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A COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL APPROACH  
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POLAND'S CRITICAL SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE:  
A COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL APPROACH TO A NATION AND DIFFERENCE

Michael D. Kennedy<sup>1</sup>

Poland is both critical to disciplinary practice in sociology and significant in critical sociology, the perspective with which I have been most involved. In this essay, I explore some reasons for Poland's importance, and consider some problematics that ought to elevate Poland's significance in global sociology.<sup>2</sup> Toward that latter end, I suggest that a comparative and historical sociology of the nation in the production of difference might be one of the central themes of a global sociology with a Polish node.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, given the measure of specialization in the discipline it is difficult to speak of sociology in general. But for those sociological concentrations like critical sociology which find radical social transformations central, Poland is an extremely important case. Its importance could be magnified even further if the distinction of the Polish nation and its various cultural constructions of difference were put to the center of the comparative study of social transformations. In other words, if critical sociology in Poland would seek to explain not only domination and movements but the cultural differences that make various kinds of alliances and dialogues both possible and problematic, the Polish distinction would be even more apparent to those who do not take it for granted. Finally, a word about style and standpoint.

I offer this essay as a metatheoretical intervention. I do not, for instance, detail empirical trends in Polish sociology's global significance, although I would be delighted if someone else took up this task. I do, however, suggest some broad issues that resonate with recent interdisciplinary conversations in which I have participated. I hope these elaborations prove useful to my Polish colleagues, for to be sure, I cannot tell them about Polish sociology. I am not a Polish sociologist. I have read a good deal of Polish sociology, but in the last five years most of my attention has shifted to other post-communist societies. I write this essay fully aware of the dangers that limited scope offers. Instead, I wish to suggest potentially new frames within which one might view Polish sociology. I hope these interventions produce stimulating commentary that I might use to develop a more substantial essay for a second audience.

I nevertheless address this other audience in a secondary way in this volume. This readership includes non-Polish sociologists who also shall find this essay wanting. Like Polish sociology, I cannot give any particular specialization within the global discipline its due. I am interested in reaching out to those other sociologists,

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Brian Porter, Julia Adams, David Ost and the volume's anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Obviously it is central to a long and strong tradition in Polish sociology, but Poland is also significant for global sociologies in both their idealized international expression and in their disproportionate grounding in US practices. Although a European identity in sociology is ever increasing, I shall remain rather US-focused in my essay, partly because of my own location and also because of the centrality of US practices in defining the global development of sociology. I am, inescapably, parochial in that North American anchorage.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to David Featherman for the notion of a Polish node in global sociology.

however, who are less centered on sociological specializations and more concerned with theorizing how context shapes inquiry. While I am particularly interested in Poland's place, I am interested in cultivating a more extended conversation about general theories that aspire to be global, and contextually grounded inquiry. One place to begin is with critical sociology.

## CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Critical sociology refers to a perspective in sociology that emphasizes the relationships among domination, resistance, and emancipatory transformation; it is at least a form of social critique with its normative groundings explicitly marked and reformulated through empirical studies (Kennedy, 1991, 1992). Such sociologies devoted to understanding stratification, class, race/ethnicity and gender hierarchies are core to the discipline and thus some might argue that sociology is intrinsically critical (Walton, 1986). But Poland has more than domination to deconstruct and forms of resistance to unpack.

Poland has had more significant social movements challenging forms of domination than most other societies. Certainly it has had more than any other society ruled by communists. And its social movements have been animated by grand visions of social transformation, not only by cultural frames which seek a specific reallocation of resources or change in particular rules. Polish struggles for independence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries inspired both republicans and socialists. And of course, in 1980-81, Solidarnosc inspired the world. Finally, Poland's 'transition' to capitalism and democracy has served as a benchmark for many who gauge change in the postcommunist world (World Development Report, 1996).<sup>4</sup>

Although all the postcommunist countries are interesting for sociologists interested in radical social change, Poland is plausibly the most important case for those who wish to understand the potential role of social movements in remaking a society. Indeed, the only other case in the world today which offers such an important example of social movements and radical social transformation is South Africa (Seidman, 1994) and the comparison might be well worth pursuing. But it is not only the importance of social transformations which draw attention to a society. Intellectual networks are fundamentally important too.

Socially consequential critique depends not only on those intellectuals who produce it but also the larger audience to whom it is directed, often other members of the intelligentsia who can transform those ideas into programs for practical action (Suny and Kennedy, forthcoming). Poland's intelligentsia has historically been exemplary in this fashion, but its distinction does not only rest at the national level. Poland's intellectual networks have extended Poland's importance far beyond its linguistic community.

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<sup>4</sup> The World Development Report, 1996 often invokes Poland as an example of what ought to be done. It is hard, of course, to call the social forces underlying transition culture social movements given that they are working through powerful institutions rather than through disruptions of the routine. On the other hand, those making transition are creating cultural frames which cultivate that spirit of radical change that must break with institutional limitations of the past. For an elaboration of this cultural viewpoint, see Kennedy (1997).

Poland has had more than its share of intellectuals and other influentials of consequence articulating visions that transcend Polish borders,<sup>5</sup> can draw attention to their society, and translate their national experiences into a global culture.<sup>6</sup> In that number, one might begin with Poland's two recent Nobel Laureates of Literature -- Milosz and Szymborska -- the Nobel Laureate of Peace, Lech Walesa, Adam Michnik as "East Europe's emblematic democratic intellectual"<sup>7</sup> and of course Karol Wojtyla, the first non-Italian pope in 455 years.

For these reasons, Poland is central to the sociological enterprise generally, and to critical sociology specifically. But it is not as central as it might be. In recent years the previous emphasis on class, structure, social movements and totalistic utopias in critical sociology has been complimented more by an emphasis on culture, history, narrative and difference (Calhoun, 1995, Kennedy and Galtz, 1996). Indeed, my basic argument in this essay is that Poland's difference, its distinction for sociology generally, and especially for critical sociology, has not been made as strongly as it might be.

