1. Introduction

Expectations that a big sociological Congress (in this case, 1,200 active participants) can be coherent, or that it can give a precise answer to its slogan question seem to us excessive under the conditions of relative, even if dynamic, economic, political, structural and cultural stability. Similarly, the expectations that at any three-day long scientific congress it is possible to reach a compromise which would satisfy all interested parties, between the aspirations of numerous hundreds of scholars who would like to have enough time to present the details of their findings and their willingness to have plenty of time for discussion during each session, we consider to be completely unrealistic. It is enough to participate in any Conference of the European Sociological Association or in any World Congress of Sociology in order to see that it is not possible in practice to fulfill these hopes.

Big social scientific events (if not during the social crises) serve, in our opinion, other functions. They give the scholars a chance to talk (formally and informally) with peers who study similar issues, to learn about new trends in empirical and theoretical analysis of social phenomena, to listen to contemporary classics, local and global, of the discipline, whom it is difficult to see on the everyday basis. We are of the opinion that the Kraków Congress met these functions, even if not to the extent outlined by the official program. We are also aware of the fact that some
participants were not satisfied. During the Congress discussions, formal and informal, as well as in the media, they expressed the convictions that the conference had not proposed any new perspectives on the dynamics of Polish society and Polish sociology, that it had not concentrated enough on the vital problems of Polish society, on barriers hindering its growth (whatever the understanding of this growth was).

In the next sections of this analysis we will deal with the following issues. Firstly, we will briefly mention the former congresses of sociology in sovereign Poland. Secondly, we will outline the “main sessions” – plenary sessions and symposia of the Kraków Congress. Thirdly, we will discuss the topics of the thematic groups. Fourthly, we will present the official events accompanying the Congress – they also tell a lot about Polish society and Polish sociology. We will comment on the international aspects of the Congress. The empirical basis of this account is first of all our participant observation in the main sessions and accompanying events, the electronic and printed program, and the report of the task force which selected and recommended the thematic group proposals to the Program Committee. This report gave an interesting typology of the thematic groups, later accepted by the Committee. We were not able to participate in other thematic groups than our own. Our account is subjective in the sense that we present here what was in our opinion particularly important. The authors of papers might have had another opinion on their own lectures. Unlike many of those participants who published their opinions in the media, we will limit the attempt to make the value judgments on this Congress’ significance.

2. Sociological Congresses in sovereign Poland

The 1st congress (at that time called a “conference”) of Polish sociologists was sponsored by the Polish Institute of Sociology (PIS), having been established by Florian Znaniecki, and took place in Poznań in 1931. During this conference, the first Polish Sociological Association was founded (the today’s Polish Sociological Association emerged from a sociological section of the Polish Philosophical Association in 1957, after the first liberalization wave under state socialism in 1956). Ludwik Krzywicki became the President of the association. The 2nd Congress, again organized by the PIS, convened in 1935\(^1\). We do not intend to underestimate the

social and cultural role of sociological congresses under state socialism in Poland, between the Second World War and 1989 (in particular for the self-reflection of Polish society), but will not discuss these five events.

The 8th Congress took place in Toruń in 1990, and its topic was the “breakthrough” (or the fast transition from the political socialism and command economy to political democracy and market economy) and the “challenges”, or new problems which the society faced then. Soon, it turned out that these problems were growing. The 9th Congress, organized in Lublin in 1994, analyzed the five-year long processes of creation and consolidation of the new social order. The participants debated first of all on the crucial triggers of the successful transformation – characteristics of individuals (in particular their rationality and agency) and/or characteristics of new formal institutions. This Congress, and in particular some of the lectures at its main sessions, expressed the reorientation of a significant part of the Polish sociological community into the neo-institutional approach. The 10th Congress was held in Katowice in 1997. At that time, another topic became particularly important for Poland and for sociologists. This was the triad: “regions, Poland, Europe”. Again, the transition from socialism (without the clear idea to what) but in the perspective of various localities (regional, Polish) and the global (at least European) arena was analyzed. The 11th Congress took place in Rzeszów in 2000. It reflected on the “opposition” (debated not only in Poland) between the “society of fate” and “society of choice”. The most significant topics of discussions were the cultural heritage which influences a part of the shape of every society, and the openness, the willingness to face the challenges, the choices standing in front of society. Fate and choice can be considered an opposition but they can be also treated as supplementary. We must go ahead, choose new social mechanisms and solutions but it is necessary to bear in mind the historic preconditions of any societal agency. In 2004, in Poznań, the next, 12th Congress was organized. That year, Poland was accepted by the European Union. Global, or at least European, perspective became once more very important for the understanding of structural and cultural processes going on in our country. Therefore, the debates concentrated on different circles of social integration and different kinds of social identifications. The 13th Congress was held in Zielona Góra in 2007. It seems to us that this was the most international of the Polish sociological congresses. The President of the International Sociological Association, Michel Wieviorka and its Vice-President, Michael Burawoy, as well as many other foreign scholars participated very actively. The

