

**CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN SOCIOLOGY
IN THE POST-COMMUNIST ERA¹**

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Introduction: The History of Sociology in Central and Eastern Europe

For a little more than a decade now, from the very beginning of the post-Communist era in Europe, we have been systematically investigating the transformations of sociology in Central and Eastern Europe. Our own approach has been a combination of the "emic" and "etic," insider's and outsider's observations.

In the early 1990s, we began a research project on the history of sociology of the region from when the so-called "Khrushchev's thaw" started, 1956, to the beginnings of the post-1988 transformations. The results were published in the US (Keen and Mucha, eds., 1994), and in Poland (Mucha and Keen, eds., 1995). One of the "failures" of sociology of the region prior to the transformation is considered to be that it did not anticipate the collapse of the Communist system. One should bear in mind, however, the fact that political restrictions on the topics addressed and on the publication of findings were very strong (not everywhere and not always to the same extent). However, it is perhaps more interesting that the free Western political sciences and sociology did not anticipate this collapse.

Two reservations seem to be necessary at this point. On the one hand, we are not dealing with comparisons between Western and Eastern European sociology, then and now, in this article. On the other hand, we are not of the opinion that sociology, and particularly macro-sociology is a "natural science" which could predict the future events. We know that only some trends can be extrapolated. What we mean by the "failure" to anticipate transformations is that the sociology of 1956-1989 was not able to recognize the tensions within the European Communist societies and their potential for radical social change.

¹ First draft of this article was presented at the World Congress of Sociology in Brisbane, Australia, in July 2001.

Many structural and often dramatic changes took place during this period. Some political units ceased to exist, i.e., the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, the "old" Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. New nation-states emerged out of ruins of old ones, and even now the nation-building processes are not necessarily completed in the region. The futures of Bosnia Hercegovina, the "new" Yugoslavia (with Montenegro's aspiration to build the sovereign state, Serbia's Kosovo's being practically a UN protectorate), of Albania, Macedonia, and even of the Ukraine (with her strong divide between the Russian-speaking eastern part and the Ukrainian speaking western part) are not clear. Other dramatic changes have occurred within individual Eastern and Central European nations. Rapid and often superficial political liberalization and democratization, economic transformation in the direction of an increasing role of market mechanisms and free competition, as well as their consequences such as very high unemployment, the growing visibility of poverty; rapid Westernization (and particularly Americanization) of the popular culture, and a reappearance of ethnic tensions and overt ethnic conflicts, are only a few examples of what has emerged. One should also recognize changes resulting from the world's transformations: cultural and economic globalization with its positive and negative aspects, the Internet and the communication "revolution," and most recently the war against terrorism with all its ramifications, including new answers to the old dilemma "security versus freedom" and redefinition of some ethnic groups' struggle for sovereignty.

Sociology in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989

In the year of 2000, we began a second project to investigate the achievements and failures of sociology in Central and Eastern Europe during the decade that has passed since the transformation (see; Mucha and Keen, eds., in print). In the new project, we asked our collaborators from sixteen countries of East-Central Europe to address the following questions: (1) was a "de-Communization" of sociology (for instance, liquidation of some sociological institutions identified with the "old system"; negative attitudes of the new sociological elites to the "old," Communist Party linked scholars; research problems which ceased to be central due to the systemic transformation; Marxism and its role as a theoretical-methodological orientation) an important issue in the internal

politics of sociology?; (2) what changed in teaching of sociology – including new curricula, new textbooks: local and translations from Western languages; students' interest in sociology and a university major; combination of sociology with related disciplines like social work, social policy, ethnology?; (3) what are the relations between academic sociology on the one hand and public and private research centers on the other?; (4) which aspects of the socioeconomic transformation were considered to be the most important research problems?; (5) was nationalism and ethnicity an important research problem?; (6) what happened to the former research and teaching cooperation with other Central and Eastern European scholars?; (7) how does the research and teaching cooperation with Western sociology look like?; (8) are sociologists present in the local and national politics?; (9) are sociologists considered to be experts of the governing bodies on the local and national levels?; (10) how is of research and teaching financed?

