes his Polish guardians, ultimately turns out to be a chivalrous
youngster who rescues a Polish girl being assaulted by a few hooligans. Then
there is a Dutch doctor who makes a very good impression in *Na dobre i na
złe*, as extremely punctual and scrupulous, a genuine professional in his field.
In addition he never complains about the far-from-easy working conditions
in the Polish hospital, is pleasant and obliging, promotes an environmentally
friendly lifestyle, and is working hard and enthusiastically at perfecting his
Polish. In the soap opera *Samo życie*, an Italian fashion journalist was shown
in a very fond manner; after arriving in Warsaw he falls in love with a Polish
girl and does everything to win her heart, changing his life completely for
her. He is presented as a person guided by feelings in his life, incredibly
family-oriented and honest, and quickly winning over others. In addition we
see him as a romantic lover, a great cook and a caring guardian for his fian-
cée’s daughter. Americans are shown just as positively, as open-minded, go-
ahead people, uncompromising, boldly defending their own judgments (*Pier-
wsza miłość, Warto kochać, Zlotopolscy, M jak miłość*). The serials in question
have also had supporting roles on several occasions in which foreigners from
the West do business in Poland. In the serial *Klan* we meet a Swedish busi-
nesswoman and German businessmen, and in *Samo życie* – a Swedish press
magnate. These people are dependable, they run their businesses honestly,
but they also take care of their own interests and are demanding towards
their business partners and colleagues.

Arab characters are seen twice in the serials concerned. One is a Syrian
working in the Polish branch of a Syrian company (*Pensjonat pod Różą*), the
second a gynaecologist Afghan refugee (*Pierwsza miłość*). The former of these
meets a girl in Poland he first of all becomes friends with, and as time passes
deeper feelings develop between them; his superiors disapprove and recall
him to his home country. He decides to leave together with his girlfriend,
but her parents are very opposed – and cannot imagine their single child marrying an Arab; they even organise a meeting for their daughter with a woman who married an Arab but after a terrible ordeal escaped back to Poland. None of this manages to convince the love-smitten girl, who decides to leave for Syria with her boyfriend. The second of these two foreigners tells the dramatic story of his life in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, the murder of his entire family and beloved, and about having to leave the country.

On several occasions we are witness to Poles’ hostility towards foreigners in the serials investigated here. Its intensity varies quite significantly. Where foreigners from east of Poland or even Polish repatriates initially sometimes encounter dislike, this initial reluctance usually gives way following closer acquaintance. However, we see various types of prejudice or even evidently racist behaviour. For example a Vietnamese high school girl has to cope with racist taunts from schoolmates (Pogoda na piątek), an Arab fiancé is not accepted by his girlfriend’s parents (Pensjonat pod Różą) and another set of parents react in the same way towards a dark-skinned man studying medicine with their daughter (Na dobre i na zle). The mother of a boy who forms a relationship with a dark-skinned American girl makes no secret of her dis-pleasure (Warto kochać), and a dark-skinned guest priest in the local parish evokes unfavourable comments (Plebania). In the episode of Na dobre i na zle cited earlier, when the Chechen woman lands in hospital with her baby, one of the patients demands that she be put in another ward, and then says to the other Polish women: “I know all these coloured people. My husband has a company and he wanted to employ one of them, but they prefer taking money for nothing from our government than going to work”4. The soap opera Pierwsza miłość shows a doctor from Afghanistan who has been working for a few months in Poland, yet constantly encounters discrimination. In one episode he confides in a colleague: “You won’t understand what it’s like to be a refugee in your country, stupid questions the whole time, mocking sniggers”5. Although the gynaecologist has undergone training in the USA and is an expert, publishing papers in scientific journals, patients don’t want to be treated by him because – as one of them says: “Are there no other doctors that this one has to experiment on me? Let’s not kid ourselves, he’s black and a Muslim”6. When the Afghan’s colleagues apologise to him for the patients’ behaviour, he says: “Do you think that’s the first time I’ve heard

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4 Na dobre i na zle, soap opera on TVP 2, quoting a patient in a hospital in Leśna Góra, episode 351.
5 Pierwsza miłość, soap opera on TV Polsat, quoting Aslan Dagaev, episode 796.
6 Pierwsza miłość, soap opera on TV Polsat, quoting a hospital patient, episode 798.
that? Some react that way, particularly since 9/11. For some people an Af-
ghan, Sudanese or Moroccan, they’re all one and the same – an Arab or even
to better, a Kebab. That’s what they shouted after me on Piotrkowska in Łódź. The same soap opera also had a councillor who when meeting the Afghan
doctor in entirely private circumstances pressed him aggressively about the
jihad and his attitude to terrorist attacks committed by Muslims, and asked him: “If you consider Islam the one true faith, then why are you running
away to Europe?” And later, when the Afghan leaves the get-together as he
doesn’t want to get involved in a dispute – to the dismay of the hostess – the
councillor explains to her: “I’m only defending the right to defend our own
values in this country. I don’t like it when foreigners throw their weight
about in Poland, imposing their terms on us.” Even more spectacular man-
ifestations of racism are encountered by another character, the dark-skinned
lawyer Sam living in Poland (Barwy szczęścia). When a neighbour in the
housing estate attempts to get his girlfriend’s fitness club shut down, he wants
to talk to him about the reasons for his behaviour, but hears in reply: “This
world has been designed very well, every ethnic group should live in the
kind of environment they’ve been adapted to for centuries, the hens with
the hens and the geese with the geese. Since you’re so well educated, why
don’t you go home and help your country? Can your country afford to lose
such outstanding citizens, its intellectual elite?” When Sam’s fiancée stands
in his defence, he adds: “That’s what you say, but when you catch Aids from
your boyfriend you’ll change your mind.” And after being warned by Sam,
he adds: “Are you threatening me, nigger?” A Nigerian footballer who joins
a minor club in a small town also encounters discrimination. First of all he’s
cheated by the coach, who houses him in a studio flat with three kinsmen,
confiscates his passport and pays him a pittance – 200 zlotys a month. Dur-
ing matches the fans shout our racist slogans and throw bananas onto the
pitch, and afterwards blame him for playing badly and call him a “lame
monkey” (Plebania).

As is evident in the description given here, the serials analysed portray
immigrants from the East and those from the West in different ways. The
former, regardless of their level of education, usually carry out the simplest
of jobs, agreeing to wages lower than Poles are paid, fill the ranks of the grey
economy, and are the victims of cheats taking advantage of their difficult
financial and family situation, or they themselves run dishonest business

7 Pierwsza miłość, soap opera on TV Polsat, quoting Aslan Dagarev, episode 798.
8 Pierwsza miłość, soap opera on TV Polsat, quoting Roman Korczyński, episode 837.
9 Barwy szczęścia, soap opera on TVP 2, quoting Krzysztof Jaworski, episode 191.
dealings. The most typical image in these serials of such an immigrant is a cleaning lady, prostitute or gangster. However at the same time, especially in the case of women, they are mainly portrayed in a very positive light – and although they do not have easy lives, they are usually characters endowed with numerous strengths. Immigrants from the West on the other hand are presented very positively, they are well-educated and cope excellently in the conditions in Poland, and are also liked by those in their community. In the serials analysed, refugees are very rare, we do not see the refugee centres, and the theme of such foreigners waiting for refugee status does not appear. On the other hand, themes of aversion towards foreigners of different skin colour or religion are increasingly common, especially in recent years. Distinct educational motifs can be detected here, as comments or examples of behaviour testifying to intolerance or racism are always portrayed as evoking disapproval in most people – shame or even castigation.

The Image in the Media and Attitudes Among Poles

In the image presented in the media of immigrants applying for refugee status or treating Poland as a transit country, their difficult situation is highlighted, along with sympathy and frequent suggestions that the aid measures implemented by Polish institutions are still insufficient. The images in the media match the attitudes shown by Poles, who on the one hand consider aid for refugees a form of Poland paying back its historic debt, as its citizens – escaping persecution – where taken in by other states (an opinion voiced by 72% of the respondents), although on the other hand we are most often (44%) in favour of allowing refugees to settle temporarily in Poland, and ensuring them with places in refugee centres (59%). Other options, such as giving them permission for permanent settlement in Poland, are much less popular (17%), with even lower acceptance of such measures for refugees as help in finding work (16%), organising language courses (8%), granting them Polish citizenship (7%) or granting them accommodation (4%) (TNS OBOP 2006).

Both in the press and in the serials analysed here, foreigners from the West are presented differently to those from the East. This is also reflected in Poles displaying different attitudes towards different nationalities. We are most fond of those from Western Europe – such as the Italians, Spanish, French, English, Greeks, Norwegians, Dutch and the Irish, as well as those from Central Europe – the Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians. Poles are much less fond of Belarusians, Ukrainians and Russians. Only the fact that the level of fondness for our Eastern neighbours has risen over the last dozen or so
years (sometimes it has even doubled) is optimistic. In 1993, only 12% of respondents claimed to like Ukrainians, compared to 34% in 2010; likewise for Belarusians – 19% and later 34%, and for Russians – 17% and 34%. Poles also show aversion towards Armenians, the Chinese, Vietnamese, Chechens, Turks, Romanians, Arabs and the Roma (see CBOS 2010b), and so those ethnic groups mostly comprising numerous groups of immigrants coming to our country.

In recent years Poles’ acceptance for the employment of foreigners has risen. The vast majority of the respondents (81%) are in favour of foreigners working in Poland, with half (50%) – any work, and approximately one third (31%) – only certain jobs. 14% of the respondents are opposed. In 1992 only 9% felt that foreigners could be allowed to do any job in Poland, and 39% – certain jobs only. Simultaneously, over the course of two years, the percentage of those believing the government should strive to reduce the number of workers from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in the country rose from 52% to 65% (see CBOS 2010a).

Despite racism or aversion towards foreigners of different skin colour or religion being condemned by the media, it is still quite common for Poles to consider unfavourable the presence in Poland of Arabs (55%), Turks (47%) and Africans (34%) (see CBOS 2004).

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Autoethnographic Method in the Sociology of Emotions*

The article describes how the sociology of emotions can utilise autoethnography. The author analyses the cultural context of the recent methodological career of this perspective as well as its methodological, cognitive and social limitations. By referring to some examples, the author indicates possible uses for autoethnography in the sociological research of emotions. She also considers the theoretical prerequisites for the application of this method in scientific sociological projects.

Keywords: sociology of emotions, autoethnography

Introduction

This article deals with methodology. In it, I would like to consider how the sociology of emotions may benefit by adopting the autoethnographic method, as well as where difficulties occur and of what nature they may be. I am tackling this issue as I believe it is worth looking into relatively new methods, or at least not very widespread, in relation to a topic that is far from easy to grasp – that of emotions.

As Piotr Binder remarks: “[…] the vast majority of sociological research studies into emotions are based on controlled precise measurements of emotions. As a rule these are mild emotions, which is directly tied to ethical constraints […]. They are mostly studies regarding specific emotions, such as anger, fear, shame, pride, or a sense of threat, etc. According to the encyclopaedic work of Turner and Stets, sociologists and social psychologists most gladly refer to standardised paper-and-pencil tests, asking test participants to place themselves on a scale of emotional excitement. […] A second distinct group comprises laboratory research” (Binder 2009: 70–71). This approach to the issue of methodology in researching emotions has significant restrictions where sociological potential or cultural interpretation is concerned. In addition, the instrumentarium used by the approaches referred to above places deliberations regarding emotions within the trend of methodological neopositivism, which – in sociology at least – was counterbalanced

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long ago by other approaches, e.g. hermeneutic. Hence it seems sensible to me to consider methodological solutions that would to some degree make use of an instrumentarium now ready-to-use and proven, while at the same time reflecting current cultural tendencies at least to the degree to which actual interest in emotions responds to and reflects them.

The Cultural Conditioning of Autoethnography

Autoethnographic research is a specific method in which – to put it as briefly as possible – the researcher researches him/herself. In other words, the roles of the investigated and the investigator meet within a single person, which has important methodological consequences. This is not a particularly widespread method in the social sciences, although already methodologically defensible today\(^1\). Importantly, the methodological advancement of autoethnography fits within the broader context of developments between which one may find very subtle connections. I would like to draw attention to two of these kinships.

The first similarity may be found in the contemporary redefinition of the notion of art. I believe this is a redefinition symmetrical to that occurring in other areas of life, including – as understood by science *tout court* – its methods and field of interests. Paweł Moźdżyński, in his analyses, places the emphasis on the category of experience in contemporary art, a border, total or traumatic experience (Moźdżyński 2009: 165), which through the participation of viewers and the actual artist constitutes the essence of art today. “A work of art grasped as a material consequence of the artist’s actions becomes secondary to the creative process, which together with the artist’s experiences moves into the foreground. It is obvious that action is more conducive to the investigation and display of emotions than a static work devoid of the dimension of time. […] Processual means of expression enable the artist to have a deeper impact on the recipient/participant, allow their emotions to be influenced more effectively, to provoke a way out beyond stereotypes and aesthetic and ethical canons. They are more suitable for artistic research laboratories, and ensure success in experiments conducted on live experimental matter and emotions – of both the artist/experimenter and the viewer/participant” (*ibid*, p.163). Continuing along this researcher’s line of thought, it is worth looking to the issue of art – which after all

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\(^1\) I write in detail about the methodological ‘legalisation’ of the autoethnographic method in *Metodologiczne aspekty badań autoetnograficznych* [Methodological aspects of autoethnographic research], which should appear in a book embracing the achievements of a methodological conference, *Homo narrator. Badanie opowieści o doświadczeniu*, organised in w Spała in November 2010 by the Institute of Polish Culture and Stowarzyszenie Katedra Kultury.
conforms to its clearly declared role (at least since the time of modernism) – as the potential avant-garde in relation to other fields, including science. This is because the same transformations as identified by Moźdzężyński can also be spotted in the definition of the scientific autoethnographic method described by Stacy Holman Jones. In her opinion, a [...] return towards performative narratives and narrative performances may contribute to the formation, in movement and through movement, of politically effective poetics. [...] The lessons and challenges for autoethnography, connected to a return towards performance, towards performative writing and personal narrative, seem obvious. Autoethnographic texts are personal stories that are simultaneously constitutive and performative. They are forms of the exchange of presence, or of a ‘reciprocal now’ (Jones 2009: 197). Therefore the emphasis placed on personal experience (of the artist or researcher, and also the recipient-coparticipant), on performative experience, and finally on processuality and a certain non-closure, allusion\(^2\), that leaves room for the non-verbal or pre-reflexive sharing of experiences, makes the assumed essence of scientific and artistic actions similar to each other.

The second kinship I wanted to briefly point out concerns the transformations currently observed with sudden intensification in the area of public communication. Above all I have in mind the significant liberalisation in regard to what content traditionally ascribed to the realms of privacy has the right to exist in this public area. However, the matter does not boil down to breaking conventions, overstepping taboos or challenging one’s sense of good taste; although one could also look at it in such a manner, that is surely a lesson we took long ago. I believe it is rather about the significant redefining of the private and public spheres, their penetration, and the filters established between them. Renata Dopierała perceives here a “shifting of the borders of truthfulness in the direction of exhibitionism, a dissemination of literality, of a peculiarly understood authenticity, the usage of private forms of communication in a public context” (Dopierała 2009: 225). A reflection of these processes can be found in the redefinition of the researcher’s position (a redefinition that has been taking place for years, in Poland for at least a few decades, if only in the form of research by prof Andrzej Siciński’s team into lifestyles and the drawing up of a methodological research concept via shared experience), but also in regard to the extent to which he or she is ‘hidden’ or ‘exposed’ in the research. Autoethnography is a manifestation of

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\(^2\) In describing Katarzyna Kozyra’s work on *Piramida zwierząt*, Paweł Moźdzężyński notes: “The most important aspect of this work [...] is non-material; it comprises the artist’s traumatic but transforming, initiating experiences/emotions” (Moźdzężyński 2009: 161).
just such exposure of the researcher, the person, which is tied to consent for a certain form of exhibitionism as mentioned above, or a baring of one’s own privacy, including in the field of science.

A potential conflict of status, one that one cannot remain silent about, naturally comes into play at this point. After all how can one reconcile the social role of the scientist and the role’s related status, and a certain type of denudation through the disclosure of personal and sometimes intimate details from one’s own life, including that related to research? How, on the one hand, can one build up one’s own prestige and authority, while on the other presenting oneself as an individual who makes mistakes, who is sometimes weak, who experiences humiliation? It it also in this context that Stacy Holman Jones poses her question: How should I retain the balance between telling [...] and showing (...)? How much of myself must I reveal, what can I remain quiet about? (Jones 2009: 177). In this respect, the research of emotions is much more uncomfortable and even professionally destructive than other research projects based on personal involvement or one’s own experience, as in for example Touraine’s sociological intervention, or Anna Wyka’s concept mentioned above (Wyka 1985), or participative observation. Especially when taking into account the aspect of self-presentation – so important in the scientist’s social role – which Erving Goffman, generalising, bases on the canon of traits that “in our society” are considered desirable: these include, among other things, “discretion and sincerity; modesty regarding self; sportsmanship; command of speech and physical movement; self-control over his emotions, his appetites, and his desires; poise under pressure and so forth” (Goffman 2006: 78). The social aspect of the method under consideration, outlined in brief here, requires deeper reflection stepping beyond the modest boundaries of this article.