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Congress concentrated on the growing differentiation of Polish society as one of the consequences of the economic, structural and cultural transformations³.

3. Main session and debates of the Kraków 2010 Congress

We will analyze here the sociological aspects of the opening plenary session (with two opening lectures), three formal plenary sessions, final international plenary session and four semi-plenary symposia.

The opening session was, in our opinion, very important. Piotr Gliński, the President of the Polish Sociological Association, gave a long and very substantive address. Three topics seem to us of particular significance. Firstly, he asked, if in the situation of fast growing social differentiation in Poland, dramatic weakening of social bonds, the breaking of the social structure into amorphous collectivities, we are still “a society”. Secondly, he encouraged the sociological community to think critically, to follow the “sociological disobedience in thinking”. In his opinion, Polish sociologists do not participate enough in public life of the country. Thirdly, he addressed the issue of relations between sociology and political power. In his view, the current authorities (newly elected President of Poland, the government) are not interested in the opinions and advice which could be given by sociologists. On the other hand, sociologists do not have enough to offer the political authorities.

This pessimism (but its other aspects) was shared by the second speaker, Claus Offe from the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. The title of his lecture (given in English) was *What, if Anything, We Mean by Social and Political “Progress” Today?* He presented three, most crucial in his opinion, concepts of “progress” and later turned the attention of the audience to the fact that they sometimes overlap, sometimes superimpose. Today, the concept of progress is loaded with many contradictions and paradoxes. He debated on the main current dangers to the progress, in the form of energy crisis, climate changes and their societal consequences, global terrorism. He was discussing the social movements which are connected with these dangers. He stressed the difference in the perspective on the progress between the point of view of the elites and of the rank and file people. He recommended the slowing down of the progress (in whatever meaning) and the concentration on its current contents and directions.

There was no discussion on Gliński’s paper on that day (it returned after one of the symposia and we will return to it), but the discussion on Offe’s paper was long and heated. These were the main issues raised by the audience: relations between the concept of progress and Marxist and neo-Marxist thinking; potential usefulness or un-usefulness of this radically pessimistic conceptualization of progress for our self-reflection and our understanding of the contemporary dynamics; the sense of the concentration on progress by a scholar who does not see any use of this concept; the tension between the pessimism of Offe and the growing general life satisfaction of people in the Western world.

The first formal plenary session was entitled Order or Disorder. Production of Social Order. Four papers were given. Marek Szczepański and Anna Śliz spoke about the “actors in the background” on the global social scene. The main actors are, in their opinion, the largest nation-states, big metropolises, multinational corporations, global institutions, international organizations and alliances. The actors in the background are the local communities throughout the world, native communities in the Third World, immigrant communities in big metropolises throughout the world, traditional local communities, local imagined networks, virtual communities. The authors stressed the fact that the worlds of the major actors and these secondary actors overlap, influence each other. Jadwiga Staniszkis’ paper was devoted to the “epistemology of order” at the beginning of the 21st century. She stressed that “order” is of a mental and not a “real” character. Dynamic mental patterns define “something” as orderly or disorderly. The current social order is a-systemic, processual, network-like. If we want to understand it, we must accept the fact that conflicts, negotiations, re-negotiations, are not pathological but normal phenomena; we must study relations between various arrangement rather than the contents of these arrangements. David Ost (from the US) was talking about social classes and social order, mostly in the Polish context. The dynamic, transforming global capitalist system produces a social order and a social disorder at the same time. The way the “losers” of these transformations are able to express their discontent and even anger, their resistance to the system, are very important to the dynamics of the system. Processual social order cannot mean the lack of conflicts. They are a “natural” aspect of the order. In relation to the Polish affairs, Ost expressed his opinion that the social classes still exist and are important actors in politics but the traditional class discourse changes. The upper classes express their interests in the language of globalization, and the lower classes, the “losers”, express their interests in the cultural language of nationalism. The problem is, according to Ost, that the traditional class language had much more inclusive character than the cultural language of exclusion. The last speaker, Radosław Markowski, spoke
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about “sociology of politics and politology of society”. He paid a lot of attention to the classics of political sciences but, in our opinion, the most important issues addressed in his paper were the following. The structural and cultural divisions in Polish society have strictly political consequences but their nature is not very clear. These consequences are: the electoral behavior and the way the political institutions function.