It was not possible in the reports we eventually received to devote as much attention to each of these issues as they deserved (we had the space limitation set by the publisher) and it would be unreasonable to address all those issues in a presentation as short as this must be. Therefore, in this article, we concentrate on three issues only. The first is the political and intellectual milieu of post-1988 sociology. From our understanding, it was determined by two factors: the hypothetical presence of political atmosphere "demanding" de-Communization of the public sphere, including sociology, as well as the decreasing role of Marxism in the intellectual discourse. The second issue concerns the university teaching of sociology with the stress on majoring in this discipline on three levels of higher education. The third issue is, in this presentation, the new research areas, areas not cultivated before 1989 due to the simple fact that the subject matter either did not exist or was completely different than nowadays.

The empirical basis of this article is the above mentioned final reports (now in print at Greenwood Press) by our collaborators² and in some cases their much larger "first drafts," containing more information.

² Denes Nemedi and Peter Robert from Hungary, Mikko Lagerspetz and Iris Pettai from Estonia, Bohumil Buzek and Eva Laiferova from Slovakia, Franc Mali from Slovenia, Karel Turza from Yugoslavia, Vyara Gancheva from Bulgaria, Ognjen Caldarcovic from Croatia, Vanda Rusetskaya and Olga Tereschenko from Belorussia, Petre Georgievski and Mileva Gurovska from Macedonia, Miloslav Petrusek from the Czech Republic, Ilie

"De-Communization" and "De-Marxisation" of Sociology

We are fully aware of the fact that Marxism and the Soviet style (as well as Romanian and Yugoslavian styles) of Communism mean analytically two different things. However, since in Central and Eastern Europe Marxism was considered, both by the ruling elites and by the ruled, to be above all the Communist ideology, they will be discussed here under one label here.

People who carefully followed the heated political debates on Communism which took place in Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of the previous decade would be surprised in seeing to what extent "de-Communization" affected and to what extent it did not affect sociology. Today, with some "post-Communist" leaders and parties again in charge in the region, the wonder should not be that high. There are good reasons why "de-Communization" was not radical. In our view, the most important of them were the slow but significant ideological and political transformations in many Central and Eastern European countries which had taken place already in the mid-1980s; the nearly completely a-theoretical character of "Soviet Marxism," a rapid growth in the demand for sociology teachers since 1989 (which made it necessary to employ many Marxist scholars, and other, more important now ideological issues which displaced the Marxist debate.

During the socialist period, nearly everything, and especially sociology, was subordinated to the political authorities. Many sociologists belonged to the Communist party. However, in Poland the proportion was smaller than in other social disciplines. In Poland, real Party control over sociology decreased beginning in 1980. In many other countries this control decreased in the mid-1980s, and in Czechoslovakia only in 1989. In many countries, overrepresentation of Marxism was institutionally enforced. In Poland, for instance, many works were published in state-controlled presses (other hardly existed) on Marxism and in the "Marxist spirit," apologetic and not critical. Theoretical research, as well as large empirical research projects were politically and financially supported above all (though in Poland or Hungary not solely) when they were carried in the Marxist framework. In Poland, political and ideologi-

Badescu and Radu Baltasiu from Romania, Valery Masurov and Michael Chernysh from Russia, Natalia Pohorila from the Ukraine, Janusz Mucha was the author of the Polish chapter.

cal control over sociology was particularly severe outside the main academic centers in Warsaw and Cracow.

Our Lithuanian author (she may represent here the post-Soviet sociologists) stresses the fact that the Marxist ideology in the Soviet Union enforced the utopian model of man, censorship and institutionalized lie, bureaucratic management of scholarly work, utopian and neither scholarly nor socially significant research topics. Other scholars from the post-Soviet Europe stress the fact that in their pre-1989 empirical sociology, Marxist quotations were necessary, but what really mattered for these scholars was the empirical merit and methodological (statistical) perfection. An important consequence, say the Estonian authors, was the complete lack of theoretical debates and interpretations of research findings. Polish author stresses the fact that the former system's important consequence was the absence of some topics, such as potential systemic change, or political organization of society. In Czechoslovakia, it was forbidden even to read Western sociological publications. In Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, many scholars lost their research and teaching jobs when they were defined as deviating from the "party line."