Being Inside the Process

At this point it would be worth referring for a moment to the question about the nature of knowledge – how do we know? how do we find out? – that would justify this positioning of the researcher-autoethnographer within the world being investigated, and more precisely – would permit it to be his world that he shows and shares. The problem thus outlined relates to the same issues I tackled above, but sets them in a slightly different context, namely in relation to the nature of science, scientificity, and methodological standards. I believe that here it is worth following the path taken by Bent Flyvbjerg (2005), who thoroughly analysed the possibility of applying a case study in scientific studies. Of course, by their very definition autoethnographic
Autoethnographic Method in the Sociology of Emotions

studies are case studies. Therefore Flyvbjerg’s reflections also refer to them, but are not limited to them. He indicates a few aspects that it would seem right to raise in these deliberations.

Above all it is about enhancing the value of contextual knowledge, immersed within a certain specific reality, that Flyvbjerg sets against knowledge without context, generalised, grasped in a form of rules or patterns. He argues as follows: “[…] if one thus assumes that the goal of the researcher’s work is to understand and learn about phenomena being studied, then research is simply a form of learning. If one assumes that research, like other learning process, can be described by the phenomenology for human learning [highlighted – M.L.], it then becomes clear that the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place themselves within the context being studied” (Flyvbjerg 2005: 59). One can spot here the same directive as recalled by Paweł Moźdżyński in relation to art: it is not the effect, not the completed work, but the process of it occurring and the experiencing. In addition the process is in the same manner uncompleted, and therefore inconclusive in the traditional sense of conclusiveness. “Case stories written like this can neither be briefly recounted nor summarized in a few main results. The case story is itself the result. It is a ‘virtual reality’, so to speak. For the reader willing to enter this reality and explore it inside and out, the payback is meant to be a sensitivity to the issues at hand that cannot be obtained from theory” (Flyvbjerg 2005: 61). In observing such an understanding of knowledge and learning, including in the scientific sense, in her textbook on methodologies in the social sciences Stacy Holman Jones wrote the chapter devoted to autoethnography in the form of a personal story, in which the author – based on numerous experiences and thanks to adepts encountered and participation in a variety of research programs – gradually crystallised the essence of the method being described (Jones 2009). Here in turn one recalls the form in which Flyvbjerg proposes that case studies be presented, which is the natural form of delivering autoethnographic studies: a narrative. In this understanding, the telling of a story, and through the telling the inclusion of the onlooker or reader, or rather the participant, in the cast of actors is treated as the most obvious, convincing and impressive method of sharing the experience and acquisition of knowledge.

In such a depiction, a narrative rich in details, dense, straying from the main thread to become immersed in a variety of less obvious aspects, becomes a source of genuine context-dependent knowledge, not pretending omniscience with the aid of generalising reductions. The ostensible gain from such reductions was expressed ironically, yet very pertinently, by the writer Herman Hesse, exposing the powerlessness of science understood tradition-
ally (positivistically) in regard to the world, and manifested in the term ‘imponderabilia’: “This word [imponderabilia] is a touchstone, a sensitive gauge of spiritual criteria that themselves would be called ‘imponderable’, i.e. elusive, by the average scholar. This handy word is always resorted to when defining and describing those manifestations of life for which the measuring apparatus available lacks precision and the speaker lacks good will and sensitivity. On the whole the life scientist knows little, and among other things does not know that precisely because of these ephemeral, peregrine values he calls ‘elusive’, excellent methods of measurement and expression were developed in another sphere, that both Thomas Aquinas and Mozart, each in their own language, did nothing other than weigh these so-called imponderabilia with unheard-of precision” (Hesse 1991: 22–23).

Autoethnographic Research and Emotions

Although interest in privacy and one’s own experience is tied inescapably to emotions, this does not yet mean that reflection of this type belongs immediately to the sphere of focused reflection, concentrated around emotions. In other words, emotions here usually constitute an indispensable component, but placing them in the centre of an analysis, or in second or third place, is the researcher’s decision. However, autoethnography – similarly to art – seems to be the perfect tool for researching (exploring, stimulating, grasping, analysing, overcoming, experiencing, unveiling, observing and showing) the author’s own emotions. This is the way towards insight, if not in the classic meaning of understanding then certainly instinctively empathic. How does this look in research practice? I shall use a few examples illustrating this issue in various ways.

Bruce L. Arnold (2006) conducted research into the process of dying and experiencing the expectation of death in a Buddhist hospice in Thailand. He was interested in the conceptual framing of dying and death in spiritual and cultural terms different to that characteristic of the western world. In itself the subject matter contains a significant emotional component, here utilised additionally in the way of problematizing the issue under investigation. The starting point for undertaking the research was the surprise resulting from the dissimilar cultural definitions, relating also to emotional processes, that precode the way in which anticipated death is experienced. As the author writes, his research project made use of “autoethnographic-autobiographical data arising from the cognitive-emotional conflict between the researchers’ cultural schemata and the phenomena in which the research process is embedded” (Arnold 2006: 21). Arnold, who initially intended to
Autoethnographic Method in the Sociology of Emotions

rely on interviews with patients, quickly became discouraged with this method due to the inconveniences entailed by the simultaneous translation of the entire conversation. Therefore, ceding the conducting of the interviews to the interpreter, he himself collected the impressions, observations and feelings accompanying the stay in the hospice. The emotions expressed by the patients and the personnel, as well as a certain overall emotional atmosphere present in the place being investigated and accompanying the passing away of the patients most often constituted the content of his research experience. Thus it was mainly data of this kind that was accessible to the researcher – as the only type due to the language barrier and the necessity of employing the assistance of an interpreter – while it also constituted the subject of the surprise mentioned above, and this became the basis of his comparative analyses. And so in his narrative Arnold noted sincerity, serenity and openness to communication in the patients, so unexpected by a Canadian in a hospice for the terminally ill. An important aspect of his observations comprised the consequences of the collective character of the hospice as an institution, reactions to the simultaneous presence of many other patients, and to death seen in one’s immediate vicinity on a daily basis. The most unexpected – highly and imposingly contradictory to the cultural schemata brought from the West – was the absence of uncertainty, fear and panic, as well as there being no visible depression. “From my first day at the hospice I was struck with the warmth, friendliness, and happiness of the staff and clients” (ibid, p. 34).

When looking at Arnold’s research in regard to the methodological issues related to autoethnography in the context of emotion research, one can see that emotional content became the main subject of the research, and that in two ways. Firstly, the researcher was interested in the emotions of the hospice patients related to their anticipated death, and to the place where (among the personnel and other residents) they awaited it. He interpreted these emotions from their faces, from their gestures, from how they spoke, the timbre of their voices, their friendly attitude and openness towards communication. Secondly, he compared these emotions to emotional schemata brought from the culture of the West, making use of the estrangement effect (Verfremdungseffekt) and permitting himself to experience cognitively-fertile surprise. It was only in this confrontation that he gained a picture both of the phenomenon of death investigated in the culture of Thai Buddhists, and of the emotional ideologies (Turner, Stets 2009: 51) in force in his own world.

The next example I would like to refer to briefly is Caroline Pearce’s narrative presented in the article World Interrupted… (Pearce 2008), where the author describes several years of her mother Brenda’s struggle – ending
in death – with a progressive disease (multiple sclerosis), seen from her mother’s, her sister’s, and above all from her own perspective. The axes around which the narrative develops are the rupture of the personal worlds of the women observed and the collective world of the members of the family in question, and the chaotic and non-lineal experience of suffering, which – as Pearce wrote – “cannot be easily assimilated into a seamless narrative or category” (ibid, p. 131). The author relies on numerous sources (identity analysis in the face of chronic illness conducted by Brenda herself, the author’s interviews with her sister and with herself [sic!], and her own journals that she then kept). In addition she applies the method of evoking (calling on) emotions through the agency of various aids, such as a photo album, a television programme the family were in the habit of watching together, the profiles of persons who had stopped coming to see or invite her, birthday cards and presents, places they had visited together, and even the smell of perfumes (ibid, p. 135). The emotions called into being with their help, almost like Proust’s madeleines, opened the door to forgotten events and the feelings that accompanied them. This story, as Pearce described it herself, is also intentionally self-therapeutic in its nature. Thus a biographic story emerged, a record of the events in the story of a certain family, but also a text separate from this family’s specific fortunes. In her conclusion, Pearce declares: “Though I have ‘authored’ this narrative, it is now beyond me, beyond the individuals in the story. It is a text, it is structure but it is also emotion, suffering and pain. This suffering was never really mine to own and it transcends and resonates far beyond the words on this page” (ibid, pp. 135–136).

The last example I’d like to recall is a book by Elżbieta Zakrzewska-Manterys, constituting a study in the sociology of suffering, based on the author’s experience of giving birth to a child with Down syndrome. It is also a personal story, and – as far as I am aware – one of the pioneering autoethnographic texts in Polish sociology. The subject of the analysis here is both the emotional struggle experienced by the mother, falling into a ‘trajectory’ after the birth of her child (ill? maybe healthy? perhaps just a little ill? no, so it is Down’s… no, luckily it isn’t… yes, I’m afraid it is…), as well as the culturally evoked interpretations and instructions that begin to apply in such a situation. Although the author – apart from the suffering in the title – does not refer directly to emotions as a research category, her suggestive narrative largely relates to this particular sphere. Right from the descriptions of the hospital stage immediately following delivery, the researcher’s emotional imbalance is clearly highlighted, and shown in contrast to the cold distance displayed by the personnel, which in unwritten medical procedure is meant
to have a disciplining effect on the mother and make it possible to cope with her distress, distress that upsets the post-delivery state of bliss in the ward and knocks the staff out of their well-arranged and productive routine. Zakrzewska-Manterys quotes the head of the ward: “I wouldn’t say it’s a tragedy. It’s simply bad luck. If we treat it as a tragedy then we’ll find tragedy” (Zakrzewska-Manterys 1995: 58). The descriptions of the researcher’s experience refer to a very large degree to her own emotions, which essentially constitute to a large degree the fundamental theoretical category of her analysis – a trajectory. She describes her stay in hospital as follows: “I cried quietly, with a feeling of total hopelessness, a feeling of some kind of enormous burden, realising that I’d be bearing that burden from that moment on, for the rest of my life. […] I think I was saved above all by the hope, however faint, that there was an error in the diagnosis. But on the other hand it was this that led to the seesaw in my moods: at one point I was certain I was condemned for the rest of my life to living with a disabled child, while at another I didn’t believe it could be true” (ibid, p. 92). In addition the narrative contains elements of conscious management of emotions (Turner, Stets 2009: 53), constituting a certain game played out for others’ needs (in this case – for one’s less immediate family, not familiarised with the parameters of the situation) and for herself, as if somehow to cast a spell on reality. The purpose of management of emotions, and work on controlling despair, is to fit the emotional ideology ascribed culturally to the situation of motherhood. The rules for experiencing and expressing emotions that bind the mother of a healthy baby anticipate joy, pride, and a happy, wonderful mood for this circumstance, which the author strived to enact: “And then those visits by the family outside the hospital window. They came in a cheerful, colourful pack, together with Hania, yelling out their shouts of joy. I couldn’t put a damper on such joy with something that was but a suspicion. Even when they tore me from my state of utter despair I rubbed my eyes and yelled back at them that everything was wonderful, and told them what food to bring me. That strategy was not based on pretending that everything was all right, but on the belief that everything would be all right. And that’s a fundamental difference” (Zakrzewska-Manterys 1995: 93). Although the author herself does not do it, opting for other theoretical interpretative keys, her story can at least partially be expressed in the perspective of a conflict between two emotional ideologies: the first – that obliging in the situation of happy, successful motherhood, as I referred to above, with all its rules for experiencing this state, and the second – anticipated for the mother of an irreversibly disabled child, an ideology that demands totally different emotions, and that also authorises (guides) those around her to
react in a totally different way. However, Zakrzewska-Manterys emphasises the distinctly social emotional clichés anticipated for her situation, and indicates their ready-to-apply, culturally conditioned character. In summarising the titular category of suffering, she writes: “On this specific, individual example I am striving to show the general, social sense forcing the occurrence of the experience of suffering in certain socially defined circumstances. The society in which I live, the culture of which I am a participant, executes on me as on a suffering subject certain states and experiences characteristic of me alone, unique, extremely individual. [...] Because on the one hand society tells me what I’m supposed to ‘suffer’, while on the other various contexts of my consciousness constantly refer to the social burden of my own appraisal and my own roots” (ibid, pp. 158–159).

Emotions and Reflection in the Context of Autoethnography

Thinking over the relationship between emotions and reflection in the context under analysis constitutes one of the more important intellectual challenges I perceive in the entire subject matter being tackled here. Therefore I am treating the two matters I bring up within these considerations as the raising of a problem rather than the resolving of it.

An issue that might constitute a fly in the ointment in what would seem a promising and faultless methodological concept (quite aside from the social repercussions) is that of the relationship between emotions and self-reflection, or to be more precise – the possibility or impossibility of looking reflectively at one’s own emotions and describing them scientifically. The question is whether, and to what degree, the commencement of reflection, essential – at least as it would seem to me today – for the sociological study of the material, influences the actual material, and as such the investigated, recorded and experienced emotions. This is not a new topic, and neither is this a new doubt expressed in regard to it. It was already raised during the German occupation by Stanisław Ossowski in his deliberations regarding self-discovery: “The mutual dependence between the being doing the discovery and the object of this discovery, when concerning the discovery of oneself – the dependence of our opinions about ourselves on momentary moods and the dependence of our personality on our opinions of it – is not an issue that would be of purely theoretical significance. [...] Any conscientious person with a critical mind will be interested in this [issue] when wanting to describe their mental attitudes, their more subtle feelings towards people and issues, either in diaries or letters or in face-to-face declarations. [...] It is easy to be honest when describing somebody else; then if one’s honesty en-
counters obstacles of some kind, they are obstacles of a social nature: concern regarding the social consequences of my description. However, when I describe myself it is extremely difficult to realise where honesty ends and where the creation of fiction about oneself or the construction of one’s own personality begins” (Ossowski 2000: 23). By taking the path laid out by the author quoted above, you might expect an emotion subjected to research, observed critically, to cease to be the same emotion at this point, e.g. one’s own anger or wrath when observed ceases to simply be anger or wrath, becoming – due to the awareness of self-observation – the performing of the anger or wrath, or conversely – suppressed emotions, emotions pruned to the cultural norms of elegant behaviour or expectations flowing from an idealised vision of oneself. A certain way of solving the danger indicated by Ossowski could be to separate in time the stage of experiencing and the stage of analysis. In other words, this would mean approaching the ideal of the ‘pure’ experience, in which we strive to suspend any critical and theoretical reflection, preceding the stage of theoretical study of the material obtained (collected in the form of autobiographic records, photos, films, recordings, or – as in Pearce’s case – a variety of types of memory aids intended to stimulate the imagination and recall past states). This would seem to be a common practice in the creation of texts of this type. The methodological recommendation of separation in time of the stage of conducting the research from the stage of analytical work is to be found, for example, in the method of research through shared experience codified by Anna Wyka (Wyka 1985), where to a large extent the researcher also activates her own experiences and emotions, becoming a fully-fledged member of the researched community, before surfacing from this community’s world after some time and distancing herself from it (and from herself in those situations), taking on the role of sociologist. In practice, though, this methodological directive seems not only difficult to achieve, but also to some extent nonconvergent with autoethnography in the scientific sense, which I will write about somewhat more broadly in the closing section of this article.

As I indicated above, there is also another aspect of the confrontation of emotions and self-reflection that requires a few words. Let us assume that the emotions occurring in us have a largely cultural source external in relation to the individual and a socially conditioned form, that both their interpretation and form of expression take their impulse from the axionormative system of the society concerned or a certain part thereof (see Binder, Palska, Pawlik 2009: 9–10). By taking a step further, one can spot the existence of entire emotion cultures, the composition of which includes “emotion ideologies about appropriate attitudes, feelings, and emotional responses in basic
spheres of activity” (Turner, Stets 2009: 51). In this portrayal, the emotional sphere appears – from the point of view of a competent member of the society in question – dangerously transparent, meaning that it is normally so obvious it becomes imperceptible, inaccessible to any self-reflective exploration. Like a Durkheim social fact, emotions thus expressed are understood – as Durkheim wrote explicite – as “manners of […] feeling external to the individual, which are invested with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him” (Durkheim 1968: 30). It seems to me that this observation creates or at least naturally privileges two situations in which emotions could be investigated self-reflectively. One of these is the situation – let’s call it laboratorial – in which a consciously chosen stimulus evokes an anticipated emotion. The cognitive value of such research comes across as practically zero. The only thing watchable here is the intensity or durability of the emotion, or the model (or models) of its expression. One could of course do this, but what would be the point? The result obtained would probably not differ significantly from common-sense expectation, while splitting the hairs of emotions will contribute little to the resources of knowledge.