I shall begin by considering Poland's existing claims to distinction. I shall then consider its place in that field of inquiry where national claims to distinction most easily rest: comparative and historical sociology. I'll next turn to two particular emphases that might elevate Poland's importance in critical sociology specifically and sociology generally: comparative cultural studies with an emphasis on ethnicity, gender and nation, and the comparative historical analysis of postcommunist transformations.

#### POLISH SOCIETY AND SOCIOLOGY IN THE REFLECTION OF GLOBAL PRACTICE

Long before transitology made East European societies a privileged object of the North American sociological gaze, Poland was important to North American sociology.

Its significance was due in part to the importance of Polish emigration and of immigration and ethnicity to the founding moments of North American sociology. But it was not just the demographics of immigration. After all, there were also significant numbers of Jews and others entering the USA from Eastern Europe.<sup>8</sup> Equally important as, if not more important than, the numbers was Poland's intellectual infrastructure. Before World War II, Poland could claim several sociologists of international stature. None was more important than Florian Znaniecki whose prior collaboration with W.I. Thomas produced an internationally revered sociological classic

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<sup>5</sup> My home at the University of Michigan has been one site where this global prominence of Polish intellectuals is easily evident. Its more than annual Copernicus lecture series has featured internationally recognized authors, musical composers, poets, philosophers, publicists, historians and other Poles of global consequence.

<sup>6</sup> For a marvelous discussion of global culture, see Appadurai, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> p. 11 in Katznelson, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Pearson (1983) estimates that there were more Poles than any other ethnic group emigrating from Eastern Europe. Approximately 1.8 million left between 1850 and 1914. The second largest community to emigrate was Jews with 1.6 million. Each other ethnic group emigrated in numbers less than 500,000.

(Thomas and Znaniecki, 1958).<sup>9</sup> International collaboration is clearly one of the most important ways in which a society enters the North American disciplinary space.

One of the most important questions international collaboration poses, however, is one about the forms in which North America's alterity is implicated in the disciplinary practice. Poland became central for Thomas because it helped to explain the character of American society and its new immigrants. Why else might a North American sociology look to Poland?

Of course, to the extent North American sociology presumed itself to be a universal social science, and not one that was an area study of the USA and secondarily Canada, it had to move beyond its 'ethnocentrism', as C. Everett Hughes (1961) named North American sociology in 1961. But Poland is a greater stretch than many other societies. For linguistic reasons, fewer North American sociologists could conduct research in Poland than in French, German or Spanish speaking countries. Poland also was less accessible than that Europe further to its West, and than Latin American for many North Americans. Polish diaspora intellectuals in North America are of course the great exception to this predisposition, but although individually accomplished, their impact on the discipline was not so great. In part, this may be because they have not populated the major research universities and graduate training institutions of the USA as much as one might have expected.

Nevertheless, after World War II and especially after de-Stalinization's liberation of sociology, Poland became particularly appealing for its systemic difference. For sociologists interested in patterns of inequality and whether things might be altered radically, Poland proved to be a central case (Lenski, 1978). It wasn't, of course, that Poland's system of inequality was intrinsically more interesting than that in Hungary, the Soviet Union, or Bulgaria. Instead, it was because Poland was more open to sociological investigation, and there were more sociologists of exceptional caliber there with whom American sociologists could collaborate.<sup>10</sup> Its many English-language publications, whether published in the USA or in Poland, represented this accomplishment to those who might not have the personal networks to confirm it. Its terrific program of research on inequality was perhaps the exemplar of Polish accomplishments. Włodzimierz Wesolowski was the obvious leader of an important school of thought and research agenda.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> W.I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki. The Polish Peasant in Europe and America. New York: Dover, (1918/20) 1958.

<sup>10</sup> One autobiographical note: Thanks in part to the inspiration provided by that special issue of Social Forces edited by T. Anthony Jones (Volume 4, 1978) in which Gerhard Lenski's article appeared, I entered graduate school with the intention of learning Russian and studying the USSR. In the spring of 1980 after my first year of study, Gerhard Lenski advised me that I switch my focus to learning Polish and studying Poland because of its more open research environment and its greater tradition of sociological inquiry. With the formation of the Solidarity movement later that summer, I lost most of my doubts about the wisdom of my decision. And after Włodzimierz Wesolowski's visit to Chapel Hill in the spring of 1981 I was convinced that I made the right choice. His visit initialed an association that was to become one of my most important during my dissertation work in Poland in 1983-84.

<sup>11</sup> Two particular projects struck me as especially important when I began my interest in Poland. Wesolowski's Classes Strata and Power (1966/1979) was clearly the leading theoretical statement of this school, and provided the means by which an American graduate student interested in inequality generally could find socialist societies a

On this score, Poland's main rivals in the 1970s were Yugoslavia and Hungary. Although there have been some initial forays into describing these different states of sociology (Keen and Mucha, 1995), one of the most important questions in the sociology of knowledge we ought to take up is a comparative and historical investigation of how Poland managed its sociological accomplishment in comparison to other East European countries and in terms of the praxis of sociologists themselves. In particular, I think it would be important to consider how networks of actors managed to open up and defend the space for sociological investigation. Not only should we consider those critical moments of post-Stalinist accomplishment and anti-Semitic defeats, Solidarity's openings and martial law's attacks, but we also should study everyday academic life. What kinds of compromises with authority did sociologists have to accept in order to promote scholarship? What kinds of negotiations with family and friends did they have to undertake? What was the relationship between those who identified their opposition to the regime rather openly and their departmental chiefs who may have belonged to the Party and accepted responsibilities in it? We should consider the relationship between professional, political and institutional requirements, of course, but also we should embed that in a sociology of knowledge that properly takes into account the intensely personal dimensions of this system.<sup>12</sup>

I think this sociology of intellectual production has particular practical importance today too. While Poland was obviously central in most inter-systemic assessments of inequality, it appears to me that after communism's collapse its relative importance has declined. To be sure, this is no reflection on the quality of scholarly product or scholars. Mach and Wesolowski (1997) argue that, on a whole, Polish sociology has improved its professional quality in the last decade, exemplified by such distinguished works in 1996 as Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski's Democratic Reconstruction: Sociological Aspects of Radical Social Change (1996), Mira Marody's (ed.) Taming Emerging Reality: Between Real Socialism and Real Democracy, and Kazimierz Slomczynski et al.'s Social Structure and Personality (1996). Furthermore, this is not a reflection of any lack of numbers. In comparison to other East and Central European national assemblies of sociologists, the Polish tradition thrives. Within Warsaw alone, there are impressive concentrations of sociologists associated with Warsaw University, the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Central European University branch of sociology, the Institute for Social Studies, and the School of Social Sciences. On top of that, there are many important sociologists in Krakow, Poznan, Torun and Gdansk. The number of influential diaspora Polish sociologists complicates the picture further.