Let us summarize these presentations and the discussion. Social order cannot be understood in a static way. It is a dynamic equilibrium, a process of constant solutions of ever emerging tensions and conflicts between various actors (of different global and local significance), belonging to different social spheres, between which there are dynamic relations. Whether or not we see order or disorder (and to what extent, and in which spheres), how the order and disorder is expressed, is very important for the social state of affairs in a given place and time. Discussion concentrated on several topics. Stressing the significance of social actors means that we may overlook the spontaneous processes. Frozen social divisions can get “unfrozen”, but the social dynamics can also make them less significant than before, for instance by making other divisions, phenomena and (in particular) relations even more important. Network analysis stresses mental processes but tends to neglect the emotional processes, so important in traditional sociological understanding of social bond. When we debate the issue of coordination of interests, it would be important to start with precise identification of those interests, and their representations.

The second plenary session concerned the Old and New Forms of Power and Sociation (we are using here the English language equivalent of Polish term “uspołecznienie”, following the Kurt H. Wolff’s translation of the Georg Simmel’s term “Vergesellschaftung”). We will not analyze two very long introductions by organizers of this session and we immediately move to the invited speakers. Mirosława Marody was interested in the ways of the “formatting” (the computer metaphor was intended) of society, old and new means of sociation (Georg Simmel’s language was intended). She underlined the decline of the old types of social bonds in postmodern world, but their new forms should not be overlooked. In her opinion, these are bonds not between groups, localities and institutions and not between people and groups, localities and institutions, but rather of the “person to person” kind. New forms of communication emerge, but we must analyze the resistance against them as well. Anonymity is a well known phenomenon, but we should study now the resistance against anonymity of the network society. Sub-networks emerge, which fight for recognition and social values. New collectivities undertake new, unknown until now, social and cultural practices. Societies are
more and more diversified, and political power is less and less significant for people's everyday lives. The second speaker, Marek Czyzewski, spoke about the knowledge society and neo-liberal “governmentality”. Sociology, social psychology, and other social sciences should be analyzed in the same way as the other forms of discourse are. They became new forms of social ideologies, serving to justify the new forms of society. Critical knowledge becomes an ideology as well. Therefore, new sociology of social knowledge is necessary. The third speaker, Małgorzata Fuszara, concentrated on the gender analysis of political power. Let us present some of her arguments. It is important to analyze participation of women in the significant role areas defined by men, but we should not overlook the new, emerging roles defined by women. Women should get the right to define more roles as important. We should start a debate on the problem whether there are social roles which are gender neutral. Division between private and public roles should be defined in a new way. Power and coercion in family should be defined in a new way. Finally, Jacek Raciborski, the last speaker, analyzed relations between the state apparatus and the “folk”. The latter concept, undefined in the paper (this issue returned during the discussion) was very important for the author. His analysis was in a complete opposition to the analysis presented in this session by Marody, and by many speakers of other sessions. According to Raciborski, states, in particular the large ones, are more and more powerful and the “folk” is very happy that the state is so strong and is able to serve as the folk’s guardian. Nation-states not only rule but they define what should be the object of their domination and what can be left to other actors. In the author’s opinion, the state apparatus and power is not the people whom we elect in the public vote. We vote for some bodies, and other bodies rule. (However, Raciborski did not raise the issue who rules and how to study the real power relations.) This situation is very dangerous for individual liberties. This session was not very coherent but was interesting, in particular due to the last presentation. Unfortunately, the lack of time limited the discussion which concentrated on the concept of folk and disparity between Raciborski’s and Marody’s interpretations of social order. Perhaps Raciborski was addressing the outcoming social world and Marody the incoming social world.