A second situation in which emotions thus understood can be researched self-reflectively is that of some kind of disorder, conflict or contradiction. The texts I have cited above contain examples of such possible disorders. What gives them sense is that by knocking an individual out of their non-reflective routine, they force the individual to carry out a deeper self-analysis, to observe their own feelings and their circumstances, together with diagnosis of the source and nature of the discomfort experienced. Generally speaking, this corresponds to the way of thinking proposed by Jean-Claude Kaufmann, when writing about the sociology of the individual (Kaufmann 2004). According to this sociologist, reflection is possible when contradiction occurs in well-incorporated and automated schemata we reproduce every day, and which are therefore transparent. This could be a contradiction between applied operative schemata (translated into the language of the sociology of emotions, this could be the case of Elżbieta Zakrzewska-Manterys, who found herself in the situation of rivalry between the emotional ideology of the happy mother of a baby and the emotional ideology of the unhappy mother of a disabled baby, or the case of Bruce Arnold, who confronted the emotional ideologies of dying between cultures), and so a clash

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3 Kaufmann focuses mainly on habits related to the body, and so on incarnate corporeal schemata, but also takes into account lingual and mental schemata. We would seek models of experiencing and expressing emotions in the latter. (Kaufmann 2004).
between two simultaneously effective yet contradictory schemata of the same level. It could be contradiction involving the forced entry of new parameters into well-arranged routine, forcing one to search for a way of negotiating with them (this may take on the form of reaching for an emotional ideology suggested by culture and appropriate for the specific circumstance – reflectively or only mechanically). And it could also be the contradiction between a ready operative schema and a cognitive schema. Where the sociology of emotions is concerned, reflection of this type would be forced e.g. by a conflict between a practiced emotional ideology and the norm of etiquette, commanding other behaviour in this situation. For example instead of exuberance arising spontaneously – a reserved politeness. In any case, reflection becomes possible and justified when something bad is happening, when things are not proceeding along the normal route, when there is an occurrence of the above-mentioned surprise, discomfort, discord or rebellion, when one has to reorder one’s world. It is also worth observing that the occurrence of this reflectively fertile contradiction may be either accidental (when a researcher makes use of such events from their own life, events that occur regardless of the research project) or planned (when a researcher provokes a situation to then investigate it). In the latter case we approach the stance of the artist-autoethnographer, conceptualising their future work. But one must remember here, that in order to thus plan a research process the sociologist must at least have sensed the existence of promising research material beforehand.

As for projects mainly aiming for a therapeutic effect, for going through a trauma or a transforming experience, in which reflection is a product of the experience rather than its material, I would place them slightly to the side of these cases of self-reflection where emotions are concerned.

Standards of Scientificity in the Autoethnographic Research of Emotions

The authors of the article Zaproszenie do socjologii emocji [lit. An Invitation to the Sociology of Emotions] indicate the problematic nature of ‘scientificity’ in regard to the sociology of emotions as a whole. In this context, as determinants of scientificity they list “discursiveness, intersubjectiveness, communicativeness, the possibility of operationalization, verifiability, and comparability, etc.” (Binder, Palska, Pawlik 2009: 16).

I can admit the thought that perhaps the current understanding of scientificity will one day become blurred to such a degree that it loses its hitherto character. However, I feel that the autoethnographic sociology of emotions
still can and should have its own specificity, different to memoirs, therapeutic séances, artistic activity, poetry, political performance or gossip. I would perceive this difference in two places: in distance and in theory. I understand distance as the skill of taking a certain external view of the events being investigated and their accompanying emotions. In relation to emotions this is particularly difficult, because to achieve distance they should ‘burn out’, but then once burnt out they are no longer the same as they were. The tools of distance would, in this way of understanding, be above all time and language. I have written above about time, about the division of time into the stage for conducting the research and the stage for analysis, listing the difficulties occurring here as reliably as possible. When we look at Caroline Pearse’s article, we can see the kind of division of time I mean: emotions are recalled or even evoked during the writing, but they do not determine the order in the article. Language in turn lends emotions a discursive character (ibid, p. 10); this is not about a secondary naming of emotions for scientific purposes, but about they themselves having a discursive character, due to which they can be included in the domain of the scientific description. Whereas artistic performance can cope without words, can be solely action and experience, science exists in words and assumes a certain intersubjective lingual communicativeness.

The second significant attribute determining scientificity in autoethnographic studies of emotions is theory. In other words, it is precisely the referring to theory that enables scientific autoethnographic method to be distinguished from a suggestive colloquial story. Of course theory is also a factor of distance, but a specific one. The researcher-autoethnographer is not simply an experiencing person who shares their adventures with others; he or she is rather a special person in possession of the theoretical and analytical competences thanks to which he or she can – at least to some degree in statu nascendi – grasp the emotions being investigated in categories of a specific theory. This does not mean that their emotions are different than the ‘incompetent’ emotions of ordinary people; I believe they are the same. But the autoethnographer lends them a form fulfilling the demands of scientific communicativeness, and is also capable of noticing the social character of the emotional ideologies behind them, possibly relativizing them culturally, spatially, and in terms of time, etc., while also if necessary holding them at a distance. Theory thus understood may be – quite obviously – an instrumentarium of ex-post analysis, but may also be (and this seems significantly more interesting to me) a constructive element used at the stage of conducting research. Based on my own experience4 I can

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4 I conducted autoethnographic studies in 2008 following a serious injury from the point of view of damage to one’s motor capabilities.
imagine the case of inspiration for research comprising a situation in a researcher’s life, conceptualised in theoretical categories that right from the research stage (including emotion research) lend it shape, form and language, and therefore in other words become the tool of the scientific problematizing of the subject.

Summary

This article had modest ambitions. I was interested in exploring the far from easy though promising subject matter of the border between the sociology of emotions and autoethnographic method, rather than definitively giving order to this border territory. As such, I treat the problems I have signalled as an attempt at diagnosing the issue and finding in its material those points (questions, references, connections, dependences) that in my opinion are worth tackling. The constructive proposals that appear in the article are up ‘for discussion’; I am counting on them becoming the inspiration for further deliberations and, perhaps, polemics, as a result enabling the development of the status and method of autoethnographic studies of emotions.

References


Profile of Cultural Figures of Warmia-Masuria\textsuperscript{1}. Research Outline

The following text is a modified excerpt from the research report: ‘Culture under cloudy skies. Dynamic Diagnosis of State of Culture in the Warmia and Mazury Region’. The author presents the result of the Twenty Statements Test used to analyse the cultural and social capital of culture institutions’ personnel in the Warmia-Masuria administrative region of Poland.

Keywords: Twenty Statements Test (TST), culture sector employees, social capital, cultural capital

During research in the field for the project ‘Dynamic Diagnosis of Culture in the Warmia and Mazury Region’\textsuperscript{2} cultural figures from this very specific voivodeship (administrative region) were, among other things, asked to take the Twenty Statements Test (TST). Designed by Thomas Kuhn and Manfred McPartland, this test – as we know – investigates the self concept. However that is not all, as Kuhn himself believed (based on many years of experience in using this tool) that the categories chosen most often by the respondents could be organised according to five criteria:

1) identification with social groups and their classification;
2) identification with ideological views;
3) identification with one’s own interests (needs);
4) identification related to ambitions;

\textsuperscript{*} The article was published in issue 2(14)2012 Sociologia emocji edited by Wojciech Pawlik.

\textsuperscript{1} The following are called ‘figures of culture’ here: artists, culture institutions’ personnel, representatives of non-governmental organisations and local government running cultural activities, as well as individual culture activists and animators; representatives of the social movement ‘Obywatele Kultury’ [Citizens of Culture] have also been taken into account here.

\textsuperscript{2} This multi-stage project – the first of its kind in Poland – was carried out in 2012 with a grant from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, with the support of the Warmia-Mazury Voivodeship’s Marshal Office, by a team under Prof Barbara Fatyga of the University of Warsaw, comprising: Dr Magdalena Dudkiewicz, Dr Paweł Tomanek (ZMBK ISNS UW) as well as Sławomir Molda, Piotr Rynkiewicz, Marcin Kaplon and Ryszard Michalski (CeIK, Olsztyn). This article is a fragment of the report, available in full (in Polish) at http://jakakultura.warmia.mazury.pl/raport-3/, prepared for the requirements of this publication.
This rather old tool was chosen because of the ease of its application, but above all because it had proved itself a good and fast method of investigating social networks, and as such social capital (in the category of so-called consensual expressions – identification with social groups and classifications) and cultural capital (in the category of so-called subconsensual expressions – self-descriptions of individuals’ personal traits). It thereby provided an interesting insight into the cultural competences comprising the cultural capital of the figures of culture in Warmia-Masuria in – interestingly – all three types of capital distinguished by Pierre Bourdieu (Chauvière, Fontaine 2003: 20). This is because information was gathered regarding:

- embodied cultural capital (the level of knowledge, internalised values);
- objectified cultural capital expressed in identification with a specific lifestyle symbolised through material goods;
- institutionalised cultural capital in the form of identification with social and occupational roles (their titles).

The main results of this stage of the research were: the gathering of information on social networks and bonds among the persons investigated; the gathering of information for profiling the cultural competences of the respondents; and the gathering of the information necessary for drawing up a collective portrait of the cultural figures of Warmia-Masuria.

I obtained the empirical material during consultation meetings3 from N = 78 persons, i.e. from 64% of those participating in the entire research process (see Table 1). This contained N = 1,221 categories characterising this group (had all research participants taking the TST completed it, providing 20 self-description categories, we would have received N = 1,560 categories; therefore the test completion ratio in this case is 78.3%). Test participants gave 15.6 categories on average, with the ‘record-breaker’ giving as many as 27, and the ‘minimalist’ only 4. The TST was completed ‘more properly’ and more accurately (in line with the instructions) by women. This in itself constitutes interesting information, especially when comparing the TST results for specific groups: the largest number of self-description categories were given by artists, cultural animators and certain local government activists, and the fewest – by cultural figures holding managerial functions in cultural institutions. Table 1 shows the profile – in regard to territorial and institutional origin – of the participants in the social consultations from which the test participants originated.

3 These so-called social consultations, constituting a separate stage of the study, were also conducted in an innovative manner. See the content of the report (referred to in footnote 2).
Table 1. Collective data for the study: ‘Social consultations with cultural figures of Warmia-Masuria’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution / organisation</th>
<th>No. of representatives in the different categories*</th>
<th>No. of territorial units covered</th>
<th>Absolute number of research participants after elimination of repetitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Institutions</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>localities after elimination of repetitions: N = 33</td>
<td>N = 122 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artists</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher places of learning</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>poviats (districts): 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens of culture, including those without other affiliations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>urban districts: 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other institutions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial businesses in culture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>urban communes: 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>urban-rural communes: 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>rural communes: 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Affiliations were counted here, i.e. the de facto number of institutions, businesses and organisations represented in the study.
From: own report.

TST analysis

The test results are presented in Chart 1, showing both the number of different types of self-identification and categories of self-description, as well as their frequency within the sample investigated. A totally unexpected bonus in this study turned out to be an interesting contribution to research into the shifting borders of intimacy; the respondents – both men and women –
described themselves in regard to erotic relations, placing descriptions of themselves as lovers in relatively high positions. This was initially presumed to be a type of cultural cliché (*mother, wife, lover...*), but then this explanation does not apply to men.

The issues indicated here shall be discussed in detail later in this *Research Outline*. However, it would be worth first of all taking a look at Chart 1, which illustrates the collective research findings, and explaining the sense of the different categories’ names.

Chart 1. Self-description categories used by cultural figures, based on TST results

1) Sub-consensual – positive individual personality traits
2) Sub-consensual – hobbies, passions
3) Demi-consensual – work content
4) Consensual family roles
5) Consensual characteristics – vocational roles
6) Demi-consensual – prosocial traits
7) General consensual: related to gender, territory, ethnic group
8) Consensual characteristics – type of education
9) Sub-consensual faults
10) Demi-consensual – CV attributes
11) Religious consensual
12) Sub-consensual – skills
13) Biological consensual
14) Political consensual
15) Man
16) Metaphors describing life as a whole
17) Others

From: own report.

The entire analysed sample totalled N = 1,221 self-identifications and self-presentations. The number of self-description categories given is usually divided into consensual categories, i.e. those related to the official (formal) functioning of the individual in the social world, and those that are subconsensual, in which one describes oneself as a private person, as an individual – above all describing one’s *personality, one’s inner self, spiritual wealth and/or character* as well as other traits that – in the individual’s vision of the SELF – constitute their personal adjectives or lifestyle features (passions, hobbies). However, in the investigated set of self-identifications and self-presentations there were certain traits that could not be assigned unambiguously to either of the areas mentioned. I have called such traits demi-consensual or demi-subconsensual:
• a demi-consensual trait, for example, is describing oneself in official space but *de facto* as a private person; at work the SELF is not so much a *director* or *subordinate* as a *support for colleagues*, a *good workfellow* or a *working woman* – which clearly constitutes a description relating to a sphere other than the relations set by the formal organisation of work (in this case relating to popular culture competences, to Irena Kwiatkowska’s famous role in the serial *Czterdziestolatki*);

• an example of a demi-subconsensual trait, also relating to work but revealed as an individual trait – [I AM] a *forge of ideas*, or an example showing a social qualification in relation to an individual trait – [I AM] the blonde of jokes sometimes.

It is worth noting that in their self-descriptions the cultural figures of Warmia-Masuria not only used their cultural competences but also metaphors drawn from their cultural resources (their cultural capital), and also used irony relatively often. Because of this, the analysis described here was more difficult than an analysis of TST results for social workers in Warmia-Masuria, carried out in 20124, because it required the ‘unwrapping’ of what were frequently multi-layered metaphors, and seeking within them the dominant frame organising the category as a whole (see: Lakoff, Jojnson 1988; Fatyga, Zieliński 2006).

One should also mention the content of the ‘others’ category, comprising rare and isolated ‘esoteric’ categories deriving from popular culture, such as e.g. [I AM] the Pisces of the zodiac, or ‘shameful’ categories – written in and then erased, thus most probably testifying to the subjective overstepping of the borders of privacy or – quite simply – what the respondent considered a mistaken first qualification while not knowing what to put in its place at that moment.

First of all the cultural figures’ social networks, i.e. their social capital, is worth analysing. The fundamental network of their social contacts comprises work-related contacts, in which respect this group varied somewhat internally, depending on their place of work: cultural figures in local government tended more often in their self concepts to use categories indicating their position (at the top) in hierarchies of an official nature, as in the tautological expression: [I AM] my subordinates’ superior (sic!); cultural figures from institutions and organisations, as well as artists, used more complex constructions when describing themselves in regard to occupational roles, saturating the world of their occupational relations (consensual descriptions – official occupational roles) with demi-consensual categories relating to de-

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criptions of the content of their work, as in the expression: [I AM] a silent rebel; fighting for elite culture or: a journalist, partially involved in voluntary work; (this was much less common among local government leaders – as in the expression: [I AM] [somebody] tending to the village’s aesthetics, organising work on the harvest festival garlands). Demi-consensual prosocial traits also appeared in the social networks, displaying for example a position of distance in the network of relations, as in the expressions: [I AM] a person who observes people or an enemy of administrative structures in culture; belonging to a ‘cosmopolitan’ community: [I AM] a citizen of the world, or quite the opposite, suggesting closeness, as in the expression: [I AM] somebody who likes getting to know new places and people; a friend of children. There were also demi-consensual traits here from the discursive CV resource, such as: [I AM] a competent team member. Consensual traits (political identifications) also constitute a component of the social capital of cultural figures in Warmia-Masuria: a patriot, a conservative, an anarchist. (These did not appear at all among social workers investigated earlier this year.) Consensual religious self-identifications also determine the social network here: [I AM] a Catholic, an atheist, an agnostic, a Buddhist.

In typical contemporary terms, cultural figures exist in highly extended family worlds; they described themselves as people strongly rooted not only in the so-called nuclear family (in regard to husband, wife or children) but also indicated their own relations to their parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and their in-laws. It should also be pointed out that the emotional temperature of these categories was decidedly positive, as in the sentence: [I AM] a friend to my beloved children; the respondents clearly drew much satisfaction from their involvement in this network – as seen in the statement: [I AM] a daddy already; they also aspire for attaining stable family relationships, giving them a sense of security, as in the statement: [I AM] [somebody’s] girl – not yet [his] wife.

It must be pointed out that these extensive social networks among cultural figures intermingle (especially in the case of artists and representatives of institutions and organisations) with their personal profiles. Specific ‘provinces of meaning’ – as they were beautifully termed by Alfred Schütz (2008) – of their social world constitute a specific internal landscape (referring in turn to Arjun Appadurai, 2005), creating an appealing mental bocage, comprising elite distance and a friendly involvement full of passion.

In addition, the internal bocage of the cultural figures of Warmia-Masuria was formed by the following consensual categories:

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5 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bocage

gender identification and particularly territorial identification, highly imbued with positive emotions;
- ethnic and regional identifications, important from the point of view of identification: Warmian, half-Teutonic, a Silesian in Warmia;
- biological self-presentation proving versatility: [I AM] thinking protein, the head of evolution etc.;
- fundamental species identification: [I AM] a person;
- fundamental so-called structural metaphors, characterising one’s entire life: [I AM] a Moby Dick, a wanderer, a searcher, [I AM] Buddha.

Therefore, in the case of the cultural figures covered by the research, their subconsensual profiles are equally as important, as they say a great deal about their CULTURAL CAPITAL, which after all functions (in keeping with the concept of cultural policy adopted in the research) as the BASIS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL. The data contained in Chart 1 shows that in their self-descriptions indicating their individual self concepts, the respondents most frequently gave evidently positive personality traits, presenting themselves as sensitive people, and also on the whole cheerful, lucky people, as enthusiasts, humanists, involved in their OCCUPATION AND CALLING, as eternal and incurable dreamers (recalling here a text of fundamental significance for the future of our civilisation, by Max Weber, 1987), but also as guardians of values: [I AM] tolerant in moderation.