I see two principal strategies available for Polish sociology in the emergent global sociological marketplace. On the one hand, Polish sociology can draw on its exceptional tradition of collaborative and positivist sociology to organize the comparative sociology of postcommunist change. It can train the next generation of scholars from other East European countries, and build out of that network an enduring set of collaborations with a Polish node. Alternatively, Polish sociologists themselves are studying other post-communist

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compelling context for research. Equally important, however, was that I was convinced that I would find an extraordinary community of scholars with whom to work. I remember being impressed with the sheer number of empirical studies conducted by Wesolowski and his colleagues when I read Włodzimierz Wesolowski and Kazimierz M. Slomczynski (1977).

countries on behalf of various international organizations or large-scale comparative inquiries. In this sense, Polish sociology capitalizes on its own research infrastructure to become the middleman research unit for comparative studies of post-communist social transformation. Hungarian sociology is also well poised to make this leap, given its own more extensive branch of the Central European University.

Polish sociology's alternative strategy has a different starting point than most of the Polish sociology I know. Most incorporates Polish society into a more general theory of human societies. This positivistically inclined epistemology is especially good for facilitating collaboration, but it is not a very good approach for generating interest in a society. Any society will do for positivist replications, and if the openness of research environments is no longer distinguishing Poland from other East European societies, it strikes me that a new approach might be worth considering.

### CONTEXTUALIZING SOCIOLOGY

Sociology and area studies -- that interdisciplinary study of a region's language, culture, history and institutions -- have been cast as antagonists. The former is understood as generalizing and rule seeking, while the latter has been cast as atheoretical and without methodological rigor (Kennedy, 1997a). That very intellectual opposition has helped to undermine what is to my mind the most powerful case for making global sociology less English-language focused and North America centered and to make international sociology more multi-nodal.<sup>13</sup> It also helps undermine one of the most important traditions of sociological inquiry, historical sociology. Sociology is most likely to be contextually grounded when historical sociologists not only constitute a specialization within the discipline, but also when historical sociologists self-consciously develop disciplinary questions for other specializations, and even other disciplines. To some extent, however, Polish sociology must challenge the archetypes of comparative and historical sociology.

Archetypes are clearly important for a comparative and historical sociology that seeks to distinguish dictatorship and democracy, for instance. Hitler's Germany is almost always invoked for the one (Moore, 1966), while Pilsudski's rule pales by comparison (Seton-Watson, 1962). If we seek liberalism, American and English nationhoods and democracies are put at the core of discussion (Greenfeld, 1992), but Poland's noblemen's democracy and early articulations of the liberal nation receive scant sociological attention.<sup>14</sup> If we are interested in basic alternatives to citizenship, why go beyond a French and German comparison (Brubaker, 1992).<sup>15</sup> If we are

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<sup>12</sup> As Podgorecki 1994 exemplifies in his own critique of Polish sociology.

<sup>13</sup> Few today seem to problematize the hegemony of English language studies. While it certainly is an important convenience, its great unintended consequence for American sociology is to leave it mono-lingual, and thereby lose the advantages that come with a global multiculturalism. For one recent exception to this acceptance of English, see Michel Wieviorka (1997).

<sup>14</sup> Despite Andrzej Walicki's special efforts, noticeably in Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. Poland does figure into archetypes of the weak state, however: see Perry Anderson's Lineages of the Absolutist State London: Verso, 1980.

<sup>15</sup> Rogers Brubaker (1992) replicated the basic alternatives in citizenship theory, but his newer work (1996) destabilizes the archetypal approach.

interested in successful and failed revolutions, why go beyond the comparison between French, Russian and Chinese cases with English, German and Japanese failures (Skocpol, 1979)? Poland's many rebellions and political transformations without rapid social structural transformations, or social structural transformations based on revolution from abroad (Gross, 1988), have not captured the discipline's attention like those in other countries. The "weak state" is the only archetype for which eighteenth century Poland is regularly invoked (Anderson, 1980).

Other fascinations of comparative and historical sociology also detour from Poland's experience. Imperial centers are especially prominent in a comparative and historical sociology focusing on modernity's making. These cores shape the modern world system disproportionately more than those who are occupied by them. England, France and the Netherlands are all fundamental to a sociology interested in modernity's origins. More exciting recently is the attention given by sociologists to the role played by their colonies in the making of the core's modernity (Anderson, 1983; Adams, 1994; Gilroy, 1994).

Those who are occupied by West European powers are treated more centrally in sociological accounts of modernity's making than that part of the world whose experience with empire fails to cross oceans. The contiguous empires are notably absent in comparative and historical treatments of modernity's making (Barkey and von Hagen, 1997). While there has been some extended interest in the sociological community about these empires generally, and especially their cores (Gocek, 1996), the peripheries of the contiguous empires are mostly beyond the pale of comparative and historical sociology. There are of course some exceptions.

Daniel Chirot's (1989) coordinating work has put Eastern Europe's 'backwardness' at the center of the sociological imagination. Poland's fundamental and initial importance to the making of Wallerstein's modern world system as the core's first periphery (Wallerstein, 1976) put the Poland of the 1500s and 1600s at the center of historical sociological debate in the 1970s and 1980s (Brenner, 1985).

On the other hand, Poland was never so dominated by the West as were more proper colonies, and one might say that Poland's history was too thick and embedded in its aristocratic layers to be rewritten by imperial reconstructions.<sup>16</sup> But as other empires become more important to the sociology of imperial systems, Poland might become an important site for this tradition of historical sociological inquiry. In particular, given that Poland was the most 'Western' and most 'historic' nation to be occupied by a power to its east, the question about the role of colonies in making modernity could find a new and important twist by making Poland and its relationship to Russia central.