The third formal plenary session was to answer the question How the Future Society is Produced. Its main (at least the first and two times as long as expected) paper was given by Michał Boni, the Chief Social Advisor to the Prime Minister of Poland. He spoke about the report “Poland 2030”, issued by his team several months earlier. The optimism of the report and of its main author astonished many listeners who had known some theses but not the details of the document. Next speaker, economist Krzysztof Rybiński, strongly questioned the empirical basis of
the latter's optimism and stressed the global and local dangers and risks overlooked by the report. He was also very critical of the current government's economic policies and their social consequences. Next speakers, Ryszard Szarfenberg, a leading representative of social policy, and Edwin Bendyk, one of the leading journalists who specializes in social and cultural aspects of scientific and technological changes, had not enough time for adequate presentation of their views. Therefore, the audience learned neither about the social policy consequences of the economic situation of Poland, Europe and the world of open borders, nor about the network analysis and the new, unexpected role of the Internet in new economy and new culture. Discussion was very short and, again, dominated by Boni and Rybinski, whose interpretations of facts (or, what in their opinions could be treated as facts) were completely opposed.

The last plenary session of the Congress was the English-language panel devoted to Sociology and Society in a Globalizing World. In fact, however, the debate focused on the unity and conceptual and theoretical homogeneity of sociology as a social science, versus divergent national traditions within the discipline. Piotr Sztompka, who was moderating the panel, stressed the unity and for Michael Burawoy, President of the ISA, diversity was more important and promising. The other panelists, Valery Mansurov (President of Russian Sociological Society), Ishwar Modi from India and Marek Ziółkowski from Poland, all represented the in-between approach, but closer to Burawoy's than Sztompka's views. The debate was very controversial and interesting but the shortage of time did not allow the willing audience to participate.

As we have already mentioned, four semi-plenary symposia belonged to major events of the Congress. The first was devoted to Polish sociology. Three papers were presented. Piotr Sztompka's opinion was already mentioned in this text, since he repeated his lecture next day in the already mentioned English-language panel. Mirosława Grabowska, Director of the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) presented a rich analysis of empirical research activity in Poland after 1989. She discussed the number of research projects, their methodologies, theoretical background, and societal significance. There are more and more research projects. In general, she liked their methodologies. The projects were very rarely theoretically grounded. Therefore, we describe social phenomena but we do not know very well what they mean. What we study seems to be important, we address many vital social trouble, but we cannot address more general social processes without having conceptualized them theoretically. Krystyna Szafraniec spoke about sociological education in institutions of higher education in Poland. In the academic year 2000/2001, 18,500 students majored in sociology, while in 2009/2010 their number
reached 42,300. Two thirds of them study on the BA level; nearly two thirds are weekend students. Ten years ago, they studied in 24 universities and colleges, now in 92 institutions. There is nearly no problem of unemployment of graduates.

Discussion was heated. The problem of the involvement of Polish sociology in solving social problems in Poland and in shaping the social life of the country overwhelmed the debate. One discussant was of the opinion that Polish sociology is boring and has nothing to tell to the political authorities, so no wonder they are not interested in sociological findings; Polish sociology should concentrate, in research and education, on the Polish national interest (which was not defined by the speaker). Other discussants continued the topic of relations between sociology and political power, one day earlier raised by Piotr Gliński. Sociology should serve society and not authorities, it was argued, and society is represented by social movements, the NGOs and the media. Self-reflection of Polish society should be the aim of sociological analysis. Many sociologists study significant social troubles and processes, participate in public discussions, are active on various committees and panels. Discussants complained that the political actors do not follow their advice but the issue why it is so, was not raised.