Passions and hobbies constitute an important feature of their incorporated cultural capital: a booklover; an avid music fan; an early movie buff; a lover of whodunits; a lover of the provinces (this obviously a demi-subconsensual attribute, ‘wrapping’ consensual territorial identification and personal passion together), etc..

Traits indicating objectified cultural capital (material heritage, lifestyles) were also richly represented here in such categories as: a lover of baking cakes; I like beautiful interiors; a fervent driver; an angler; a self-taught ornithologist; a gardener; a person fascinated by aromatic morning coffee; a lover of good cuisine, etc.. This shows a social picture of cultural figures not so much as martyrs celebrating their oppression mainly through their work (as was the case among the social workers studied) as rather living in harmony with the world, capable of enjoying its charms with a certain dose of sybaritism.

The respondents’ subconsensual and demi-subconsensual self concepts also included descriptions of specific and less specific skills: coping well with other people; a social activist; ingenious; [I AM] musical; I know how to teach archaic singing. This image should also be complemented by the subconsensual description of drawbacks and shortcomings: a nervous, edgy person; hot-tempered; a person in need of rest; [I AM] a person who leads a pretty crazy life.
Based on the TST and the significantly more extensive study, ‘Social consultations...’, which I mentioned above, the following conclusion and simultaneously practical recommendation was reached: that the cultural figures of Warmia-Masuria constitute the most important and most valuable resource in the province’s social capital.

References


On Critical Competences in Sociology and the Field of Art

The article analyses the relations between the ‘scientific field’ and ‘field of art’ in the context of theory of reputation, that is – the prestige and social recognition of scientific and culture texts created within these two fields. The author posits that scholarly texts (including sociological articles), due to their esoteric language and high level of abstraction, require high and specialised theoretical and methodological qualifications, thus rendering such texts unintelligible to the average reader. Paradoxically, this fosters the reputation of such texts (and the social role of the sociologist) as transcending the ‘average’ qualifications of the broader audience, which in turn facilitates the creation of social recognition of science and trust in scholarly institutions. The process of popularisation of scholarly knowledge and its simplification, in turn, sheds its aura of ‘inaccessibility’ and brings it into the mass media and everyday discourse. The process of relativisation of qualifications of authors, critics and audience is presented in the context of popular art (cinema), where it is far more advanced than in the ‘field of science’.

Keywords: sciences, sociology, field of art, cultural competence, discourse, critique, language, creativity

In terms of colloquial understanding, the distinction between sociology and other forms of narrative regarding society does not demand any special substantiation. Sociology is a science, as opposed to literature, cinema, journalism and other forms of discourse whose conclusions are considered less objective, less binding and less ‘certain’. Apart – quite obviously – from the real or potential benefits and practical applications, it is on this that the social prestige of knowledge and trust in institutions of the world of science is grounded. Thus at this level of determining the status of sociology and non-sociology, the matter is relatively simple.

Yet despite the undoubted respect science enjoys within society (or at least enjoyed until recently), scientists – and sociologists are no exception here – occasionally drift into areas overstepping the borders of the fossilized ‘field of science’ (Bourdieu 1999: 31–51). Politics, journalism, essay writing

* The article was published in issue 2(14)2012 Socjologia emocji edited by Wojciech Pawlik.
and various forms of contemporary ‘blurred genres’ (Geertz 1983: 19–35),
civic engagement and social involvement, activities related directly or indi-
rectly to the ‘field of art’ (Bourdieu, Wacquant 2001: 76–99; Bourdieu 2001,
2003) are territories that come into contact with science, but when entering
them sociologists must accept that they then lose their privilege of prestige
resulting from the social recognition for science’s exclusive right to the com-
petence of what is ‘objective’, ‘genuine’ and ‘certain’. This specific position
of scientific knowledge and the status of scientists was attributed to their
work for as long as sociologists participated in discourse not going beyond
the monopoly of the ‘field of science’ they occupied.

Understanding sociological papers written in theoretical language requires
totally different language competences and knowledge than is the case with
research reports and analyses, written using natural language, that are com-
communicative in character – as such is expected of them – and that ulti-
mately deliver pragmatically understandable recommendations and directives
addressed to various subjects in public life.

In recent years this linguistic resignation from one’s own lexical knowl-
edge and theoretical explanations has contributed to an increase in the pop-
ularity and intelligibility of sociology among the public; articles providing
the findings of sociological surveys have more and more readers every year
(with such material today even functioning at a tabloid level), while non-
idiographic theoretical papers written in a specialist ‘sociolect’ are by their
very nature addressed to a narrow group of specialists, to academic sociolo-
gists. An obstacle to the broader reception of strictly sociological papers is
not only their artificial language incomprehensible to the average reader [and
sometimes unnecessarily complicated or even cognitively harmful (see An-
dreski 19722002; Sokal, Bricmont 1998) – author’s note], but also their
degree of abstraction: the formulation of hypotheses, evidence, argumenta-
tions and solutions occurs at such a highly formalised level in sociology, purged
of any empirical fact (and as such the link between a sociological paper and
the average reader’s experience is mainly invisible to the latter). There are of
course various approaches to writing in sociology, but we are talking here
about the most academic of versions, the most theorised and scientifically pure.

The language of literary narrative (in the traditional sense) is radically dif-
ferent. And it is not a matter of its lexicon, generally much more extensive yet
simultaneously less precise than in the language of science, but a matter of its
being fixed strongly in natural language, which by its very nature corresponds
to the language used by (or at least understood by) the mass public.

As for sociology, with the corpus of its own assumptions, theories, no-
tions and methodologies, the more academic and ‘scientific’ it becomes, the
less understandable it is for such an audience. Besides, there is no communi-
cative aberration here, as every well-developed science is to some degree
‘incomprehensible’ to the broader public, as understanding it requires a
mastery of the specific skills behind the historical and contemporary achieve-
ments of the scientific discipline.

Communication and scientific discourse therefore takes place within the
‘field of science’, it is homogenous in character, while one may only speak of
communicating with an audience beyond this field in the case of papers
popularising a discipline’s achievements or fulfilling the functions of a ser-
vice: in regard to the expectations of politics or the market. A consequence
of this in science (including sociology) is the specific functioning of scientific
discourse. In the closed ‘field of science’ there is no distinct, fixed division
into: 1) creators, 2) critics and reviewers, and 3) the ‘public’, the audience.

The readers of sociological papers are mainly other sociologists, who are
also their producers and their critics, their reviewers1. In the institutionalised
academic world, sociologists appear interchangeably in these three roles, as
highly specialised and professional competences are required in each of them,
competences not in the possession of those from outside of the ‘field of sci-
ence’. One could say that the situation in science is in this respect a situation
of highly advanced functional exchangeability – the reviewing and appraising
of the papers or achievements of other writers legitimised in science by one’s
own works, one’s scientific achievements and research experiments. The com-
petences for appraising therefore derive from one’s own oeuvre, and are ground-
ed in knowledge acquired through one’s own scientific research and output,
and are not – as is the case in the ‘field of art’ – the competences of creatively
sterile ‘criticism’, but fully professional in the interpretation and appraisal of
cultural texts compiled by others. As opposed to art, in science (and in soci-
ology) scholars are simultaneously – alternately – the creators, critics/review-
ers, and the audience of the papers that they collectively produce.

In the case of the ‘field of art’ (literature, cinema, theatre, etc.), creators
of culture sometimes do indeed undertake the tasks of theoretical criticism
and reviewing, but this is not their main assignment. It is not them, but a

1 The notion of scientific criticism (just as literary, theatrical, art criticism, etc.) denotes two types of
text: as interpretation and a form of textual hermeneutics it constitutes a sound text in the ‘field of
science’ (field of art), serving theoretical goals and the discipline’s development, or – in a more colloquial
understanding – it may become a text that is utilitarian in character, serving the expressing of appraisals
and reviewing of the usefulness, rightness and attractiveness of the text concerned. And although the
border between one type of text and the other is not always sharply defined, when writing in this paper
about scientific (and artistic) criticism, I will have in mind the former meaning, reserving the notion of
‘reviewing’ for texts of the latter kind.
separate, professionally educated cast of professional critics, with specialised theoretical competences (although – as we have pointed out – not necessarily talent or practical skills of their own), who are responsible in their jobs for assessing and reviewing literary, cinematic or theatrical output, etc. Their task is to control the ‘field of art’ – to determine the hierarchy, values, depth, beauty, and epistemological, ontological and ethical horizons, etc., according to a ‘theory of reputation’ adopted here and which, in their opinion, is currently binding (Becker 1982: 351–371).

One could of course say that elite art, or high art that does not reach a mass audience, is in a situation similar to that of science. However, this analogy is not fully entitled. In science there is no – as there is in art – division of occupational roles into those related to creativity (producing scientific knowledge and scientific papers) and those related exclusively to reviewing what is created. Neither is there a separate professional role of ‘reviewer’, of somebody who in the field of art fulfils the function of ‘legislator’ or ‘translator’ in the media and in culture institutions, and who as a person possessing greater theoretical competence in regard to art, literature or cinema than the public (and frequently the creator as well) appraises and ‘explains’ cultural texts addressed to the public (Bauman 1989: 127–140).

These structural differences mean that sociology as a science is not – to the same degree as is art – an object of negotiation between the scientific taste and preferences of one’s own circle and the taste and preferences of the ‘barbaric’ public (Bourdieu 2005: 43–45). There quite simply is not such a broad audience for whose needs theoretical sociological papers should be assessed and explained.

A sociological paper that reaches a wide audience, undergoing theoretical and linguistic simplification along the way and yielding to the demands of persuasiveness, loses in the public’s perception that type of halo of superiority of competence that it was guaranteed by its theorisation and academic character. By becoming a utilitarian text, it enters the utilitarian discourse – and therefore begins to be subjected to the same appraisal and reviewing as non-scientific papers. So-called media sociologists are no longer treated as impartial, dependable, objective and neutral, etc., or at least lose a great deal of their earlier impeccability.

The relation of cognitive and competence-related imbalance is then replaced by a horizontal relation; a sociological paper, by becoming understandable to the general public, thereby becomes for the public an article situated cognitively ‘within reach’. Such epistemological positioning starts tempting politicians, journalists and the broader public to interpret it as an article that is ‘one of many’, and therefore from the same, horizontal order
of discourse in which reviewing and appraising from the perspective of the public (understood as a position which in terms of competences is *equally valid*) is acceptable. As such the epistemological and status-related ‘breaking the spell’ of sociology in the eyes of the public has two kinds of consequence: on the one hand, it enables discourse reaching beyond the closed ‘field of science’ and communication between sociologists and the public outside of this field, which is in itself a positive phenomenon, while on the other hand a boomerang effect of this process is the risk of sociologists losing the prestige and authority that remained unthreatened in the hermetic character of their professional language and theoretical paradigms. Going beyond the borders of competence of their own discipline established in their circle also means that such sociological papers are subjected to a different appraisal than those that retain a more neutral, scientific character.

On the level of scientific discourse, and within the limits of theoretical and methodological competences, a sociological paper is mainly ‘beyond the reach’ of the non-professional public. A change in the language, simplification and trivialisation of the scientific conclusions as well as the ideologising of a paper makes it easy for the public to redefine its status: it turns from an epistemologically inaccessible paper into an article the public can discuss, question or acknowledge, and which – as the audience – the public gains the right to review.

The penetration of a sociological (or quasi-sociological) paper among the general public is rarely the result of its being revolutionary in terms of theory or scientific method. If at all, then interpretative frameworks from the order of pragmatism, politics, or religious or ideological positions are at work here. To review a sociological paper from such points of view, the public does not need scientific competences (i.e. theoretical, methodological, or related to the discipline’s achievements). Competences in the areas from whose perspective the scientific (sociological) paper is to be appraised are sufficient.

The process of relativizing the competences of creators, reviewers and the audience is, for science, as risky as it is stimulating. In the field of popular art, this relativisation makes it possible today for almost anybody to present themselves as an ‘oracle’ entitled to appraise practically any text. Reviewers cease to count for the public as ‘meaningful others’ and competent guides to cultural texts. The public ‘has its own opinion’, and appraises in its own way both the reviewers and the texts they review.

Media discussions related to the launch of two controversial movies in Poland in 2012 provide an example of the extremity of this type of aesthetic relativisation. The producer of one of them, entitled *Kac Wawa*, unable to
come to terms with a review publicly crucifying his work, accused the critic of violating the principles of ethics in journalism with the extreme nature of the judgments expressed in the review, and also threatened to sue him for financial losses resulting from such a faultfinding critique. The woman director of the second controversial movie, Big Love, a film also exceptionally harshly criticised, together with the critic who reviewed it, became the key figures of media reports and online discourse. An open letter in defence of the reviewer, entitled ‘Experts in culture apologise for Barbara Białowas’, was signed by 164 culture experts, while an online group was established on Facebook as the ‘guardians of the reputation’ of the review’s author.

In order to illustrate the emotional temperature of the discussions on this matter, and the degree of relativisation of people’s judgments, I cite below a portion of the posts published by the online community. For now they may constitute the topic of research for a sociologist, but perhaps before long sociologists themselves – especially those appearing in the role of so-called media sociologists – will also become the protagonists of similar discussions:

“The movie wasn’t a world masterpiece, but the review uses a few arguments that seem contrived. I’d like to see reviews by M. Walkiewicz for movies such as Pulp Fiction, ideally before it was showered with rewards. I wonder if he’d criticise the ‘disjointed threads’ there? ;)” (Bormann81).

“F*** me, what a critic!!!!” (marcin8114).

“I think Ms Białowas has a much bigger problem interpreting the criticism than the critic had interpreting her film. The review was spot on, the movie really is awful trash and I wasted some 20 zł on the cinema ticket :/” (damianzajda).

“As far as I’m concerned Ms Białowas’s conversation with the review’s author was a total failure. A good film stands up for itself. No matter what the review, good, bad or hopeless, the director should still retain at least the remnants of their dignity and not get embroiled in any discussion with the critic, but just accept it; sometimes criticism can be helpful. Evidently Ms

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3 http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kulturoznawcy-przepraszaj%C4%85-za-Barbar%C4%99-Bia%C5%82ow%C4%85s/308318109234881

4 http://www.filmweb.pl/reviews/Trzeba+zabi%C4%87+t%C4%99+mi%C5%82o%C5%9B%C4%87-12447

Białowas has some kind of complex in regard to this movie since she tried so hard to defend it, thereby further ruining herself and her ‘masterpiece’” (killx-annette).

“A review appropriate for what was happening in the movie; it’s worth drawing attention to those sex scenes, which really were boring, just like the entire plot in this film, no sense to it, I don’t know what the director wanted to achieve by shooting this movie, because she hasn’t seduced me with it” (Pasterz21).

“The critic wanted to shine with his ‘intelligence’, but he hasn’t managed. Wooooowwww, how he manages to lambast the film... Faaaaantastic :/ sad xD” (aniulka96).

“I stuck 15 minutes of the movie, while I read the review to the end as it doesn’t take one and a half hours, but I feel just as exhausted by it as by the film. It generalises, it’s unprofessional, relies heavily on emotions. Walkiewicz voiced his opinion, and probably felt that lambasting the young director would win him applause. That didn’t happen. The entire situation – in the context of the now famous debate between him and the director – proves that mainly only those deserving each other jump at each other’s throats” (Sony_West).

“The review is a little insane, but that’s just what makes it good to read. As for the film itself, then I have to say that I also noticed those same mistakes as the critic, although I wouldn’t be able to express that so accurately and bluntly. [...] in my opinion those erotic scenes were the worst moments in the film, above all they were badly done. I felt embarrassed watching the middle of the room from the camera’s perspective as the two actors ‘screwed’ in various positions, and in addition that projection in the background, when I saw it I almost burst out laughing. Instead of having such a backdrop through the window as showing the passage of time, they could have e.g. interwoven a few foreplay scenes into the storyline, in various places, and left it at that. Because watching what was practically intercourse is almost pornography, and somehow that’s an affront to my sense of aesthetics and my desire to watch something. So the idea for the movie was quite interesting, though it hardly had a well-developed story, but despite that and a few other mistakes the movie will certainly stick in my mind” (sandrusiek_vanillka).

“Terrible, what a review! Words for their own sake, veritable graphomania. Sometimes I’m afraid myself of my own over-intellectualised comments, but the author behind this review went the whole way! I can understand somebody not liking this movie, that some people enjoy reading such severe criticism, and that such articles are written for those people, but when accusing a film of having no logic it would be worth having one’s own review based on the Polish canons of the art of the written word. [...] As for poking
fun at the bed scenes, as love ‘a la Bravo’, then as I see it either the critic has read too much *Bravo*, has watched too many pornography flicks, or is attempting to cure his own complexes with such criticism. I know it’s hard to believe, but love and sex like that read about in *Bravo* also exists. If the director had wanted to tell us the love story of a typical Pole, somewhere in a high-rise estate, in the dark and beneath a duvet, then she wouldn’t have been able to show the story of Maciek and Emilka as they’re not characters from a drab high-rise estate, they’re not examples of typical Poles, just statistics, instead they are specific people, the protagonists of THIS story. I understand that this also is difficult for some people to grasp” (konrad_azrael).