Poland could also help rewrite the questions of empire's study by centering the nation in our inquiry. After all, it was within these multinational contiguous empires that histories were rediscovered and reconstructed by 'small nations'. And together with Poland, as a 'historic' nation, the claim that the route to modernity was through national emancipation found powerful expression. But it is not only the question about nation-making that sociologists should find central. We should imagine new questions too.

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<sup>16</sup> Here I think especially of the comparison between Hawaii and China that Marshall Sahlins (1981, 1994) has made and the very different implications of foreigners in remaking tradition and culture in the two places. The presumptions about peoples without history can be found in Wolf (1982).



For those in the US, society and the state are imagined as coterminous. Or at least they are operationalized that way in numerous empirical studies. The production of a rhetoric of a Polish nation (of course through many important cultural transformations) over 123 years of partition challenges our imagination of how society is reproduced and constituted. Indeed, while one might explain some of the French distinction with their contentiousness (Tilly, 1996), the Poles relied on their contentiousness through quiet resistance and open rebellion to preserve their very identity (Lepkowski, 1967; Wandycz, 1984). But because the great questions of comparative and historical sociology have been defined by societies as nation-states, or by their relationship to the capitalist world system and its core, the national question that has so dominated Polish sociology has not been as central as it might be to comparative and historical sociology at a global level. Rather than leave it as a branch of comparative studies of ethnicity, I think nations and nationalism ought to be taken outside of its more comfortable sub-speciality, and inserted into the larger discourse of systemic transformations and global formations. In particular, I think we should use this problem of the Polish nation as an opportunity to discover how discourses of identity are produced, rather than take the survival of a nation itself as a point of departure. While the nation should thus be studied as one among a number of cultural formations whose production must be explained, one of its major points of entry to sociologies allergic to cultural studies might be with reference to comparative studies of race and ethnicity.

Racial and ethnic distinctions are fundamental to sociology. With the elevation of identity politics and multiculturalism to the center of political debate in a post-Fordist world, the founding concerns of US sociology -- immigration, assimilation, and ethnic and racial difference -- are being embraced by a larger and larger global community of scholarship. But these are also distinctions that rest heavily on global patterns of inequality established with racial markers. Poland does not easily fit. But with recasting the debate, to rearticulate ethnic difference with a national accent rather than racial one, historical Poland could be central.<sup>17</sup>

As it is, however, Polish markers of difference, because they are inflected less by race and more by nation, get relegated to studies of nationalism and not incorporated in basic studies of race and ethnicity in the USA. Of course, language barriers play a role in this disruption of dissemination -- Jasinska-Kania's (1992) fine edited collection addresses the link between social experience, social distance and ethnic stereotypes, but is unapproachable for those who do not know Polish. But I would propose that linguistic barriers are not the only problem. Hertz (1988) for instance, explicitly compared Jewish relationships to Polishness with African American relationships to American nationality (Hertz, 1988). One also might compare how liberal racism assaults minority identity in the American context with how Pilsudski's romantic nationalism affected Ukrainian identity (Rudnycky, 1987). Interwar Poland could then become an early and important case of multicultural strife. These comparisons would, however, require a more extended discussion of the meaning of the nation that that which is typically accorded it in North American studies. More contemporary studies in Poland are also extremely

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<sup>17</sup> As Rogers Brubaker (1996a) finds. Brian Porter reminded me that race and nation were used rather interchangeably in the nineteenth century. Discursive practices later in the twentieth century have magnified the distinctions between these concepts.

important for the comparative and historical study of race and ethnicity, but they also need to be approached with a greater emphasis on cultural and hermeneutic theories than treatments of race and ethnicity are often conducted.

#### COMPARATIVE CULTURAL STUDIES: ETHNICITY, GENDER AND THE UNARTICULATED

Polish-Jewish relations are one of the most important subjects of this century, but because of the moral loading of the debate, they are also one of those terrains of analysis that can intimidate the faint of heart. Some historiographies paint Poland as the home of the Holocaust, and not as the refuge from Inquisition. Because of Polish denials, Polish complicity can be painted as negatively as Nazi responsibility. Other historiographies emphasize that Poles *also* died by the millions, and that there were many righteous ones who risked their lives and those of their families to save Jews. To rehearse the simple but ever recurrent mistrust in the debate is to replay that which should be transcended, however.<sup>18</sup>

Jeffrey Goldfarb (1992) recognizes the complexity of this relationship between Poles and Jews in his exploration of the controversy over the foundation of a Carmelite nunnery in the death camp at Auschwitz. Specifically, he identifies the summer 1989 conflict of an American Rabbi and his followers with Polish workers who ejected them from the convent in which they staged a sit-in. Everyday Polish Catholics, he pointed out, could not imagine the affront to Jewish sensibilities represented by inserting a place of Christian worship on the site of Shoah. Jews could not imagine the violation such a forced entry to the nuns' sacred space of prayer meant. Clearly, there is a critical hermeneutics to be engaged. But the moral grounding overwhelms the intellectual problem.

After rehearsing the difficulty, Goldfarb moves away from problems of mutual recognition toward a critique of Polish anti-Semitism. This kind of racism is of course important to explore, and Goldfarb's own method is familiar in the literature: to cite the crudeness of the Archbishop Glemp's own anti-Semitism (if he is that bad, just imagine how bad the anti-Semitism of the everyday Catholic must be!) and to cite his friend and indigenous authority Konstanty Gebert's opinion that he felt "a little less at home in Poland" after these developments around Auschwitz (Gebert, 1991). While certainly the demographic weight of the problem lies with Polish Catholics, the problem is not just a Polish Catholic one if our concern is about the mutual construction of the Polish-Jewish relationship. Indeed, I was struck that Ireneusz Krzeminski's (1996) recent survey work was motivated in part to show that Polish anti-Semitism is not so exceptional. It is not much different from anti-Semitism in other Central European countries, and its character depends on age. Finally, philo-Semitism is mixed with anti-Semitism. This philo-Semitism is especially challenging to interpret: how can one balance its commodification, its celebration, its reliance on stereotypes, and its elicitation of a Jewish publicity that was previously denied (Lehrer, 1997). Clearly, the Polish-Jewish relationship is something that deserves extensive investigation by sociologists of race and ethnicity.