All of this changed at the very end of the 1980s. The most significant changes were of an institutional character. Communist Party academies (various names were in use) were dissolved and elderly professors of sociology (and other social disciplines) retired. In Yugoslavia, the "Marxist" Centers were closed. Communist periodicals that published Marxist analyses were also closed. At the universities, chairs and institutes of Marxism-Leninism were re-named into chairs and institutes of philosophy and/or sociology. It seems to us that this constituted the most significant "de-Communization" which took place. The democratization of academic life that quickly followed closed the old system for good.

What happened to Marxism? What happened to people? As we said above, in some countries a public sphere for non-Marxist interpretation of social worlds was allowed prior to 1989. Poland (but not at the provincial universities), Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia are good examples. In Hungary, it was possible in the late 1980s to overtly criticize Marxist sociology of social structure. Therefore, some of our collaborators, such as our Hungarian contributors, do not even mention Marxism among the interesting theoretical approaches in sociology. In Poland, since the early 1980s, Marxism was not an issue for students

majoring in sociology in the major academic centers. Since 1989, in the view of the Belorussian and Bulgarian scholars, there has been no necessity to criticize so-called Western "bourgeois science" and the theoretical basis of sociology broadened significantly.

As a whole, "post-Soviet" sociology within Eastern and Central Europe found it quite easy to get rid of the Marxist labels and quotations. In some post-Yugoslavian countries, a bibliometric analysis was done which shows that Marxist citations nearly totally disappeared from sociological periodicals. In Yugoslavia, however, due to the famous, very critical Zagreb *Praxis School* in Marxism, active in the 1960s and 1970s (later dissolved and the scholars were either fired or jailed or forced to emigrate) Marxism was treated quite seriously. Therefore, in Serbia, in the 1990s, there was a heated debate on Marxism (so called *Marxismus Streit*), which revealed two positions from which Marxism was criticized: nationalistic and anti-nationalistic (liberal). According to some participants, however, this was not as much discussion about Marxism as one on Yugoslavian authoritarianism. In Russia, following a few years of a complete abandonment, Marxism has begun to return to sociology. Now, it is one of many theoretical perspectives, which informs the sociological research. Scholars are interested particularly in the Marxist theory of alienation.

In Poland, today's mainstream sociological community accepts most of the active participants of public life of the pre-1989 period. Many sociologists who were active in the Communist Party until its dissolution in 1990, and who were better or worse academic teachers of a more or less apologetic Marxism, continue to be very active in the discipline's public life. Almost none of them continue his/her former Marxist interests. Many of them, in their research programs and university lectures, stress the virtues of economic liberalism and of the "social teaching" of the Roman Catholic Church. Only exceptionally do they belong to the post-Communist party Alliance of Democratic Left. Some of them have nowadays strong political connections with post-Solidarity, right-wing political parties. Today, some senior professors of sociology who used to be strongly tied to the Communist Party apparatus carry out very interesting and fruitful analyzes of the processes of political democratization in Poland. They deal well with democracy and in democracy. They are democratically elected by their peers to central sociological institutions. They put forward successful initiatives,

important for the sociological community. Basically, there is no strong resistance to this participation from scholars who were connected with the democratic opposition before 1989.

This lack of "deep de-Communization" of sociology caused, however, concern among some scholars who considered it to be an aspect of a more general lack of coming to terms with the socialist past. A discussion of this problem was published in the influential right-wing daily *Życie*. A Pole, German sociology professor, wrote in 1998 that there had been no debate in Poland on the relations between social sciences and Communism in Poland after 1989. "Its lack resulted in the fact that academic community has not taken any steps – intellectual or institutional – against even the most corrupted persons. Nobody was fired, nobody was criticized in public." In the next several issues of *Życie*, the opinions of a small number of scholars of various pre-1989 biographies were published. They stressed that in 1998 it was too late to start any "de-Communization" of sociology, that Polish scholarly mediocrities had not been only of the Marxist character and now many sociological mediocrities represented clearly anti-Marxist outlook and could be found in the right-wing and pro-Church intellectual circles. They underlined the fact that ideological "conversions" were natural consequences of deep social transformations and did not have to mean mere opportunism. Discussion was not continued.