“A good and honest review. And to confirm that, I recommend the interviews with Ms Bia³ow´s and Mr Walkiewicz. The quarrelsome director attacks, indicating a complete inability to read and understand, to conduct a discussion, and even to use proper Polish” (civred).

“One of the BEST reviews on filmweb. My total congratulations. Couldn’t have said it better!!!” (eu_geniusz1).

“A hopeless review, its only goal being to show its author’s literary artist-ry” (_Lenka_fw).

“I agree 100% with the review. As a subject for a movie – OK. But not shown in this way” (buszasz).

“A very aggressive review, ticking off the points well… the movie should be a real hit in rural areas and small towns” (jagode).

As can be seen in the quotes given above, the diagnosis of relativism as the state of the spirit of contemporary culture expressed almost thirty years ago by Allan Bloom also reflects quite well the mood of contemporary on-line and media discourse. There have always been epistemological conflicts in the ‘field of science’ and aesthetic-axiological conflicts in the ‘field of art’, but their multitude and diversity, and at the same time the acceptance of this as an obvious state, is – at least in Poland – a relatively new phenomenon. The social sciences, including sociology, have as a result found themselves in a situation that is new to them.

As for the ‘field of science’, these processes are not entirely spontaneous. On the one hand, the bureaucratisation of the management of science and its parameterisation is forcing an ever more specialised circulation of science on authors of sociological papers, closed within hermetic and ideally English-language journals (more viable in bibliometric categories than the publication of monographs, textbooks or collective volumes), and on the other – for their works to be linked to the market, to acquire an educational quality and display involvement in cultural transformations, to be useful for the market or politically, etc. In the first case – sociological papers will become
even more elite and completely inaccessible to a broader audience. In the second – they will lose their scientific identity, the identity of their discipline, thereby becoming an element of the pluralised market of intermixed cultural texts. And they will be subjected to the same reviewing and appraisal by journalists and representatives of ‘people’s competence’ as is currently the case with texts in the ‘field of art’.

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A Good Job the World is Not Just America

(Jacek Kurczewski (ed.), *Sociologia pojednania [The Sociology of Reconciliation]*, Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Kraków 2012, 240 pp; J. Kurczewski, A. Herman (ed.), *Antagonizm i pojednanie w środowiskach wielokulturowych [Antagonism and Reconciliation in Multicultural Communities]*, Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, Gdańsk 2012, 536 pp)

According to data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS) based on the national census of 2011, almost 1.47 m inhabitants of Poland declared ethnicity other than Polish. The largest number of them described their identity as Silesian (847,000), followed by Kashubian (233,000), German (148,000) and Ukrainian (51,000). Compared to the previous census, this showed an increase in the number of people claiming to belong to an ethnic minority, regardless of whether or not this was a minority officially recognised by the Polish state. Two hypotheses may be used to explain the reasons for the increase in numbers of those claiming to have double identities, Polish and non-Polish, as well as the rise in the number of those not considering themselves Poles at all, yet living within the territory of the Republic of Poland.

The first is related to the sudden growth in the non-Polish population, covering people who decided to settle in Poland — although the statistics indicate that the balance of migration over the last few years has been close to zero. Therefore, in order to explain the higher percentage of the population declaring a non-Polish ethnicity, another hypothesis must be posed. Rather than the effect of a population inflow from other countries into Poland, this would be that it is an increase in respondents’ inclination to admit...

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Aleksandra Niżyńska

to an ethnic identity other than Polish. One could assume that the room for admitting openly to membership in an ethnic minority has increased in Polish society. As for the questions of whether such an interpretation is legitimate, and how one should analyse the space of multiple identities functioning in parallel, it would be worth seeking their answers in the publications reviewed here.

*Socjologia pojednania [The Sociology of Reconciliation],* edited by Prof. Jacek Kurczewski, constituting a publication broadening the discussions conducted in the *ad hoc* session organised as part of the 14th Congress of the Polish Sociological Association in Kraków in 2010, and *Antagonizm i pojednanie w środowiskach wielokulturowych [Antagonism and Reconciliation in Multicultural Communities]*, edited by Prof. Jacek Kurczewski and Dr Aleksandra Herman, tackle the issues of how societies that are deeply divided yet exist as a whole actually function. The sources of division are of historical, religious and political natures, and most frequently manifest themselves in conflict between two groups differing in their ethnicity or religion. This conflict erupts at certain moments, adopting the form of a specific ‘holy day’. J. Kurczewski, drawing on the concept of Victor Turner, writes that it is a massacre that “puts people into a liminal state in which the hitherto structure vanishes” (Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 203). However, this ‘black holy day’ is actually an interlude in the everyday lives of the local communities investigated by the team of Prof. Kurczewski’s collaborators. This event, or series of certain incidents, has an enormous impact on the functioning of the population inhabiting the borderlands, while at the same time ‘normal’ life carries on in these places. An enormous strength of both the research conducted and the publication, i.e. the effect of this research, is the presentation of these two aspects of life in multicultural communities – of their uniqueness related to the diversity of people living there and the everyday lives of their inhabitants.

A perfect example of such an approach is provided in Aleksandra Herman’s analyses of bi-denominational local communities ([Top-down Discord and Bottom-up Reconciliation. The Institutional Order of Churches and Everyday Life Processes of Believers], in: Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 71–87; and *Reconciliation in Everyday Life and its Conditioning in Bi-denominational Communities. A Comparative Study*, in: Kurczewski, Herman, ed. 2012: 19–89) Based on research conducted in the village of Goleszów and small town of Stryków, she describes family life, neighbourly relations, the education process, local politics and the specific ceremonies and holy days celebrated in the two localities. By showing how differences related to the two groups’ denominational distinction are manifested in specific areas of everyday life,
she draws attention simultaneously to the bottom-up reconciliation through unceasing dialogue in different everyday situations and special occasions, such as religion lessons at school or a wedding ceremony.

Adrianna Mica also writes in her articles about the touchpoint between everyday life with its rituals and the process of reconciliation (Embedded Football as Reconciliation. Purposive and Unexpected Sequences, in: Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 185–200; Reconciliation via a Scapegoat – Public Space and Football in Cluj-Napoca in Romania, in: Kurczewski, Herman, ed. 2012: 271–313). She confronts the topic of sports, citing interesting papers regarding political reconciliation via football. Using foreign examples, she analyses the ‘absence of reconciliation’ in the Romanian city of Cluj-Napoca from the perspective of ‘conflict-triggering ethnicisation’, involving such as the support of nationalistic moods in local supporters’ groups.

A feature making both publications in question valuable is their tackling of the issue of reconciliation not only from the perspective of the Polish borderlands, as is evidenced by the articles by Adrianna Mica as well as articles by Władysław Wołkó and Jacek Kurczewski on ethnic relations between Latvians, Poles and Russians in Daugavpils (The Collective Identity of the Poles of Present-Day Daugavpils: Issues for Historical Reconciliation with Latvians and Russians, in: Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 171–184; and The Poles, Latvians and Russians of Present-Day Daugavpils: The Issue of Historical Reconciliation, in: Kurczewski, Herman, ed. 2012: 215–270). The universal character of these books is also related to the theoretical contemplation to be found within. As such neither The Sociology of Reconciliation nor Antagonism and Reconciliation in Multicultural Communities come across as research project reports, but form the theoretical framework of discourse regarding reconciliation. The fact that Joanna Kurczewska grappled with the topic of methodology in research into reconciliation (National Reconciliation as Ritual and Drama (Benefits from Historical Anthropology), in: Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 23–36; and An Alternative Methodological Remarks: The Local Community in Michael Herzfeld’s New Anthropology, in: Kurczewski, Herman, ed. 2012: 391–408) allows the conclusions deriving from the two publications to be used in research into reconciliation not only in multicultural communities, but also in groups affected by division arising due to other criteria (e.g. economic or worldview). The perspective of historical anthropology and performativity as a category enabling a better description, and as a consequence a better understanding, of the process of reconciliation constitutes an important contribution to research into reconciliation.

A unique perspective in reflections over reconciliation is offered by Aneta Gawkowska in her articles (Reconciliatio et paenitentia – Pope John Paul
II’s Teaching on Reconciliation, in: Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 37–49; and The Pontificate and Reconciliation of Pope John Paul II, in: Kurczewski, Herman, ed. 2012: 353–390). She draws on John Paul II’s theories and religious practice to show in what way Catholic theology may provide inspiration for research into the quarrelling and reconciling of parties at discord. Just as Joanna Kurczewska in her analyses, she does not leave the reader with only her theoretical contemplations, but indicates a practical dimension in the teaching of reconciliation. In the second of the cited articles A. Gawkowska analyses John Paul II’s pontificate and his involvement in resolving conflicts in various corners of the world by peaceful means. Among others, she refers to the Polish Pope’s ‘peaceful intervention’ in Chile, and his strivings towards an ecumenical dialogue within Christianity as well as between different religions.

The way in which both the theoretical legacy of Polish 20th-century sociology and new works by authors from outside of Poland are utilised constitutes a tremendous strength of these publications. In the articles penned by Jacek Kurczewski (Conclusion: Anomie, Reconciliation and Identity, in: Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 201–218; and Conclusion. Antagonism and Reconciliation in Multicultural Communities, in: Kurczewski, Herman, ed. 2012: 409–474) an important role is given to references to the works of Józef Chalasiński and Antonina Kłoskowska. The notion of order and its unbalancing, its shaking, which according to Chalasiński leads to the eruption of ‘revolution in the settlement’ (Kurczewski, Herman 2012: 416–421), is also analysed by Kurczewski using Victor Turner’s categories of ‘holy day’ and ‘ritual’ (Kurczewski 2012: 203).

However, the wealth of empirical material on which these publications in the field of the sociology of reconciliation are based should not be forgotten. Broad-ranging research conducted in Cieszyn Silesia, the Eastern Borderlands and in the Opole region provides the ground for reconstructing the space of conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe. Conflicts whose genesis may largely be dated back to World War II. As Yurii Andrukhovych wrote: “[...] Central European fear is balanced historically between two fears: the Germans are coming, the Russians are coming. Central European death is a prison or labour camp death, and in addition it is mass death, Massenmord, a ‘zachistka’ [clearance]; a Central European journey is an escape. But from where to where? From the Russians to the Germans? Or from the Germans to the Russians? It’s a good job that the world also has America for such circumstances” (Andrukhovych 2001: 43). The research by Prof. Kurczewski’s team is not about the conflicts, but the space after a conflict – a situation far-removed from the mythical American dream. It reveals the ambiguity of
being a German, a Russian, or a Pole in land inhabited by many nationalities. Studies in the field of sociology of reconciliation show how specific local communities coped and continue to cope in the face of various geopolitical conditions. The books published in 2012 are an excellent combination of sociology of local life and a global historical perspective. Usually, however, it is history that sets the tone for descriptions of borderland space. A major quality of these two publications is their focus on the now, on how the Mariavites residing in Stryków, the Poles in Český Těšín or the Germans in the Opole region live today. Thanks to the living language, fascinating local histories and the diversity in the culture and customs, this post-conflict world ploughed by violence and human tragedies also has a positive side. The authors of the articles in both books seem to be saying, paraphrasing Andrukhovych, that “it’s a good job that the world is not only America”.

The research presented in these books has the immense quality of combining different fields from within the social sciences and the humanities making up the concept of the sociology of reconciliation. The sociology of everyday life that the research team drew from, focusing on minor and seemingly trivial aspects of everyday life in the communities covered, is undoubtedly a significant perspective. For example thanks to Vladislav Volkov’s scrupulous analysis of dishes eaten by the residents of Daugavpils in Latvia, the reader learns what dishes comprised Latgalian cuisine, and what skabputra is (“[…] grey peas or barley groats with milk, boiled till soft and fermented within 12 days after adding thick buttermilk or curds, served cold with sour milk or cream, and also as a side dish with grey peas”) (Kurczewski, Herman, red. 2012: 236), as well as what Russians, Poles and Latvians in those areas eat. A perusal of the following pages reveals to the reader the institution of ‘protraction’ in the case of mixed marriages in communities home to Mariavites and Catholics, and an explanation of how this differs from the ‘crossing’ functioning in an Evangelical-Catholic community (Kurczewski, Herman 2012: 73–76).

The sociology of reconciliation in the form proposed by Prof. Kurczewski also draws on the legacy of historical anthropology. Focusing attention not on historical facts but on cultural rituals rooted in history enables a better understanding of the process of reconciliation. Whereas a conflict is easier to present in categories of historical events, analysis of reconciliation that is unceasingly underway – though undoubtedly set in history – requires somewhat different theoretical categories. These are described by Joanna Kurczewska in her articles.

In the publications covered by this review, the sociology of reconciliation is complemented by a philosophical and theological analysis. The themes
of Pope John Paul II’s works and activities related to world peace, recalled earlier on in this review, allow one to look at the issue of reconciliation from a universal point of view.

A departure from pure history towards historical anthropology, and having the philosophical reflection supplemented with religious trains of thought lends both publications originality, and testifies to the uniqueness of the field of science that the sociology of reconciliation constitutes. In addition both volumes include articles drawing on the legacy of such fields as media analysis or the sociology of law. The former is evident in articles dedicated to the celebrative unveiling of plaques commemorating the tragic histories of Poles and Ukrainians in Pawłokoma (Halyna Werniuk, The Case of Pawłokoma – an Attempt at Polish-Ukrainian Reconciliation, in: Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 143–156) and a tour in the footsteps of Stepan Bandera (Dariusz Wojakowski, Alla Karnaukh, Frames of Polish-Ukrainian Discourse in the Borderland. The Case of a Tour Commemorating Stepan Bandera in 2009, in: Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 157–170). Both are about difficult Polish-Ukrainian relations, while the authors chose to analyse them through a study of the Polish and Ukrainian press describing the same events. This measure best reflects the necessity of departing from the perspective of objective historical facts and focusing on local narratives. Thanks to an analysis of the press and media discourse in the two antagonised communities it was possible to reconstruct how (and if at all) the reconciliation was proceeding.

Another perspective that could not by omitted in the concept of sociology of reconciliation presented by Jacek Kurczewski is sociology of law. Małgorzata Fuszara tackles the issue of compensation for so-called ‘beyond-the-Bug-river’ property (Organisations of the Resettled from the Eastern Borderlands – Reconciliation or Resentment?, in: Kurczewski, ed. 2012: 127–142; Reconciliation Without Conflict? Compensation for Property Beyond the Bug River, in: Kurczewski, Herman, ed. 2012: 313–354). The complex situation related to legislation passed by the authorities of both the Polish People’s Republic and the Third Republic of Poland became yet more convoluted following rulings by the European Human Rights Tribunal and the Constitutional Tribunal. The articles by Małgorzata Fuszara present the legal situation related to compensation for property left behind in the Borderlands area, but do not constitute purely a description of the legal state. Interviews conducted with leaders of borderland organisations reveal the level of legal awareness among the people from the Borderlands and how the compensation regulations work in practice.

As can be seen from the cursory description above of the various articles comprising the two volumes dealing with reconciliation, analysis of the cul-
tural diversity also demanded immense variety in the research perspectives. Thanks to the articles by Jacek Kurczewski, crowning both of these books, the reader is not left with just a set of a dozen or so articles laying out the subject of reconciliation in its various aspects. He presents a concept of culture of peace based on values, methods and goals appropriate to a specific community and serving to curtail conflictual behaviours (Kurczewski, Herman, ed. 2012: 471–473).

*The Sociology of Reconciliation* and *Antagonism and Reconciliation in Multicultural Communities* are worth reading as complementary publications, yet simultaneously each with its own separate values. In the former the emphasis is on presenting the findings of research and presenting as broad a spectrum of the issues in question as possible. As for the second book, it contains fewer but more comprehensive articles, with a clearly emphasised theoretical thread. At the same time it is worth pointing out that these books may constitute the beginning of academic discussion of reconciliation taking numerous scientific disciplines and outlooks into account. Karolina Wigura’s book *Wina narodów. Przebaczenie jako strategia polityki [The Guilt of Nations. Forgiveness as a Political Strategy]*, also published in 2012, shows that one can count on a growth in scientific reflection over the issue of reconciliation and forgiveness in multicultural communities. A look at contemporary culture confronting the subject-matter in question could constitute a perspective lacking in publications to date. The movie *Róża* by Wojciech Smarzowski, which won the Warsaw Film Festival in 2011, or the novel by Kazimierz Orłoś, *Dom pod Lutnią [The Lute House]*, recognised by the monthly magazine *Miesięcznik Literacki Książki* as the best Polish prose of 2012, illustrate the situation of the population inhabiting the Masuria region just after World War II. Subsequent publications in the field of sociology of reconciliation could also present the interest in antagonism and reconciliation that exists in contemporary Polish culture.