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<sup>18</sup> There have been many important attempts at this. One might begin with Antony Polonsky (1990). The effort continues, too. The University of Michigan is focusing in 1997-98 on the relationship between Jews and Poland in a joint program between the Center for Russian and East European Studies and the Center for Judaic Studies.

One project that especially impresses me with its critical engagement of the Polish-Jewish relationship is Young's (1993) study of monuments to the Holocaust. By comparing particular Holocaust memorials in the USA, Germany, Poland and Israel, Young shows how the singularity of the Holocaust is necessarily imbued with national meanings and practices when monuments are constructed to its memory. In this sense, the Polish emphasis on its own suffering during World War II is made more 'normal'. In the USA, Holocaust memorials are embedded in stories of American responsibility and the challenge of extending the civil rights struggles; in Israel, the Holocaust memorial is implicated in a state project. In Germany, Holocaust memorials must simultaneously embrace German responsibility while remembering the victims of Holocaust. While Poles are not responsible for the Holocaust, the national project to emphasize Poland's own suffering is hardly compatible with an event that seeks to deny all comparison. In this project, then, Young demonstrates that it is not just the fact of Polish anti-Semitism or the physical location of the Holocaust itself, but the challenge of articulating the Holocaust with every nation's memory and meaning.

Like a Polish society that emerges after partition, Polish-Jewish relationships cannot only be explored as an empirical phenomenon. Polish Catholics perceive Jews to be far more prominent in Poland and the world than they are. To explain both the survival of the Polish nation without a state and the survival of Jews in the Polish national imagination requires a kind of cultural analysis that involves projection as much as presence.<sup>19</sup> And it also invites a measure of reflexivity and normative reconstructions that most other kinds of sociology can overlook.

In some ways, gender studies reproduce some of the challenges involved in Polish-Jewish studies. It too is heavily loaded normatively, although the moral stakes are not nearly so high. The antagonisms are also much more muted. Non-Polish women have a much more limited claim to knowing the proper way Polish women should be treated than Jews have authority in knowing how the legacies of the Jewish presence in Poland should be handled. On the other hand, both gender studies and Polish-Jewish studies have a complicated hermeneutics underlying their empirical analysis *if* they have a multinational audience. They both require moving well beyond the empirical observation of patterns of inequality or oppression in order to provide explanation.

Feminism, or at least the positioning of women in prominent roles, was not so alien to Poland before communist rule. Polish women even were assimilated into North American feminist writings as particular exemplars of emancipation (Filipowicz, 1996). But during and especially after communism's collapse, gender studies have not articulated easily with Polish intellectual culture (Funk and Mueller, 1993).

Of course there are important scholars of gender in Poland,<sup>20</sup> but the globalized feminist community of discourse doesn't resonate as well in Poland as in Germany, Hungary, Russia, the former Yugoslavia or Turkey.

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<sup>19</sup> One might approach this problem through Lacanian studies that focus as much on the fantasy structure of the unconscious as on the observable phenomena which others presume to produce these effects (Zizek, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> Malgorzata Fuszara, Renata Sieminska and Anna Titkow are the sociologists who most often appear on the global stage. In May 1997, the University of Michigan's Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Institute for Social Research and Center for Russian and East European Studies initiated a year long engagement of gender studies and Polish studies. This follows the important work on the East European-North American dialogues around gender initiated in North America by Susan Gal, Gail Kligman and Joanna Regulska.

North American feminists may explain that dissonance with Polish male chauvinism and the influence of the Catholic Church; Polish scholars might explain it with intimations of feminist unculturedness or Western national chauvinism. The better scholars will use more nuanced interpretations (Marody, 1993). But I have not seen the accounts that go deeply into how feminism, as a community of discourse, articulates with Polish intellectual culture more broadly speaking. To examine this properly, a comparative and historical analysis of feminism's reception in and articulation with various East Central European intellectual communities could be valuable.

Beyond noting the obvious significance of the Catholic Church, one should consider how emancipation was itself framed. Nationally framed emancipation can, sometimes, be articulated with gender-based emancipatory frames (Hart, 1996; Kandiyoti, 1991). But this typically feeds into a society where the distinction between tradition and emancipation is drawn with a thick line, as in Turkey where one of the most effective arguments against Islam is one based on the critique of its gender practices. But where tradition and emancipation cannot be so ideologically opposed, the gender problematic is harder to elaborate.

While certainly communism's undoing was marked by a wish to join Europe, it was also based on a resentment that Polish ways were denied by Soviet rule. Tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, could be linked.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, feminism's global reference and its distance from the patriarchal traditions of its national culture is more difficult to enunciate where the cultural form of independence was sublimated to the struggle to acquire it.

For that reason, rather than rely on a globalized formation of feminist discourse to interrogate gender in Poland, I believe unusual comparisons might help unpack the relationship between everyday life and gender politics better. For instance, might the expression of gender politics in Polish everyday life be illuminated by its comparison to the ways in which women within the Turkish Islamist movement articulate their gendered distinction (Gole, 1996)?<sup>22</sup> Indeed, might we say that one reason Turkey can produce so many more feminists than Poland is because its national community is more radically split on cultural lines than Poland's community? The gap between the secular and the religious, between appeals to modernity and appeals to tradition, is much greater in Turkey than in Poland, or is it?

Comparison is important in its own right, but I believe that its greatest payoff comes when the comparison yields new kinds of questions that depart from reigning globalized intellectual formations.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the best questions are those which show the limits of that globalized discourse's universality by highlighting how much

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<sup>21</sup> At various stages, Adam Michnik has been central to developing this tie. See Michnik (1991) and Michnik, Tischner and Zakowski, (1994).

<sup>22</sup> The University of Michigan is focusing on this particular comparison in a series of workshops in the 1997-98 academic year.