It seems that not only in Poland but also in other Central and Eastern European countries the full "de-Communization" will come only with the generational transition which is inevitable due to simple human mortality.

New Education in Sociology

Sociology has been a university major in several Central and Eastern European for decades. The Soviet Union was an exception and it was only possible to study sociology there on the doctoral level. On the lower levels, some courses were offered (i.e., in Belorussia) in empirical sociology and sociological research methods (mostly statistical) and their graduates could be employed as sociologists in the research centers. Now, every university in the post-Soviet nation-states has a sociology program. Instructors are on the one hand researchers from the old time laboratories of empirical sociology, and on the other hand former teach-

ers of Marxism-Leninism and scientific Communism, though retrained through special courses.

The first graduates of sociology (at the MA level) in these new post-Soviet programs came out of the universities in the mid-1990s. In Belorussia, 30 freshmen are accepted a year out of 100-120 candidates. In Estonia (which is a very tiny nation) 600 freshmen are accepted yearly for the four-year BA program. A fraction of its graduates is accepted for a one-year MA program. Ph.D. studies were done after 1989 and until now, abroad, above all in Finland. In the whole Russian Federation, there are 200,000 students majoring in sociology. In the Ukraine, university education has four steps: BA, "specialist," MA, Ph.D. and habilitation. Since the mid-1990s, about 100 graduates (on the BA level) of sociology have completed their studies within the private and public institutions of higher education.

In the post-Soviet Slavic countries, their own new, as well as new Russian textbooks are in use. However, some Western texts were also translated (into Russian and in national languages). The most popular Western authors are Neil Smelser and Anthony Giddens. In small non-Slavic nations (for instance in Estonia), in addition to Russian texts, Russian translations of Western books are used as texts.

Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, sociology became very popular among candidates at both public and private schools, though less so than economics, business administration, management, political sciences and law. Old teachers of Marxism-Leninism who have the formal qualification and are not of retirement age, participate in instructions. Students use both domestic and Western textbooks (in Romania, Poland, Hungary, former Yugoslavia it was the case before 1989 as well). It seems to us that, with the exception of some Polish universities, the curricula are relatively rigid and the proportion of mandatory courses is quite high. Many countries has taken advantage of the educational exchange program of the European Union called TEMPUS and now ERASMUS and SOCRATES.

There are various systems of university education in various countries so sociological studies are not organized in the same way throughout the region. We already mentioned the differences within the former Soviet Union. Let us give other examples. In Bulgaria, the system of education is based on the four-year BA program, and some graduates later take one year of the MA program. One can then enroll at

the Ph.D. program at the academy of science or at the university of Sofia. In Hungary, in Slovakia and in Poland, as a rule (and there are exceptions to this rule) the regular studies entail a five-year master's program. In Hungary, two Budapest universities carry a joint doctoral program. In Romania, the basic education is a four-year (or three-year) BA program, and later three semesters of the MA program (in practice for a fraction of graduates of the above).

Let us look a little closer at the situation in Poland. It is to some extent unique, as any example would be, but it also reflects the transformations in teaching sociology in the whole region. There are many candidates for the "free of charge" five-year MA programs in sociology at the public universities. Sociology, as a major at the MA level, expanded from few "traditional" centers such as Warsaw, Cracow, Poznan, Katowice, Lublin, to several new academic centers. Now, 13 public institutions of higher education (including all public universities but the two youngest) have these programs. Sociology is offered as a paid by students MA program in the "non-public" Collegium Civitas in Warsaw (at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences) and as a paid by students, extramural three-year BA program in many public universities and also in "non-public" schools. On the BA and MA levels together, about eleven thousand people are majoring in sociology. Graduates of the BA programs can, after an entrance exam, study sociology at the MA level at the same school (if, for instance, they studied at a public university). However, they may have to go to another school, if they studied at a school without the MA program in sociology.