**References**


On Experiencing the Holocaust and on the Human Condition

(Marta Cobel-Tokarska, Bezłudna wyspa, nora, grób. Wojenne kryjówki Żydów w okupowanej Polsce [Desert Island, Burrow, Grave. Wartime Hiding Places of Jews in Occupied Poland], IPN, Warsaw 2012, 299 pages + 24 pages of illustrations)

A fascinating journey lies in store for readers of Marta Cobel-Tokarska’s book bearing the intriguing title: Bezłudna wyspa, nora, grób. Wojenne kryjówki Żydów w okupowanej Polsce [Desert Island, Burrow, Grave. Wartime Hiding Places of Jews in Occupied Poland]. It features beautiful, understandable and precise language, a clear and coherent structure, and pertinent and inspiring categories of analysis. The author proves herself an attentive and empathetic reader of testimonies of the Holocaust, while at the same time an astute researcher, skilfully analysing and interpreting the phenomenon of hiding places for Jews during the years of the German occupation. She manages “to say something new about the Jewish hiding places” (p. 262) – and not only about the hideouts themselves, but also about experiencing the Holocaust and about the human condition.

At the beginning of this review I would like to share a general reflection that comes to mind after reading this book: it is a reflection regarding sociology and its current state as a scientific discipline. This is a thoroughly sociological work, seen above all in the categories of sociological analysis used by Cobel-Tokarska: social space, experience, home and homelessness, marginalisation, interaction and social distance. The author’s sociological imagination is an enormous asset of this work: the way in which she treats the specified area of research – the issue of the Holocaust and a certain, seemingly rather narrow, slice of human experience. C. W. Mills wrote about this particular sociological capacity, which – in my opinion – Marta Cobel-Tokarska has come to possess to the highest degree, as it “enables us to grasp

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history and biography, and the relations between the two in society”\(^1\). Furthermore, she refers to sociological deliberations and research, and directly cites concepts put forward by such sociologists as Irving Goffman, Peter Berger, Florian Znaniecki, Piotr Sztompka and others. Worth emphasising here is precisely the fact that the sociology in this work comes across as a fully mature science, no longer needing to clutch tight to the discipline’s clearly marked borders (as tended to be the case earlier on, when it was a young science fighting for recognition), not afraid of entering the regions of related disciplines in the social sciences, and even more broadly – the humanities. Marta Cobel-Tokarska practices precisely such a sociology, ‘free of complexes’, a sociology of broad horizons.

She examines the issue of Jewish hideouts from various angles. As such, alongside sociological concepts, she also employs anthropological and semantic analysis, and does not eschew the architectural point of view; she takes philosophical and theological reflection into account, refers to the findings of research in criminology and psychology (including environmental psychology and the psychology of architecture) and gives examples provided in literature, not to mention that she also makes use of what has been determined by historians.

Although the topic of the book is exactly as suggested by its title, i.e. the hideouts used by Jews in occupied Poland, the author does not lose sight of the broad and historical context of the experience of the Holocaust.

Marta Cobel-Tokarska raises a problem in the preface: “to what degree at all may the past be the subject of a sociological work?” (p. 9), before proceeding to give arguments in favour of a positive answer. Further on, in the Introduction, she expresses the fundamental questions (for determining the area of the research) answered in this publication: “Why hideouts?”, “Why space?” She situates her own research approach within the paradigm of the sociology of everyday life, and states (in a conviction that I share) that “investigating the Holocaust through analysis of people’s experience of everyday life [...] is a new and fascinating approach” (p. 11). She considers space “the fundamental category describing and determining the human world, yet quite rarely used in sociological papers” (p. 13). The phenomenon of Jewish hideouts during the occupation has indeed belonged till now among those issues relatively poorly identified and described, while its analysis in relation to space – thanks to the book being reviewed here – really does seem a “new way of talking about the Holocaust” (p. 13). However, as M. Cobel-Tokarska emphasises several times, she is not interested in a his-

On Experiencing the Holocaust and on the Human Condition

torical description of the phenomenon of hiding places (although with her work she is, after all, making a significant contribution to the history of the Holocaust). More important for her is the “human dimension, the fortunes of specific people. […] Those involved in the events and the authors of the testimonies analysed here are above all Jews who, at some moment of life during the war, chose a hiding place as a means of survival, regardless of their earlier or later fortunes” (p. 15). In the approach adopted, the “view of the testimonies’ authors” proves the most important. Cobel-Tokarska painstakingly recreates all elements available in the materials analysed providing answers to the question: “What was a hiding place for those hiding in it?”; how did they experience the space in which they came to live in order to survive? Therefore she analyses the descriptions and metaphors used by those hiding away, such as: “desert island”, being a “Robinson”, “Noah’s Ark”, “an animal’s den” (being “hunted prey”, “game”), a “grave” and a “prison”, or on the other hand terms such as a “port”, “anchor”, “shelter” or an ersatz “home”. At the same time it is an analysis of both the content conveyed by such terms and the associations they evoke, as well as their semantic and sociological analysis. “A description of the space of the hideout,” she writes, “cannot be […] separated from attempts at defining their existential experience, at naming their fate using available models and metaphors” (p. 163).

The goals of her work have been precisely defined: “having defined space as the key category determining the description,” Marta Cobel-Tokarska’s intention was to outline the characteristic qualities of the Jews’ hiding places, describe the complexity of this phenomenon, look at it from as many angles as possible and trace the related social mechanisms functioning at that time. Her “goal was also to achieve an anthropological interpretation of the hiding place as a place given specific meaning” (p. 25).

The structure of this book is a consequence of the assumptions and goals adopted at the beginning. This was exhaustively described in the Introduction (pp. 25–29), and also in the Ending, recapitulating on the content of the entire work and containing conclusions drawn from the analysis (pp. 261–267). Apart from the sections just mentioned, the book also comprises four very comprehensive chapters. “Starting from an objective typology of the phenomenon, through a description of its place in man’s social and individual experience, and an attempt to capture the meanings given to it”, the author reaches the “key role of hideouts (apart from their fundamental function of saving lives) in helping Jews overcome the social status imposed on them” (p. 29). The work concludes with an exhaustive bibliography and annexe, containing unique iconographic materials – namely: photographs and illustrations of hiding places and shelters (24 pages at the end of the book).
Ms Cobel-Tokarska displays exceptional knowledge of literature on the subject, has mastered the research skills (sociological, anthropological and also historical), clear-sightedly analyses her sources and also takes a penetrating look at the issues under investigation from various perspectives.

The excellent style and language used here deserve highlighting: brief sentences and accurate wording, reflecting well the sense of the reality, the experiences and the emotions described in the work (e.g. the description of the essence of hiding places given on pages 116–118). The book has no shortage of sharp and horrifying descriptions, yet her language is vivid and precise, while at the same time remaining very balanced.

I feel an affinity to the author’s approach, in which she “interprets” the meanings of a hiding place, when it is “[…] about searching for the kind of perspective that lets you notice something important, something we hadn’t thought about before when reading the texts – evidence of those times. When talking about certain matters using different language, we uncover a hidden side to reality” (p. 207). Another invaluable quality of the analysis presented in the book is the usage of various types of comparison, making it possible to reach unexposed meanings and aspects of the reality being described (e.g. hiding place and prison, hiding place and home).

The anthropological categories of analysis applied by M. Cobel-Tokarska may be useful for the sociology of space. They reveal new meanings, manifold unexpected aspects worth taking into consideration, also in relation to the space of places other than the specific places of this work, places of hiding. The author’s deliberations pointedly convince one that “Space without people cannot be described” (p. 267). After all, when writing about the space of hiding places she touches mainly on issues of the “social solitude of the people hiding” (p. 266).

* * *

To conclude it would be befitting to add certain critical comments, even if of a minor nature, to avoid giving the reader an impression of single-sided flattery. I have to admit that this is not an easy task when dealing with such an interesting, creative, inspiring and original book, and additionally so when the reviewer shares the author’s assumptions in regard to the research approach, the manner in which to treat the sources, the methodology applied, the procedures for analysing the empirical material, attitude towards the reality investigated, and caution in drawing conclusions:

1. I consider the author’s interchangeable usage of the terms ‘typology’ and ‘classification’ unfortunate. The first chapter is not of a ‘classificatory’ character (p. 35), but is ‘typological’ (constituting a description and present-
ing types of hiding place according to a variety of objective criteria). Maria Ossowska wrote of the differences between typology and classification: “[…] typology is not obliged to fulfil the demands set in regard to classification. It does not have to be either exhaustive or disjunctive. Classification must break down a broader scope into smaller divisions. Not so with typology. Here the assembling of one type among the phenomena investigated is a heuristic tool in the hands of the researcher.”

Besides, Marta Cobel-Tokarska writes that the categories she mentions “are not separate” (p. 49). Her typology of hiding places is meant to further the “ordering of the set of characteristic features helpful in describing the phenomenon of hiding places”. It is also a type of research tool, and helps the author outline the field of research and to show this particular phenomenon “in its entire diversity”.

2. I also feel that certain phrasing, in which she speaks of “people” and not directly of “Poles”, is unfortunate or overly euphemistic. For example, in the description of hideouts in the forests, we read that: “The biggest threat here was that of other people who penetrated the forest world” (p. 99).

3. On page 123, M. Cobel-Tokarska writes: “Although most of society was probably indifferent to the fate of the Jews, news about them was in general circulation”. The thesis that the attitude in Polish society towards the Jews during the wartime occupation was one of indifference is given quite explicitly here (despite the word “probably”), yet the author does not cite any historical studies at this point. Indifference may also come in different shades. When writing about the attitude shown by most of French society towards the Jews in French territory under German occupation, Foss and Steinberg used the phrase “positive indifference”, as this type of attitude of indifference could have involved them not noticing the presence of Jews hiding in the vicinity (“kindly” not noticing, so as not to cause them harm). This is unlike “negative” indifference, an unkind attitude expressed in the unfriendly turning away from those in need. Besides, M. Cobel-Tokarska may have had “negative indifference” in mind, since she wrote that: “Hiding places belonged in the category of unwanted, uncomplimentary, troublesome space” (p. 123).

I firmly believe that Marta Cobel-Tokarska’s book is an example of an excellent study in the field of sociology (both historical sociology and the sociology of space). The original and ingenious (possibly even pioneering) model of analysis proposed by the author was not only presented well, but

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Małgorzata Melchior

also executed very well, interestingly and penetratingly. The book reflects the latest tendencies of broad research covering the Holocaust, based on sociological and anthropological analyses.
News and Conference Reports

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Conference report:
‘Non-normative Family Practices’*

On 25 and 26 May 2012 the University of Warsaw was the venue for a Polish nationwide interdisciplinary scientific conference, ‘Non-normative Family Practices’. It was organised by the Doctorate Research Group ‘Gender & Queer’ at the University of Warsaw’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences, in collaboration with this Institute and the same university’s American Studies Center. The conference was held under the patronage of the University of Warsaw’s Committee for Combating Discrimination. The following comprised the conference’s academic committee: Prof. Małgorzata Fuszara, Institute of Applied Social Sciences, University of Warsaw; Prof. Krystyna Slany, Institute of Sociology, Jagiellonian University; Prof. Anna Kwak, Institute of Applied Social Sciences, University of Warsaw; Dr Joanna Mizielińska, professor at the Sociology Institute of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, and Dr Tomasz Basiuk, American Studies Center of the University of Warsaw.

Conference Topic

The rapid changes within the area of families and intimate relationships over the last few decades have led to a departure from the family constellation as traditionally understood (the nuclear family) in favour of alternative forms such as cohabitation, LAT (living apart together), or DINKS (double income no kids), which has contributed to the bounds of the very notion of ‘family’

* The article was published in issue 1(13)2012 Kobiety, migracja i praca edited by Małgorzata Fuszara.
moving further apart. There is growing discussion, especially in western teachings regarding the family (related to the New Family Studies movement developing since the nineteen seventies), of the need to create a new approach in theory and research that would take into account the actual diversity in ways of understanding and forming a family, and that would enable a real departure from the ideologised and normativising concept of the ‘family’ in favour of the identification of individual practices and family narratives of individuals. However, in Polish discourse regarding the contemporary family – both public and academic – the phenomena and problems discussed are defined in terms of a crisis in or decline of the family, while non-normative family practices – increasingly often demanding legitimisation – are treated as disturbing developments. In the meantime, constellations alternative to the normative model seem to increasingly reflect individuals’ changing needs. Therefore, in moving away from generalising and universalisation, the following questions would be worth posing: How do contemporary family practices look in reality? How is the comprehension and creation of family bonds changing? How do the members themselves of these families and relationships perceive the bonds they create?

The fundamental goal of the conference was to attempt to show the diversity of Polish research initiatives in studies into non-normative family constellations, frequently marginalised in the prevalent public and academic discourse focusing on the traditional nuclear family. It also aimed to bring together the academic community dealing with such studies. The conference, an opportunity for exchanging thoughts and experiences as well as a broader look at the condition of research regarding the non-normative family, may contribute to the development of interdisciplinary research projects in the field of family studies in Poland over the coming years.

The opening speeches were delivered by Prof. Małgorzata Fuszara and Prof. Krystyna Slany, following an introductory word by Prof. Jacek Kurczewski. Approximately 55 papers were delivered or available for reading during the conference, while the academic sessions featured an abundance of interesting speeches and inspiring discussions, the latter frequently not drawing to an end in the conference room, but ‘enduring’ in the corridors, during the coffee breaks, or over a vegan slice of cake. The following provides a brief roundup of each session.

**Session 1. Beyond the Heteronorm of Intimacy**

During this session, moderated by Dr Joanna Mizielińska, Dr Mariola Bięńko of the University of Warsaw’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences delivered a paper on The Dimensions of Intimacy in Non-heteronormative
Conference report: ‘Non-normative Family Practices’

Relationships. Research Reflections, in which she traced the dimensions of intimacy as part of a larger research project into intimacy. She discussed the involvement of women and men in intimate relations with persons of the same sex as well as how these relations unfolded, as well as these people’s convictions, their opinions about themselves and how they are perceived by those around them. Similar issues, focusing particularly on the self-narratives of respondents in same-sex relationships, were tackled by Miłosz Ukleja M.A. of the University of Warsaw in his paper Narrative Strategies among Partners in Same-sex Relationships. Dr Dorota Majka-Rostek of the University of Wrocław, in her presentation on Lesbians, Gays and Their Children – Diversity of Family Forms, drew attention to both normative and non-normative forms of family relationships and between non-heterosexuals. During the discussions the speakers jointly reached interesting conclusions, and seemed to gain inspiration for the direction of further research work.

Session 2. Family Non-normativity at the Crossing of Disciplines

This session, moderated by Prof. Krystyna Slany, comprised a paper presented by Dr Ewa Majewska of the Jagiellonian University, When the Private and Political Cross, or Family and Gender Insubordination, and Non-normative Family Practices in Terms of Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology by Marcin Gągolewski M.A. of the University of Warsaw. The latter paper was something of a thematic singularity at the conference, the author focusing on – as he put it himself – the “great success of sociobiology, as shown by its transition into evolutionary psychology that is currently ‘conquering’ the social sciences”. Following this, Dorota Orłowska M.A. of the University of Warsaw presented her paper What to Expect Following the Introduction of the Law on Civil Unions – a Legal View, in which she answered urgent questions regarding the legal consequences of the possible introduction of legally regulated relationships of persons of the same sex.

During this session a paper by Katarzyna Banach M.A. of the University of Warsaw, The Shaping of the Cultural Gender of Children in Same-sex Families. Impact of Sexual Orientation on the Perception of Gender Roles, was available for reading.

Session 3. Beyond the Heteronorm of Parenting – 1

During this session, moderated by Ewa Majewska, Dr Urszula Kluczyńska from the Poznań University of Medical Sciences delivered a presentation
on the Non-normative Heterosexual Family with a Child – the Oppressiveness of Roles. She spoke of a case study of a family, the members of which she conducted in-depth interviews with in order to determine to what degree a heterosexual couple, bringing up their child together, stepped beyond the heteronorm. Kluczyńska suggested that the norm constitutes a tool of oppression, including towards those whose choices and lifestyle seemingly conform to it. In the paper Sexuality, Intimate and Child-raising Relations of Women in a Non-heteronormative Relationship, Małgorzata Kot M.A. of the University of Warsaw presented the issue of sexuality and women’s intimate and child-rearing relations in a non-heteronormative relationship, based on interviews she conducted. Sylwia Waclawik M.A. of the University of Silesia spoke in her paper on Motivations for Intentional Childlessness about reasons behind deliberate decisions to forego the possibility of parenthood, presenting the findings of quantitative research in a psychology paradigm. These two aspects of the approach to research constituted an exception in the conference, arousing a lively response during the discussions.

A paper by Dr Jowita Wycisk of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, entitled Homosexual Parents as Perceived by Future Psychologists, was available for reading, while A Review of German Academic Literature on the Phenomenon of Non-normative Family Practices by Katarzyna Sowa of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences was sadly, despite earlier plans, not displayed.

Session 4. Non-normative Family Practices on Screen

In this session, moderated by Aleksander Wasiak-Radoszewski M.A., the speakers were Dr Krzysztof Arcimowicz of the University of Białystok, with his paper Non-normative Family Models in Polish Soap Operas. Analysis of the Most Popular Slice-of-Life Serials at the Turn of the 21st Century, and Kamil Łuczaj M.A. from the AGH University of Science and Technology with The Changing Family in the Changing Serial. The Model-forming Role of Post-soap Serials. Unfortunately the third of the planned speakers, Bartłomiej Nowak M.A. of the Jagiellonian University, who was scheduled to deliver a speech on The ‘Homofamily’ in Polish Films and their Press Reviews, was unable to attend.