<sup>23</sup> This is the premise of the U-M CREES project on identity formation and social issues in Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. We seek where and how similar narratives linking identity to social issues across these radically different civilizational contexts are constructed. For more information, see the website <<http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/crees/fsugrant/>>.

they reflect the experience of, or attention to, the core of the world system's intellectual production rather than the variety of social and historical experience in the world system.

One of the intriguing points about contemporary scholarship is that some of the most innovative work in social theory is taking place outside the core. Indeed, if there is one world region that has produced a significant number of theoretical shifts in recent years it has been South Asia. One might invoke any number of exemplars, but I would point to Partha Chatterjee (1993) as someone who has simultaneously elevated the significance of his place, Bengal, or more broadly India, into a challenge to dominant social and cultural theories. To take but one example: he has argued that nationalism is fundamentally flawed as an emancipatory vision because it is based on a modular expression that is itself a product of the imperial rule from which those in South Asia seek liberation. His ambition is to discover a methodology and practice that might allow one to recover that very form of indigenous social association that global implication denies. India thus becomes something other than another case with which to investigate a general theory. Instead, particular practices within India require close historical, cultural, social and institutional analysis to unpack the combination of imperial and local residues. While certainly this example can't be exported to Poland, it does have some really interesting implications, I believe, for Polish scholarship.

To some extent, I can imagine a similar method to Chatterjee's being elaborated in the analysis of gender in Poland. While it is incredibly useful to draw upon those methodologies and practices associated with North American feminism's development, their implication in research and especially their deployment as critique within Poland should not escape how they have been nationed by their North American or West European reproduction. For instance, one colleague told me of the difficulty she faced explaining to North American feminists why she could not support a particular program for women's rights when it also plays into the elevation of a post-communist party whose past practice and present duplicities are part of the very system of domination against which she struggles. How does one explain the relationship between a struggle for emancipation that simultaneously finds in the Catholic Church meaningful community and a source of women's oppression? And how does one move beyond my own simplistic renderings?

I am not the diaspora, or hybrid, intellectual who can do with Polish culture what Partha Chatterjee can do with Bengali or Indian culture. But I am part of that community of discourse to which the hybrid of Polish background can write, and in which the Polish distinction can be vaunted as an object of sustained sociological inquiry. But this elevation of the Polish distinction too easily resonates with that intellectual culture that most of my Polish colleagues seek to escape.<sup>24</sup> Skotnicka-Illasiewicz and Wesolowski (1995) identified two kinds of intellectual communities among Poland's elites: on the one hand, there were those who saw Europe as a collection of civil societies with little distinguishing them. On the other hand, there were elites that emphasized nations as moral communities with very different value systems, of which Poland was one of the most pure and which must be protected from the depravity of European materialism. The former proponents of civil society are more likely to be

my colleagues in sociology or gender studies, and yet it is the latter who are more likely to look for the Polish distinction.

For those who wish to enter Europe as quickly as possible, the Polish distinction is not something to be elevated. For those who wish to encourage international scholarly collaboration, one must promise the provisional transparency of social relations and the plausibility of comparison. But I believe that alongside these comparative and collaborative ventures, one might also seek to render those differences which are backgrounded in order to make the comparisons plausible, the collaborations possible. Can sociology move toward not only the production of comparison, but also the evocation of differences that are typically unarticulated? Much as Chatterjee might seek that form of community that the global formation denies expression, might Polish scholars seek that Polish gender regime that North American feminism cannot recognize? And if with gender, then might we also extend the interpretation of the nation further to question whether in fact there are other differences in nation formation that are denied expression by the conventions of unequal international association? Indeed, might 'transition' itself be subjected to just such a comparative and historical approach to the nation and difference?

#### COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO POSTCOMMUNIST TRANSFORMATIONS

Transitology is not yet comparative and historical sociology. By that I mean the comparative study of postcommunist social transformations has not yet acquired that synthetic, deep and nuanced approach that time certainly allows. Its emphasis is rather formal and structural (Centano, 1994). On the other hand, once comparative historical sociology embraces the transition, the bounty of data on which it can draw will be far deeper than investigations of any other periods of radical social change. And Poland could be marked as central in that comparative historical analysis. Poland's preeminence as a leader in transition, as an exemplar on the fast-track, is itself potentially transitory, but one place where the Polish distinction likely will not fade is in the vibrancy of its social movements and popular protest.

Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik (forthcoming) are making an extremely important case for considering that Poland's social transformations are exemplary for considering how pressure from below influences the process of transition. But this exemplary case was itself based on an earlier moment, one that historical sociology had begun to engage, but because of the turn of world history, left behind.

Because my focus in this essay is Poland's implication in global sociology, I won't pay proper heed to the number of significant Polish works assessing what was arguably the most important social movement of this century, Solidarnosc in 1980-81.<sup>24</sup> I do wish to emphasize, however, that that period produced a significant measure of global focus on Poland, with a substantial number of journalistic works and later a flurry of more scholarly English language publications. The principal concerns of these works in some ways made them

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<sup>24</sup> Although Wesolowski's (1995) emphasis on the communal tradition might be one way to magnify the Polish distinction while retaining the progressive orientation of left liberalism.

<sup>25</sup> My own book on that period (Kennedy, 1991) was to a significant degree based on that scholarship, however, although it only relied on those publications issued in 1989 and before.

anachronistic when communism began its collapse in Poland, however. Touraine et al. (1983) emphasized its evolution as a total movement, and Kennedy (1991) its class alliance; Ost (1990) the movement's antipolitics; Laba (1992) its workerist roots; Staniszki's self-limitation and moral politics (1986). All of these portraits were grounded in a sociology implicated in communism's power, not its demise. Jan Kubik's (1994) work is a major exception. His book properly emphasizes the cultural construction of society vs. the authorities, and in particular the conflict's 'oversymbolization'. This lays the foundation for his subsequent important work (forthcoming) on the disarticulation between elite conflicts and the cultural frames of popular protest.