As in the case of other attractive university disciplines, there are not enough senior professors in Poland to educate all of the students according to the state quality of education requirements. Therefore, many senior faculty members have several academic jobs. Young scholars' promotions are often delayed because they have no time to do the independent research that would lead them to the habilitation degree. There are problems with Polish textbooks as well. Private schools publish their own texts for their own use, but they are of relatively low quality and the circulation is small.

There are new specializations within the general major in sociology. The most important are "social policy" and "social work." The BA and MA programs in them are offered by both public and private schools. These programs are usually paid by students and extramural. A thus far

exceptional but important phenomenon is the post-graduate two-year interdisciplinary program in "cultural and social gender identity – Gender Studies," offered by the Institute of Applied Social Sciences of Warsaw University (this institute, in addition to the Institute of Sociology of the same school, also offers an MA program in sociology).

Postgraduate studies in sociology are a relatively new phenomenon in Poland. They existed in some Polish universities before 1989, but have grown only recently. In addition to major universities, they emerged in two private schools. Ph.D. studies in sociology at the Central European University (Warsaw Branch) started in 1997. In the academic year 2000/2001, there were 26 postgraduate students coming from 11 countries, mostly from Central and Eastern Europe, but also from Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan in post-Communist Asia. The Graduate School for Social Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences was founded in 1992. In the academic year 2000/2001, 162 persons from 17 countries studied philosophy and sociology, among them 99 Poles, 25 Ukrainians and 10 Russians.

Polish scholars have tried very hard to maintain or even increase the quality of education in this new situation of dynamic development in higher education, though without the requisite infrastructure, i.e., without new teachers, textbooks, lecture halls. A semi-formal process of accreditation of individual academic disciplines started in 1998, and was carried out by the University Accreditation Commission, which is independent of the Ministry of Education. Sociology at eight public universities, e.g., in Poznań, Łódź, Warsaw, Cracow, Toruń, Katowice, Lublin, and Wrocław became accredited in 2000. This process of accreditation was preceded by activities of the Conference of the Institutes of Sociology (KIS), an informal body that has been analyzing and coordinating syllabuses and teaching standards since the mid-1990s.

As we have already mentioned, there are problems with Polish textbooks in general sociology. To date, these are the authors of the most important translations of undergraduate texts which have been published: American – Norman Goodman and Jonathan H. Turner; British – Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens; and French – Henri Mendres. In addition, a translation of J. H. Turner's *The Structure of Sociological Theory* was made in 1985 and a translation of Peter Berger's *Invitation to Sociology* was made in 1988.

To conclude this section of the article, the teaching of sociology in Central and Eastern Europe has changed more in some, less in other countries. The common features of the process is the rapid growth of the number of students, inadequate infrastructure, attempts to build a system including BA, MA and Ph.D. levels of education, changes of the curricula in order to make them closer to classic and modern sociological theoretical perspectives, and to the analysis of the most important social phenomena characteristic for the modern and post-modern world and particularly the region. International cooperation with the West and within the East seems to be important as well.

New Research Topics

As presented above, the ideological system that dominated in Central and Eastern Europe until 1989 resulted in the absence of some crucial research topics, such as the political organization of society and its transformation. Due to the ideologically legitimated vision of homogeneity and consensus, many problems were neglected (some examples will be given in due course).

All this was to change after 1989, and as mentioned above, in some countries even earlier. New topics emerged due to two reasons: socio-economic and political transformation in the region on the one hand and its immediate consequence – liberation of sociology itself on the other. Therefore, these topics are new in the sense that either the social phenomena and subject matter did not exist before and they emerged only now, or they did exist but were rarely or never studied (or they were studied but are now studied in new ways).

In the former Soviet Union, particularly in Estonia, Lithuania, Belorussia, the traditional mass media research, the sociology of the youth and education, life course analysis, analysis of the standard of living, and of ways of life (lifestyles) is still very popular. Hungarians and Poles have been studying the rural population. Slovenes have been studying social services and quality of life. Naturally, all these subjects are studied in a new way now, and many theories developed in the West are use for the interpretation of empirical material.