Krzysztof Arcimowicz endeavoured to reconstruct the image of non-normative family models in Polish soap operas, also known as ‘tele-sagas’. By applying the method of quantitative content analysis and the procedure of critical discourse analysis, he presented an analysis of the opening episodes of five of the most popular such serials broadcast in 2010 by public televi-
sion (M jak miłość, Barwy szczęścia, Klan, Plebania, Na dobre i na zle) and two commercial television channels’ tele-sagas (Na wspólnnej and Samo życie). He drew attention to the serials’ significant social reach as well as the strength of their impact, maintaining that tele-sagas are attributed with a culture-creating and model-creating role, while they can also fulfil a useful educational function. According to Arcimowicz, although one can find an ideologised image of the traditional nuclear family in tele-sagas, they also present new models of non-normative families, e.g. childless couples, single-parent families, patchwork families, cohabitation relationships, a homosexual family and a group of friends. He analysed the family models and gender images identified in regard to the Polish social and cultural context and the transformations taking place in the post-modern world. In addition he displayed frames (photographs) from specific serials. During the question and answer session he was asked to provide a detailed description of the homosexual couple featured in one of the serials.

Kamil Łuczaj, in his paper The Changing Family in the Changing Serial. The Model-forming Role of Post-soap Serials, presented the way in which post-soap serials (big-budget new production types breaking down genre models) change the media image and associations related to hitherto taboo topics, such as non-normative concepts of social roles, sexuality or disability. With family image as an example, he strove to demonstrate that the serial-based revolution is attempting to keep pace not only with the latest achievements in technology, but also issues explored by the social sciences. In addition Łuczaj presented aspects of his research findings and the reception of non-normative family practices shown on Polish television among women residents of former collective farms. In this section he concentrated on the perception and skill of decoding family models inconsistent with their everyday experiences. His research material derived from two independent sources: analysis of the content in three serials (Modern Family, Chuck, Big Love) and in-depth interviews using television materials. These interviews were part of a research project into the reception of television serials among women threatened with social exclusion. During the questions-and-answers session, Kamil Łuczaj was asked to give a detailed description of the research conducted.

Session 5. Beyond the Heteronorm of Parenting – 2

During this session, moderated by Agata Stasińska M.A. and Dr Aleksander Wasiak-Radoszewski, Dr Jowita Wycisk and Dr Joanna Śmiecińska from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań delivered a paper on The Strategies of Revealing One’s Sexual Orientation by Lesbian Couples Rearing Children
Together, and their Consequences, while Wiktor Dynarski M.A. of the University of Warsaw gave a speech on When Binarism Fails – Motherly Transitions, Child-bearing Men and the Homonormativity of Equality Policy, in which he indicated an entire spectrum of issues related to the subject-matter being covered – from the linguistic to the identity-related, taking particular account of the context of activism in favour of equality in relationships and marriage. Because Dynarski presented the findings of research that he conducted with respondents hard to reach – persons who had been through gender correction and who had decided at a certain stage in life to become parents – interest among the session’s attendees focused around the issue he brought up.


The final session on the first day of the conference was dedicated to speeches during which three speakers, using numerous examples, presented the latest trends and signs of change in the family. The first paper, compiled by Prof. Anna Kwak of the University of Warsaw, dealt with the phenomenon of cohabitation. In The Status of Cohabitation among Forms of Marital and Family Life, she described the beginnings of analysis of cohabitation in the countries of Scandinavia, evolution in approaches to this phenomenon, the most important changes in cohabitation over the past forty years, and the situation and social status of cohabitation in Polish society. Thanks to her paper’s analytical character, listeners were able to follow the internal changes within heterosexual relationships of this kind, which despite the same name – invented over thirty years ago – bear little resemblance today to the term used in the past. This also testifies to the unprecedented dynamic that the ‘fundamental social cell’ is subjected to. The second speaker, Beata Simlat-Żuk M.A. of the University of Gdańsk, focused on patchwork families in her speech, entitled Patchwork Families – Something New in (Post)Modern Society?. She explained the guise this form of relationship may take, who it may be formed by, how the fortunes of such families look, and how evident they are in Polish Society. The final speech, by Agnieszka Kowalska-Sobczak M.A., PhD student at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, tackled the increasingly popular topic of paternity leave. In Online ‘Daddyhood’ – an Analysis of the Trend and New Sociological Implications, she listed the fundamental terms related to the definition of this form of leave addressed to men, gave statistical data on its usage since its introduction, and gave a very interesting presentation of websites designed by dads for dads. Aspects tackled in the discussion following these papers included the fundamental changes in all family forms discussed.
Session 7. Re-presenting the American Family

During this session, which was held in English and moderated by Marta Olasik M.A. and covered a reinterpretation of the concept of the American family, Colin R. Johnson, PhD, of Indiana University delivered a paper entitled *Microwave Cooking for One: Solitary Living, Abjection and the Family That Is No One*, in which he discussed the issue of non-normative households. Among other things, he analysed the functioning of household types, e.g. single-person, and the realisation of solitude via food, referring to a cookbook published in the United States. The speaker concluded with a reference to the current legal situation related to the legalisation of same-sex relationships.

Following this, Dr Tomasz Basiuk of the University of Warsaw, in his paper *Queer Familial Representations*, told of the representations in American literary and movie fiction of non-normative or queer families. A boisterous discussion was provoked by Basiuk’s choice of characters, who proved controversial among the session’s attendees. Betty Houchin Winfield, Phd, of the University of Missouri, and Lola Weddington of Smith College, who due to travel problems arrived late for the session, provided brief interpretations of the concept of the American family in a historical perspective.

Session 8. The Non-biological Dimensions of Kinship

During this session, moderated by Katarzyna Michalczak, M.A., Dr Dorota Szawarska of the University of Warsaw presented a theoretical depiction of the subject of care as a source of kinship from the point of view of anthropology in her speech *Care as a Source of Kinship*. In the paper *Home/Waiting-room/Stage. Queer Family Bonds in ‘Ball’ Culture*, Michał Abel Pelczar spoke of queer bonds in ball culture. To provide the appropriate contrast, he illustrated his presentation with a rich selection of humorous photographs showing seemingly ‘traditional’ families, which – as he demonstrated – always bear a potential for straying from the norm, meaning that they differ to less of a degree than the stereotype would suggest from abnormal practices seen in communities of people questioning heteronormativity and frequently the whole of their related culture. Monika Kłosowska M.A., Phd student at the University of Warsaw’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences, delivered a paper entitled *The Family Does Not Exist. About Other Ways/People (for) Achieving Selected Needs*. In this she presented the findings of focus group research she conducted in a group of male and female students and a group of feminists. Adorning her speech with numerous quotes from
her respondents, she proved that the concept of the family is clearly defined by each individual separately for their own purposes, and – as the respondents proved – that it changes over time depending on circumstances, although admittedly always in relation to familiar norms functioning in its society.

Session 9. Family Practices in Different Discourses

In this session, moderated by Dr Błażej Warkocki, Stanisław Skarżyński of the University of Warsaw delivered a paper entitled Non-normative Family Practices as a Subject of Polish Political Discourse in the Years 2005-2012. Dr Joanna Mizielińska, professor at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, and Agata Stasińska, PhD student of the University of Warsaw’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences, prepared a speech on Families by Choice – Fragments of the Discourse in the Press, the goals of which included identification of the main strategies dominating in public discourse, tracing the dynamics of change in these strategies, and an attempt at answering the question regarding what or who generates these changes. This was followed by Dorota Jedlikowska of the Jagiellonian University with her paper Analysis of Academic Discourse in the Context of Deliberations Regarding the Family – an Attempt to Utilise the Performative Approach. Session participants could also read a paper by Anna Jawor M.A. of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, ‘Poland is Not Yet Lost’, or the War for the Family.

Session 10. Non-monogamous Relationships

Moderated by Prof Anna Kwak, this session began with a speech by Rafał Majka M.A., The ‘Borders’ of Polyamorous/Multi-person Relationships, in which he proposed differentiating relationships of more than two persons into multi-person and polyamorous, referring to the relationship-forming principles distinguishing the latter. The speaker argued that his proposed category of multi-person relationships could be defined by the non-creation of or non-adherence to principles by those in the said relationships. Katarzyna Michalczak, PhD student at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences of the University of Warsaw, who in her speech Family by (Multiple) Choice? Definitions of Family among Persons Declaring Openly to be Non-monogamous presented the findings of her own research covering persons openly and consciously entering non-monogamous relationships, did not agree with this distinction. Based on the interviews she had conducted, she claimed that the border between principles drawn up together by partners in a relationship,
principles they agree to and to which they adhere, is very fluid. The discussion that followed these papers revealed a growing number of people showing vivid interest in the topic of non-monogamy. Sadly Karolina Grabowska-Garczyńska M.A. of Nicolaus Copernicus University, scheduled to present a paper on *Women in Polyamorous Relations – Emancipation or Enslavement? An Analysis of Discussion Fora*, was absent during the session.

Session 11. Surpassing the ‘Family’ in Ethnographic Terms

During this session, moderated by Dorota Jedlińska, Anna Wojtach of the Academy of Special Education in Warsaw delivered a speech compiled together with Agnieszka Ilendo-Milewska of the University of Pedagogy in Białystok entitled *An Analysis of the Quality of Inter-family Relations in Polish and Finnish Families*. This was followed by Urszula Markowska-Manista of the Academy of Special Education in Warsaw, who presented *Family Relations of the Bayaka in the Sanghe Mbaere Region in the Central African Republic Faced with Civilisational Change*, providing these people’s current definitions of the family and presenting narratives regarding the family practices of persons she interviewed, as well as selected areas of her analyses of family relations among the Bayaka. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska and Maciej Klimiuk of the University of Warsaw shared their reflections related to the topic of their speech on *Affair or Family – an Urfi Marriage as Perceived by Western Female Tourists in North Africa*.

Session 12. Homosexual Relationships in a Variety of Contexts

This session was moderated by Dr Robert Pruszczyński, dedicated to homosexual relationships in a variety of contexts, provoked interesting discussions. Agnieszka Weseli first took listeners on a journey into the past, salvaging from oblivion the character of relationships and relations between women from the mid-19th century to World War II, in her speech entitled *In Friendship, In Love, In Action and At Home. Close Relationships between Women in Polish Lands from the Mid-19th Century to 1939*. This was followed by Justyna Struzik of the Jagiellonian University and the Women’s Space foundation, who in her paper *Rural Les-families. The Social Situation of Lesbians and Bisexual Women in Rural Areas and Small Towns* presented a report based on interviews conducted with non-heterosexual women from rural areas. Finally Aleksander Wasiak-Radoszewski of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities gave a speech on *The Homonormative Relationship and Tolerance / Homophobia / Fear of Coming Out. Can Coming Out*
Always be Good?, constituting a reflection over ‘coming out’ as a political strategy. He brought up the matter of non-heterosexual persons being ‘forced’ by society to ‘come out of the cupboard’, an issue most often omitted. Later discussion during the session confirmed the controversial nature of the issue, revealing the multifaceted nature and ambiguity of this particular phenomenon, and showing the heterogeneity of interpretations within the queer perspective itself.

Session 13. Non-normative Family Practices in Literature

For organisational reasons, sessions 13 and 14 were combined into a single prolonged session. As a result a broader group of participants could take part in the discussion following the speeches. Under the moderation of Katarzyna Michalczak, the session opened with a paper by Błażej Warkocki of the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań regarding the motif of Zygmunt Kaczkowski’s ‘Bracia Ślubni’ [lit. ‘Wedding Brothers’] from the 19th century, in Same-sex, Normative, Traditional. On Zygmunt Kaczkowski’s ‘Wedding Brothers’. This 19th-century author described a rather transgressive rural ritual of the fraternal nuptials of two men who, from this moment on, were to support each other in sickness and in health. For those researching queer subject-matter such an oddity in literature, and according to the speaker bearing historical traits, is one of the pieces of evidence that family life in rural communities over a hundred years ago possibly included non-normative forms, or only traces of them. Adrian D. Kowalski M.A. of the Jagiellonian University delivered a paper on the works of Michael Cunningham, ‘Strange Families’ in the Works of Michael Cunningham, in which he demonstrated how far family groups in this author’s prose stray from norms of all kinds, despite constant reference to the traditional family.

The session dealing with taboos in family practices, moderated by Tomasz Basiuk, began with a speech by Piotr Dworzański M.A. of the University of Warsaw, FemDom LifeStyle Relationships in Poland, regarding the relations between men and women involved in BDSM practices, and especially the variety involving dominance by a woman in a male-female couple, twenty-four hours a day, i.e. going beyond the usual understanding of sexual interaction. The speaker presented interesting conclusions regarding the reproduction of patriarchal relations.

The conference ended with a paper by Robert Pruszczynski of the University of Warsaw, entitled ‘Family Cream. Homosexuals and Voluntary In-
cest, regarding voluntary homosexual incest present in culture. He presented an American comic dealing with the breaching of this taboo by a father and son who meet after many years apart. Hearing of their trials and tribulations ensured a change in tone, though leaving the session’s attendees in a state of analytical curiosity that endured after they left the conference venue.
‘SCHULZ IN WARSAW, DROHOBYCH IN WARSAW’ – Schulz Festival, 19–25 November 2012

The Senate unanimously declared November 2012 Bruno Schulz Month in honour of the writer and artist, whose works – as emphasised in the Senate’s resolution – have been acknowledged by international critics and readers as among the most original examples of 20th century world literature. The year 2012 marked the 120th anniversary of the artist’s birth, and the 70th anniversary of his death (born on 12 July 1892, died 19 November 1942). One of the most outstanding Polish writers and graphic artists, Bruno Schulz wrote in Polish; of Jewish descent, he was born in Drohobych – then a Polish and today a Ukrainian town – a place he immortalised in his prose. Cinnamon Shops, Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass and The Booke of Idolatry were to become recognised works of world culture, as testified to in the dozens of translations (most recently into Chinese), issues and critical analyses of Schulz’s works. He was also a painter and illustrator, for whom graphic expression was not supplementary to the word, but a separate form of expression.

The Institute of Applied Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw, the ISNS UW, initiated this academic-cultural event for the Schulz anniversaries, its goal being to draw the attention of the young in academia to Schulz the person, a tragic hero of world culture, but also of local, Galician, Drohobych culture. In this, we referred to research conducted by the ISNS UW’s Department of Sociology and Anthropology of Custom and Law in Drohobych from 2008 to 2010. Today Drohobych is a Ukrainian town that now has mere traces of Polish and Jewish minorities. However, studies into attitudes among the town’s population today towards its multicultural past and their former neighbours reveal that most have a feeling of a presence of this past, with Bruno Schulz its personification.

* The article was published in issue 2(14)2012 Socjologia emocji edited by Wojciech Pawlik.
The Festival was also an opportunity for experts on Schulz and sociologists to get together and contemplate over a contemporary interpretation of Schulz, his inspirations and intentions, as well as over the Drohobych of his day – in the context of multiculturality – and the Ukrainian town today.

The events were financed by the Polish Book Institute, the National Centre for Culture and ZAiKS, the Polish Society of Authors and Composers. The Festival was designed at the appropriate scale, and with the leading role of the UW’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences it was jointly organised by the Jewish Historical Institute and the Academy of Fine Arts, as well as the Polish Filmmakers Association with its ‘Kultura’ cinema, the Theatre Institute, the University of Warsaw Foundation and the Collegium Vigrense Foundation.

The Festival opened on Monday 19 November with an inauguration lecture given by Jan Woleński, introducing the perspective of magic realism and Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology into the analysis of the works of Schulz. The anniversary of the artist’s death was also commemorated by Jacek Kleyff, giving the audience a performance of his Ballad of the death of Brunon Schulz in November ’42, or a courtyard ballad of two good men. Although millions died in the Holocaust, sometimes an individual’s death expresses this in a particularly pointed manner. Such was the death of Schulz, turned by a member of the gestapo into his personal slave and shot by an SS man only to annoy his fellow executioner.

The first academic panel, led by Prof. Jacek Kurczewski, was held in the evening on the same day. ‘Antagonism and Reconciliation’ drew from recent publications: Socjologia pojednania [lit. The sociology of reconciliation], edited by J. Kurczewski, and Antagonizm i pojednanie w społecznościach wielokulturowych [lit. Antagonism and reconciliation in multicultural communities], edited by J. Kurczewski and A. Herman. Practitioners and theoreticians in reconciliation took part in the discussion: Krzysztof Czyżewski, Aneta Gawkowska, Joanna Kurczewska, Paweł Śpiewak and Bohdan Prystupa. Despite differences in how the subject matter was depicted, the participants unanimously emphasised the importance of interpersonal relations in building reconciliation, its necessarily unending and procedural character, and the growing significance of local identity and memory that help generate humanistic awareness among those involved in antagonisms, thereby creating the grounds for mutual acquaintance, which is a condition for reconciliation.

The first day of the Festival culminated in a chamber music concert given by the Varsovia Piano Trio, comprising Adam Zarzycki – violin, Ewa Skadowska-Kiljan – grand piano, and Piotr Hausenplas – cello, accompanied by the soprano Anna Karasińska. The musicians put together a program relating to Polish music of the 19th and turn of the 20th century. The Polish music
certainly revealed the composers’ professionalism and national awareness, the relative durability of their stances and the topics of their creativity leading to continuous dialogue and intergenerational polemics, and finally the theme of national belonging, treated as a demand towards artists or a problem requiring self-definition of the artists themselves. Such music created a context important for the works of Brunon Schulz. The program comprised pieces composed by Grzegorz Fitelberg, born in Dyneburg belonging to the Polish Republic before the partitions (today’s Daugavpils in Latvia), predecessors of Schulz’s generation – Ignacy Jan Paderewski and Frederic Chopin, Ludomir Różycki of the Young Poland movement, and Szymon Laks – an artist of Schulz’s generation and at the same time one of the few Polish Jew composers to survive the Holocaust.