Despite Kubik's contribution, there is room for more attention to that movement and that historical moment. In particular, I think it could be worthwhile to reconsider the movement's praxis with a new theory of communist power based on its mutability rather than its durability. Following Akos Rona-Tas's (1997) treatment of the second economy in his account of Hungary's downfall, we should pay special attention to the authorities' power and vision in its own praxis vis-a-vis the movement. We should certainly move beyond the cultural frames that animated the movement. In particular, I think we should separate the question of lustration from the very important analytical question of the role of the communist authorities in constructing the movement after 1981.<sup>26</sup>

I would propose, therefore, that we consider how the engagements between authorities and movement constructed a pattern of responsible politics superseding principled anti-politics; how class antagonisms superseded class alliances; and how capitalist interests superseding workerist moralities. In some ways, I am asking the same question that Adam Michnik (1996) poses when he writes that the workers/civil rights component of Solidarity has been transformed into populism; the Catholic/traditional component transformed into nationalism and the instrumental treatment of religion; and the intellectual/democratic current relegated to marginality. But rather than blame the movement, how might we consider this an unintended consequence of the cultural politics of postcommunist transformations in which Adam Michnik himself is implicated?

One of the powerful critiques that cultural studies can make of the social movements literature is that movement analysts typically accept the cultural frames movement leaders produce of their own or others' movements. My first book is particularly guilty of such an affirmation of Solidarity, where I argued that one must accept that Solidarity represented emancipatory praxis. In the middle of a movement, one can not very easily question whether its claims represent the constituencies they imply are their base.

While I still think that Solidarity represented emancipatory hope before 1989, cultural studies does not easily embrace that kind of intellectual solidarity with movements. Rather than assume the distinction between resistance and social movements to only represent one of intensity, cultural studies problematizes the relationship. As Dirks, Eley and Ortner suggest (1994:5),

movements often themselves become removed from everyday experience, their members coming to see popular behavior as something to be educated, improved, disciplined. At the same time, the people on whose behalf

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<sup>26</sup> Andrzej Zybertowicz's (1993) book properly raises the question, but because it is implicated in a politics of lustration and intra-necine post-Solidarity conflict it can't find the proper community of inquiry in which to conduct the study.

such movements claim to speak often find the language and the mechanics of these movements remote and alienating. The complex and problematic relations between social movements and disorderly popular culture, involving distinctions of class and gender, ethnicity and race, roughness and respectability, are becoming central to the contemporary problematic.

In other words, how are the alliances, or the appearance of congruencies, between a movement and its grassroots popular culture made? What gets left out? Similar concerns about the articulation of popular culture and its elite expressions might also be applied to transition culture itself.

For those studying transition, the normative loadings of their commitments are typically clear: the sooner the transition is complete, the better. Their inquiry is typically rooted in the barriers to making transition work. In this sense, those studying transition are typically part of its very culture. But in the larger popular culture, is it not also true that convictions about direction and especially about the carriers of that forward vision are becoming ever more chaotic? That investments of integrity, morality, and political correctness are becoming harder to assign. That the sense of victimhood might be more widely dispersed?

Not only is the analysis of transition problematic because this analysis is itself embedded in transition culture itself, but also because its priority is often the comparison of cases rather than the deep interrogation of a particular one. I would propose that the most interesting questions are precisely those which are relatively absent from the debates, debates which focus on those questions that are most easily transportable. While certainly postcommunist social transformations need to be studied comparatively, I believe they also should be studied with questions that only in-depth engagements with particular sites can answer and even imagine. Specifically, I believe that the focus on elites and institutions must be complimented by a focus on the hidden transcripts and popular understandings.

Ekiert and Kubik's work on social movements in transition is vitally important to this challenge. Social movements and especially popular protest are means by which we can approach that hidden transcript. Indeed, following their use of newspapers for the reporting of protest frames, one can approach this in a comparative fashion. Kubik's work in particular is extremely helpful in identifying the gaps between political elites and movement cultural frames. He also has tried to articulate the protest themes with everyday life concerns, but has had to rely primarily on survey research to realize that ambition. But this may be one of the challenges transition culture ought to set before us.

Both surveys and social movements evoke public opinion through powerful mediations that necessarily distort how everyday life works. Their mediations are of course different: the survey instrument necessarily reflects the theoretical positions of the survey makers, and the social movement reflects the positions of the activist. Of course neither researcher nor activist will get their results if they don't articulate with everyday life to some degree. But on the other hand, neither instrument of social engagement prioritizes the reduction of intrusion into everyday life. Instead, one prioritizes representativeness and replicability, and the other prioritizes social efficacy.

I suspect, however, that transition culture is so powerful that it makes the hidden transcripts difficult not only to see but also to articulate. The theorist who derives her questions from transition culture might continue to



put forward survey questions about markets and democracy while everyday life focuses on living standards and the irresponsibility of the authorities.<sup>27</sup> The social movement activist might respond to the wishes of her movement and of the strategies for conflict, but how these protest frames articulate with popular concerns is hardly self evident, especially if movement activists and survey researchers are both informed more by transition culture's categories than are those whom they seek to mobilize for survey response or protest demonstrations. One way, I believe, for getting to these hidden transcripts is to consider the meaning of the nation itself, not as an ideological formation but as a part of Polish common sense, in the context of transition culture.

I continue to work on the implication of the nation in transition culture and am struggling to develop the right questions for this approach to postcommunist social transformations. I have studied the cultural encounter between Western experts and Polish businessmen in everyday life, and have found the ways in which Polishness and its implication in a socialist past and European future far more complicated than oppositions between civic and ethnic nations allow. For instance, although the sophisticated businessman might denigrate the socialist mindset of the old manager he replaces, fully in line with the transition culture he breathes, at the same time this new manager will resent the arrogance and condescension with which Western consultants will speak of Poles as a category of inferior marketeers. Indeed, he might even identify the multinational corporation with the socialist past, filled with the same kinds of bureaucratic irresponsibility and negative selection that characterized communist rule (Kennedy, forthcoming).

Although I have been removed from an active engagement with Polish scholarship for too long, it seems to me that the central questions are not only those which move along with transition, but stand to the side, from the margins, and look at how transition has shaped scholarship. Indeed, to get to the side of the transition, one might return to popular narratives, whether of elites or of the impoverished, and through that kind of phenomenological engagement, ask how our concepts of sociological inquiry might be refashioned not only by the world historical changes that have overwhelmed Poland in the last decade, but also by the ways in which those changes have been understood in everyday life.