As mentioned above, there are topics new in the sense that the already existing problems were rarely analyzed. Industrial conflict has always existed but was very rarely studied. Ethnic composition is noth-

ing new in each individual country of Central and Eastern Europe, but it was not a popular subject matter of sociology (the dominant Communist ideology stressed the national unity). Elites always existed but it seems to us that they had been analyzed only in Poland. Women had always had their own specific problems, but they were not studied as such. During the last decade, ethnicity and gender relations became a legitimate and very trendy subject of social analysis.

Some completely new phenomena also emerged due to the transformation. We will divide them roughly into three areas. The first is socioeconomic aspects of transformation. The important topics have been: privatization of state-owned enterprises and its social consequences; industrial relations in state-owned enterprises, the enterprises sold to the foreign investors and the new private companies; the new labor market; information technology and its social consequences; dynamics of class structure, including class-building processes, change and reproduction of economic elites; unemployment; and poverty. The second area is the new, liberal, and democratic politics: political parties (which, in the Western sense, did not exist before 1989), political, particularly parliamentary elites; voting behavior; civil society and NGOs. The third area is culture: culture versus economy as the factor explaining everyday behavior and everyday social processes; religion in its new forms such as the institutionalization of the role of major denominations, public rituals, private religion, new religious movements (mass media and ethnicity were presented above). A topic studied in several Central and Eastern European countries but not in all of them is regional cooperation and tensions, and the aspirations of societies to the European Union, as well as the readiness of these societies to enter this organization as measured by using several indicators.

There are also topics specific for some countries. The catastrophe in the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl in the Ukraine in 1986 affected both this country and Belorussia. Only now it became possible to analyze the social consequences of this tragedy. Post-Yugoslavian sociologists do war-related research, studying refugees, displaced persons, returnees, ethnic problems after the wars, diasporas resulting from the war. Czech sociologists analyze immigration from Eastern Europe and Asia to their country and the dangers of xenophobia.

As in the previous sections of our presentation, our conclusion is that sociology in Central and Eastern Europe has become more and more

similar to Western European sociology, though it is still keeping its individual features due to the different historical and different social characteristics of the region.

Conclusions

Until 1989, sociology in Central and Eastern Europe differed from Western sociology in many respects. There were at least three reasons for this fact. Firstly, historically speaking, sociology developed here a little later than in the West (with the exception of Poland) and it had to face the problems of political dependence and of rural society and not problems of sovereign democratic and industrialized societies. Secondly, after World War II the relative isolation was strengthened by the Communist authorities, which were not able to modernize the countries they ruled. As a consequence, sociology's subject matter was different in the east of Europe than it was in the west. Thirdly, political liberties were lacking in Central and Eastern Europe and these liberties as well as possibility to refer to various theoretical interpretation of empirical material are a precondition of sociological teaching, research and publication of its results.

All this is changing. In this article, we drew upon the forthcoming book on sociology in Central and Eastern Europe after the transformations, which began in 1989. We concentrated on three issues: the so-called "de-Communization" of sociology, the teaching of sociology at the university level (in some countries sociology is being taught in high schools) and the research topics. Our conclusion is that it is hardly possible to get rid of the historic determinants but on the other hand Eastern European sociology becomes more and more similar to the shape of the discipline known from Western universities. In particular, the American standards seem to be copied most willingly. Political transition in sociology was of rather evolutionist and not revolutionist nature. Teaching method and organization of the educational process become similar to those throughout the world. With the changing societies and economies, the subject matter of sociology is increasingly similar to that of the industrialized countries.

What is the likely future of sociology in Central and Eastern Europe? As mentioned above, some historically grounded differences in economy and culture will continue to exist for many decades to come. Sociology will have to face them. It seems to us that the analysis of these

specific problems may be very fruitful not only for better understanding of Central and Eastern European societies but also for theoretical sociology in the globalizing world. If sociology is to present general theses about the ways human beings and their societies behave, it must use comparative material and not limit itself to the analysis of the West.

It should be mentioned at the end of this text that there are problems Central and Eastern European sociology faces in common with Western sociology. Examples are increasingly scarce public resources, increasing reliance on corporate support, maintenance of its own intellectual agendas and independence, globalization.

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