Subsequent academic panels were held on 23 and 24 November (on Friday and Saturday), and were organised by Prof. Jacek Kurczewski and Prof. Marek Zaleski. Invited guests from Poland, the USA and Ukraine (including two scientists from Drohobych), Schulz experts and sociologists, debated in five academic sessions:

- What was Warsaw for Schulz?
- Are we ready for Schulz’s graphic works? The culture of perversion in open culture
- The sociology of Drohobych
- The Drohobych stars (Schulz, Franko, Gottliebs, Chciuk and Bergner)
- Bruno Schulz: Jewish Pole or Polish Jew?

The panellists included: Arkadiusz Bagłajewski, Tomasz Bocheński, Zdzisław Budzyński, Stefan Chwin, Katarzyna Czajka, Paweł Dybel, Małgorzata Fuszara, Leonid Golberg, David Goldfarb, Jan Gondowicz, Aleksandra Herman, Jerzy Jarzębski, Alla Karnaukh, Hanna Kirchner, Zbigniew Kloch, Jerzy Malinowski, Wiera Meniok, Alina Molisak, Emilia Rekosz, Stanisław Rosiek, Karolina Szymaniak, Magdalena Tulli, Leonid Tymoszenko and Dariusz Wojakowski. They presented original takes on Schulz-Drohobych topics, taking into account the breadth of the conditioning behind Brunon Schulz’s works (social conditioning such as multiculturality, but also psychological conditioning such as his profound sensitivity and modesty) and the specific nature of the pre-war neighbourly relations between communities living alongside one another in ethnic parishes, as was the case in Drohobych. Account was also taken of the dramatic wartime history, as a result of which Drohobych – like many other towns in Europe’s eastern realms – become a ‘transitive’ town, i.e. one that saw a sudden change in population in the 20th century resulting from totalitarianism, nationalism and war.
The proposed topics also generated interest among the public, who turned up in significant numbers thereby fulfilling our expectations and confirming that Bruno Schulz is still a figure well and truly alive in contemporary – and not only Polish – culture. The multiculturality of Schulz himself was discussed on several occasions in the speeches and discussions, and although the debaters could not ultimately agree on whether Schulz himself was aware of his multi-layered identity, many cultures are aware of ‘their Schulz’.

We also wanted to create an opportunity for presenting the activities of an outstanding centre of Schulz-related research, the Igor Meniok Polish Scientific and Information Centre at the Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University, directed by Dr Wiera Meniok. She talked about this Centre’s history while also recounting the achievements of successive International Bruno Schulz Festivals in Drohobych, organised with significant support from Polish cultural institutions. Thanks to these initiatives a Ukrainian ‘Schulzology’ has been emerging in Drohobych, and the town is attracting an international community of intellectuals and artists.

Apart from its academic angle, the Schulz festival ‘Schulz in Warsaw, Drohobych in Warsaw’ also featured artistic events. Throughout the week the 1973 movie *The Hourglass Sanatorium*, directed by Wojciech Has, was screened at the ‘Rejs’ cinema.

The alternative ‘Alter’ academic theatre came specially from Drohobych to perform *Joseph & Co.* on 24 November (Saturday), a combination of a novel and tales by Schulz that provoke unexpected encounters of a variety of characters and protagonists. All these fragments were linked by static, monotonous jazz and the words of the narrator, while one had the impression that the story’s two key planes were in a state of organic coexistence within the single space of the stage, sometimes joining and sometimes parting, yet on every occasion with a brilliantly balanced effect.

The Sejny Orchestra, conducted by Raphael Rogiński and with singer Ola Bilińska, performed at the closing of the Festival on 25 November. They presented *From Thee to Thee*, a series of songs written by Raphael Rogiński to mediaeval kabbalistic verse and – specially for the Festival – to works by Debora Vogel, a friend of Brunon Schulz. The concert was held at the Faculty of Media Art and Stage Design of Warsaw’s Academy of Fine Arts, in the hall that a few days earlier – on 21 November (Wednesday) – was the venue for the opening of the exhibition ‘W stronę Schulza’ [Towards Schulz], featuring photographs of present-day Drohobych and its people taken by a team of the Academy’s students and staff in the artist’s home town. Thus we were listening to borderland music performed by borderland artists surrounded by modern images of places so familiar from Schulz’s prose,
striving to spot faces known from his works in the figures captured surreptitiously by camera.

To recapitulate, the Schulz Festival demonstrated for us how much inspiration, both academic and artistic, continues to be provided by the art of Brunon Schulz. Of a canonical artist, yet escaping explicit appraisal and interpretation not only in the visual arts but also in the written word. Of an artist whose moving life story and dramatic death continue anew to show how thin a line divides civilisation from the barbarity of totalitarianism, due to which – as Antoni Słonimski mourned in his *Elegy*... – “Gone now are, gone are in Poland those little Jewish towns...” or a Jewish world interwoven, as in Drohobych, with the world of the Slavs.
JAN WINCZOREK

Jubilee Ceremonial Conference of the Research Committee on Sociology of Law, University of Warsaw (19–21 October 2012)*

The second issue of ‘Studia Socjologiczne’ in 1965 contained a three-page article by Adam Podgórecki discussing the conference organised by the newly-established ISA's Research Committee on Sociology of Law ISA in St. Vincent, Italy, in 1964. There are a few observations to note in this report. Firstly, it contains the customary description of the conference agenda. Judging by the amount of space given by Podgórecki to specific topics, the proceedings focused on the Italian project regarding the judiciary in Milan, covered the presentation of other empirical studies, and touched on a few theoretical issues. Secondly, the report refers to organisational work undertaken within the RCSL, especially that related to joint research projects at the planning stage (some of which, unfortunately, never came to fruition). In both these aspects the report clearly reflects – but does not directly communicate – Podgórecki's satisfaction with the fact that, thanks to his and others’ efforts, sociology of law had achieved a level of favourable international institutionalisation.

Podgórecki’s third observation refers to the future of the RCSL as an organisation and sociology of law as a practical science. In his opinion, sociology of law in 1964 was on a rising tide both in regard to the quality and the quantity of research. He believed this was the effect of a greater governmental readiness to listen to the counselling of sociologists of law. This is followed by Podgórecki expressing the conviction that legal sociology – having achieved maturity as an academic venture – would also become significant in practice, and that it would successfully convince decision-makers that

* The article was published in issue 2(14)2012 Socjologia emocji edited by Wojciech Pawlik.
it is worthwhile “translating certain problems hitherto resolved by speculative means into the language of problems resolved empirically”.

Half a century later, on 19–21 October 2012, the University of Warsaw – Adam Podgórecki’s home university – hosted the RCSL’s Jubilee Ceremonial Conference, organised to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishing of the RCSL. This was a memorable event for several reasons, including the broad role played in it by Podgórecki’s legacy – which in a way may come as a surprise, considering the context.

Firstly, this was already the third occasion on which the University of Warsaw aided the RCSL in organising such an academic gathering (the previous two the annual conferences of 1964 and 1999). This undoubtedly testifies to a significant contribution by Polish sociology of law, which continues to be based largely on Podgórecki’s ideas, to the international community of researchers in law and society.

Secondly, although the conference was mainly ceremonial in character (though some may say ‘barely’), it attracted over 50 participants and its scientific section enabled deep and vivid discussion. This proves that the efforts of Adam Podgórecki, William Evan, Renato Treves and others – taken to establish the RCSL – have borne fruit, and the optimistic description of this organisation given by the former of the above in 1965 remains appropriate for its fiftieth anniversary as well. The RCSL, via its diversity of activities, continues to animate the world’s community in the sociology of law.

Thirdly, the conference’s agenda related to the achievements of classic figures in the sociology of law: Renato Treves, Leon Petrażycki and Adam Podgórecki. Not only in the form of ceremonial reflections over the future and the past of the RCSL, but also in scientific terms.

On the first day of the conference, dedicated to recollections regarding the history of the RCSL, the floor was taken by Jacek Kurczewski, Jean van Houtte, Vincenzo Ferrari, Mavis Maclean, Anne Boigeol, Klaus Ziegert, Adam Czarnota, Jerzy Kwaśniewski and Stefka Naumova. Jean van Houtte delivered a synthetic account of the fifty years of the RCSL, thereby paving the way for the remaining speakers to present more personal, subjective experiences related to this organisation’s operations. A few of them added accounts of their own relations with previous generations of legal sociologists to the discussion.

Another significant event during the first day of the sittings was the awarding of the RCSL’s Adam Podgórecki prize to young scientists. Fatima Kastner of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research was rewarded for her work on systems theory and truth and reconciliation commissions. Stefan Larsson of Lund University was rewarded for his research into the sociology of law in a digital society.
Two special sessions were held on the second day of the conference, dedicated to two of the founding fathers of European sociology of law – Adam Podgórecki and Renato Treves. The Treves session dealt with the ‘Administration of Justice in Liberal Democracy’, with a discussion of issues brought to sociology of law by this leading Italian legal sociologist. Grażyna Skapska recalled Treves’ accomplishments, discussing the findings of her own research into trust in Polish judges. In her opinion, the situation of the judiciary in Poland continues to be delicate, although in regard to attitudes towards the courts and appraisal of the work carried out by judges one can observe certain positive trends. The second of the Polish speakers, Stanisław Tyszka, focused on the impact the works of Renato Treves had on his own research and activities, in particular his involvement in Polish deregulation projects. The third speaker, and the first of three Italian panel participants, Anna Rosa Favretto, referred to certain threads in Treves’ works regarding judicial ideology, presenting the findings of research into the views of Italian judges regarding the correct model of family law, including the general support they have expressed for alternative forms of resolving disputes. The session’s fourth speaker, Valerio Pocar, accepted the challenge of presenting Treves the person and the work, and in so doing he emphasised the need for a balance between the objective aspect of research and the normative involvement of the researcher in sociology of law. The final speaker, Fernando Spina, brought up Treves’ issue of the legitimisation of judges in a democratic state, indicating the dangers arising from the search for legitimisation in the media and politics, described using the example of the sadly well-known notion of the judicialisation of politics.

The session dedicated to Adam Podgórecki also related to an issue in sociology of law on the reception of which Podgórecki himself had a substantial impact: ‘Totalitarian Law and Transitory Justice’. The discussions opened with a speech given by Susanne Karsted, who described the role of law, the rule through law, and the role of law in totalitarian states, emphasising the oppressive nature and omnipresence of law in such conditions, while also drawing attention to the possibility of judges performing the role of ‘liberators’ from this condition. The second speaker, Jiri Priban, tackled the issue of totalitarian law, referring to a few of Podgórecki’s notions, including ‘totalitarian grundnorm’, ‘dirty togetherness’ and ‘hidden legal structures’. Jerzy Kwaśniewski related in his delivery to Podgórecki’s very critical opinions of the legal and political situation in Poland post 1989, providing a few empirical illustrations for his premises. Małgorzata Fuszara discussed the evolution of Polish penal law over the past forty years, referring to research into views regarding the law conducted by Podgórecki and many of his con-
tinuators. A similar task was tackled by Iwona Jakubowska-Branicka, who discussed the issue of legalistic attitudes in comparative research studies. The final speaker was Adriana Mica, who spoke on ideas she had brought up in a book on the scandals of communist Romania, presenting her reflections over the instrumental utilisation of these scandals by communist party functionaries.

A special session dedicated to ‘Adam Podgórecki’s project of empirical sociological theory of law’ was held during the second day of the conference. This comprised speeches by Jacek Kurczewski and Mark Conney, evoking lively discussion into the essence of empirical studies in legal sociology. Jacek Kurczewski voiced his conviction about Podgórecki having taken the right approach to the research, while Mark Cooney supported the view of the rightness and notional discipline of the concept of pure sociology developed by Donald Black.

The morning sessions conducted on the third day of the conference constituted a continuation of the Polish-Italian subjects and discussions initiated on the second day. The first session was dedicated to the legacy of Leon Petrażycki, for which an opportunity was provided by Edoard Fittipaldi’s book of 2012, *Everyday Legal Ontology* (LED 2012). In his speech, the author revealed his own concept of linking Petrażycki’s psychological theory of law to legal realism, Freudian psychoanalysis and linguistic research. Following this Krzysztof Motyka and Jan Winczorek shared their views on this matter. After the session Edoardo Fittipaldi was presented with a medal from the Foundation of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences, ‘Pro Sapientia Cum Virtutis Praescriptis Adequata’, in recognition of his services in disseminating Petrażycki’s ideas.

The second session focused on the achievements of an early Italian legal sociologist, Carlo Nardi Greco. The main speech in this session was that of Maria Ausilia Simonelli, who gave an exhaustive presentation of her works regarding Greco’s ideas. Her treatise was supplemented by the comments of Vincenzo Ferrari and Maria Rita Bartolomei.

Regardless of the multitude of information this session provided in regard to the achievements of Greco, an author unknown to broader circles, it was also noteworthy for it rightfully departing from the prevalent practice of using English as the only conference language. Maria Ausilia Simonelli took the praiseworthy decision to deliver her speech in another official language of the ISA – French.

The two afternoon sessions, conducted in parallel and drawing the conference to a close, comprised a number of submissions. Eight papers were delivered during each session. The first panel focused on current
issues in socio-legal research, with speeches given by Paola Ronfani with Roberta Bosisio, Stefi Naumova, Anna Krajewska, Pierre Guibentif, Aleksandra Niżyńska, Adriana Mica, Paweł Kociszewski and Stefan Larsen, presenting diverse topics such as homoparental families, discrimination and anti-discrimination law, taxes, the financial crisis, formality and informality, methodological innovations in sociology of law and digital technologies.

The second panel dealt mostly with national traditions in sociological studies regarding law, as well as the future of such studies. Speakers in this panel were Anuradha Parasar with Meenakshi Sharma, Germano Schwartz with Dani Rudnick and Renata Almeida da Costa, Dace Sulmane, Takayuki Ii, Håkan Hydén, Flora Di Donato with Francesca Scamardella, Adam Czarnecka, and Jan Winczorek. They spoke of the development of sociology of law in India, Brazil, Japan, Scandinavia and in Italy, while also saying a few words on the issues of legal education and the role of procedures.

A comparison of Podgórecki’s set of hopes and diagnoses presented in 1965 with the actual state of sociology of law on the fiftieth anniversary of the establishing of the RCSL provides the grounds for three concluding observations:

1) there is no doubt that in 1965 Podgórecki was right in claiming that the sociology of law was a discipline on a rising tide. Over the fifty years that have passed since the RCSL was created, very many empirical and theoretical studies of law have been carried out. The diversity of topics and points of view, characteristic of the sociology of law, as well as the continuing influence of this field’s early masters on the work of today, is easy to spot in the program of the Warsaw conference;

2) the RCSL has clearly played a fundamental role in making sociology of law a successful scientific discipline. Without many of the events and achievements the RCSL has contributed to (suffice to mention the creation of the International Institute for the Sociology of Law in Oñati), the field would be significantly poorer;

3) if some of Podgórecki’s observations of 1965 have proved not entirely prophetic, they are those relating to collaboration with decision-takers. Although the speeches given in Warsaw cannot be perceived as a representative sample of all work carried out by legal sociologists, they have revealed only a limited impact of socio-legal research on decisions taken by those in power. Although examples may be given of research areas created on governmental commission (including research into legal assistance in certain countries), the normalisation of sociology of law as a scientific discipline has not yet led to the normalisation of sociology of law as a tool of governing.
As such one should hope that the ‘translation’ Podgórecki wrote about fifty years ago will ultimately be achieved, and that this will occur before the next fifty years of the RCSL pass. And let this be our birthday wish!
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SOCIETAS/COMMUNITAS 1(19) 2015

327
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This issue is dedicated to the memory of Professor Aldona Jawadowska (1934–2010) who established the journal. Her idea was to make it an interdisciplinary vehicle of open debate in the humanities. The profile of the founding mother of our journal is in itself a record of the Polish humanities struggling to survive and flourish following the political transformation from the obnoxious totalitarianism of the past to the market democracy that followed.

In this special issue of Societas/Communitas we present a selection of papers from previous issues in Polish. All authors were, at the time of publishing, members of the faculty of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences. In this way we want to present the journal’s publisher, an Institute with a brief – though approaching 25 years – and complicated history.

The academic community at the University’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences defines applied sciences as, firstly, the generation of knowledge based on empirical studies as broadly understood. And secondly, as the application of notions, theories and concepts already existing, not only for resolving social problems but also for describing and interpreting social life, both as an entirety and in its multifarious aspects, fragments and layers (usually leading to significant modifications in these notions, theories and concepts).

The specific nature of the Institute may be described in brief by the following two expressions: INTERDISCIPLINARITY and PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES. In its science and research teams, the Institute gathers together representatives of a variety of the humanistic disciplines and social sciences (sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, pedagogues, historians, and philosophers), frequently representing unique sub-disciplines and academic specialisations.