Such an emphasis is unlikely to be vaunted in most transition studies given that they are themselves focused on distinctions might be diminished rather than elevated. Here, critical sociology might be different. It will have to give up its familiar agenda of looking for resources that allow emancipatory movements to mobilize. Instead, critical sociology might turn to the business of articulating alternatives that are phenomenologically resonant with those parts of life transition culture denies, denigrates or simply ignores. And this can alter basic questions of sociological inquiry.

As Ekiert and Kubik seek to integrate protest culture into their conception of civil society and the fulfillment of transition, they are simultaneously transforming the very teleological nature of transition itself. If movements and protest are not just problematic stakeholders, but intrinsic to the definition of both the process and

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<sup>27</sup> This at least is the initial findings of our work using focus groups in our project on Identity Formation and Social Issues in Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

goal of making transition happen, the meaning of transition becomes much more open and subject to negotiation. And the relationship between forms of difference and projects of social transformation becomes central.

Consequently, in this comparative and historical approach to postcommunist social transformation, I believe it is time to take the cultural landscape of postcommunist change seriously, not only by implicating the cultural frames of its contestants and the identity projects of its victims and its winners. It is also important to use those historical materials and sociological studies to pose the questions that contemporary transitological studies repress because of the implication of their own work in making change happen (Kennedy, 1994). Already, there are several important collections that elaborate the cultural and attitudinal dimensions of postcommunist transformations (Jawłowska, Kempny and Tarkowska, 1993; Marody, 1996). Much as the relationship between movement and popular culture was not seriously studied before, today one might question the relationship between popular culture and transition culture.

## CONCLUSION

I have proposed that a comparative and historical sociology of the nation in the production of difference ought to be one of the central themes of a global sociology with a Polish node. In this conclusion, allow me to reconstruct the argument briefly and conclude with the identification of a single problem that might produce a larger comparative project.

In this century, Poland has been vitally important to the development of a global sociology because of its exceptional intellectual strength and the dispersion of Poles across the globe. It has been especially important to critical sociology given the importance of Solidarnosc in 1980-81 and its leading role in ending communism and initiating transition to democracy and the market economy in the region. But the ambition of this chapter has been to argue that the case for Poland's distinction has not been made strong enough.

To the extent Poland and other societies have had to demonstrate their sociological merit by casting their empirical lot within theoretical frames originating elsewhere, the distinction of their case cannot be recognized. We might find unusual distributions of stress by class (Slomczynski et al, 1996) or exceptional movement activity (Ekiert and Kubik, forthcoming), but Poland's distinction is likely to be recognized as only a matter of degree. And for positivists, this is as it should be. And thus, it hardly merits the investment in learning the language or the history of the place if our knowledge is best produced by comparison among many data points rather than in-depth engagement with one or a few societies.

On the other hand, to work within a largely Polish or indigenous cultural problematic is unlikely to generate the global reach that sociology aspires to realize. Indeed, the challenge of this outward reach for indigenous problematics is nowhere more evident than in debates about intellectuals and the articulation of the nation. Although this is a powerfully important subject within the region, it is hard to see in global sociology. In part, I would argue, this is because American sociology and intellectuals are not concerned about their own nation-ness.

Comparative and historical sociology is, in this sense, the branch of sociology most likely to search for the distinctions of societies within larger theoretical problematics. But because this field has been dominated by those whose first concern is Northwestern Europe and its empires, the problematics of Eastern Europe and Poland in particular have not been central to the debate. The major challenge to the sociology of Poland, I should argue, is to identify and elevate the problematics that put Poland at the center of scholarly inquiry. And that needs to be done by articulating Polish issues with dominant problems. I have suggested that a critical hermeneutics of Polish-Jewish relations that engages theories of racial difference and a comparative analysis of Turkish and Polish gender regimes that explains variable receptions of feminist theories are precisely those topical areas likely to generate wide interest. But more than publicity, these problems require a kind of cultural sociology that not only focuses on empirical distributions of attitudes or practices, but also an approach that can explain how absence can produce effects, and how a discursive formation centers some questions and concepts and relegates others to marginality or inferiority. In short, these areas of inquiry resemble the kind of theory that has made South Asian social and cultural theory so important lately: it forces us not only to look at distributions of the observable, but to elicit the unarticulated.

Although both gender and racial/ethnic differences are more important in a general sociology, the hottest topic in Polish studies is no doubt 'transition'. But could such a comparative and historical sociology of the nation in the production of difference be developed for transition?

I have already suggested that a comparison of the role of social movements in the making of Polish and South African transitions would be an exceptional project. While no doubt we have already had several proposals to study the variable impact of these movements on elite compacts and negotiations, what we have likely not seen proposed is a study of how each nation's transition has managed to repress the disarticulation of popular narratives from that of transition culture. But before the comparative proposal is made, the particularities of disarticulations, of difference, must be explored.

If we were to put difference at the center of our investigation of transitions, we would immediately problematize the relationship of those at the center of transition culture with those on whose behalf they claim to speak. Where are the congruencies in narratives of change? Where are the congruencies in terms of barriers to success and solutions to problems? If we problematize the relationship between movement activists and protest culture with the popular culture they claim to represent, we would not automatically fall into the trap movement theories invite. But if we do put movements at the center of our vision of transition, we can also begin to undermine that teleological theory of transition which is itself embedded in transition culture. It opens up the meaning of transition by putting difference at the heart of it.

Already communism's end has altered sociology's disciplinary practices. It has undermined the tendency to think in terms of systemic comparisons, and has invited us to think more subtly about the meanings of consequential social change. It has resurrected the importance of civil society, and has made us question the capacities of elites and of movements to steer change. But has this transformation produced new basic questions for sociology? And has it produced new fundamental concepts?

I believe that if we look to the phenomenologically meaningful and its disarticulations with the dominant concepts of transitology, and elaborate those sensibilities into intellectual cultural formations that elevate the meanings of transition into a more sociologically rich and pluralistic conception, we might reap the scholarly rewards these social transformations ending communism should have produced. And if any place might central to these conceptual transformations, I should think it would be Poland.

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