A parallel symposium was devoted to the Social Structure – Coherent or Broken. The first paper, given by Irena Kotowska, a demographer, analyzed the influence of transformations of family life and households on changes in social structure. According to Kotowska, contemporary structural transformations are caused by economy, culture and demography. She concentrated on the latter and discussed the delays in transition from one stage of family life to another, the destabilization and deinstitutionalization of families, the drop in fertility rates, the ageing of society, the increase in volume of labour migration. As a consequence, family relations and intergenerational relations change, family patterns diversify. Moreover, these changes have, in Europe, a unilinear character, and individual countries differ only in their dynamics. Henryk Domański focused on empirical verification of the main hypothesis of the symposium, that the cultural differentiations in Polish society have systematically deepened since 1989, and the structure is more and more broken, which is supposed to be reflected in social barriers and distances between various segments of population. Based on the empirical data from 1982–2008, Domański analyzed differences between socio-occupational categories in nine dimensions. His conclusion was that the thesis on deepening of social divisions and distances is not empirically grounded, that the social structure is not, in fact, broken. Anna Titkow analyzed the gender dimension of social structure, and focused on difference between men and women in the value hierarchies (children as the major element of the women’s world) and role identification (women as
mothers, men as husbands). She stressed the differences in the division of household labour and tensions being their consequences. Jarosław Górnia asked which factor is more important in determining the place of an individual in social structure – his or her competences or his or her social background. His conclusions were optimistic and supported Domański’s opinion – individual’s intelligence and competences are very important for shaping his or her location in social structure.

The really vivid discussion concentrated on the difficulties with conceptualizing and collecting empirical data which would reflect more and more complex social processes.

The third symposium dealt with *Society, Economy and Crisis*. Danuta Walczak-Duraj discussed recent re-evaluation of work processes. She looked at them from the perspectives of globalization and “new economy”; culturalist approach to economic phenomena; and discrepancies between the world of employers and the world of employees. She asked the question of what it means today, that some procedures are “employee-friendly” and what are the similarities and differences between the entrepreneurship in the corporate world and in the small-scale companies. Barbara Gaciarz analyzed institutional dysfunctions in the socio-economic development in contemporary Poland and asked if they must be treated only as barriers. Perhaps, she said, they can be seen as a chance in the sense that they give a window of opportunity to social and economic actors usually not taken into account. Based on empirical findings of 2002 and 2010, she stressed the fact that local institutions are much more efficient than national ones. Even local governments do not work well, though. They do not take into account many needs of specific groups, social movements, NGOs. However, people increasingly trust more local governments (and the European Union) as important social and economic actors than they trust the national government. Sławomir Partycki gave a very well organized lecture on the nature of financial crises of the last two years. He suggested to look at them from a sociological rather than economic point of view. It is problematic, though, if Partycki’s approach was really sociological.

The discussion was interesting. The main points were: economic (and particularly financial) crisis undermined a lot of legitimacy of economic analyzes but not necessarily of sociological analyzes. Neo-liberal economy has both advantages and disadvantages. New (not that new in 2010, though) global actors, like China, Brazil, India, should be analyzed more deeply in macrosociology. Crisis is very important for social mobility, in all senses of the term. Local elites are as diversified as national elites.

The parallel fourth symposium’s topic was the *New Mechanisms of the Production of Culture*. Małgorzata Jacyno, following Michel Foucault’s analysis of influence of
various devices on individual’s agency, claimed that nowadays we have to do, in the sphere of culture, with the transition from endogenous to exogenous relations which isolate individuals by making the impression of permanent endangering on the part of others. Devices determine a specific path of reflexivity and they contribute on the one hand to the increasing self-sufficiency of individuals (even to de-familiarization), and on the other hand to increasing problems with one’s own identification. “Sociation”, in the opinion of the author, has a very superficial character and individuals life paths are designed by devices. Krzysztof Abriszewski presented a comment on Marek Krajewski’s paper given in one of the previous day’s thematic groups, on the “participation in culture as a process of sociation”. Abriszewski discussed participation of individuals in the dynamic cultural industry and focused on the evolution of the carriers of music and its influence on the shape of culture. This evolution which takes place in the discursive field has a linear character but the participants of culture react to it in a “network way”, what results in the emergence of new forms of participation and in asymmetry. Alek Tarkowski asked, in his paper, whether the Internet, as a liaison between actors of culture, can become an arena for the development of new social movements. The Internet, stimulating processes of social production (which fundamentally differ from the production of commodities), resulted, among other things, in the emergence of the “free software” movement, which belongs to the field of culture. A key question, that returned in the discussion, concerned the problem if the Internet-based movements meet the constituent conditions of social movements, namely the conscious participation. Jan Sowa was interested in the issue of independence in the functioning of culture. In his opinion, the state authorities, claiming that they hand over culture to the NGOs and civic sphere, actually give up the responsibility for culture production, but controlling the flow of financial resources, they influence some directions of its development. The alternative, suggested by the speaker, would be the creation of a next (“pi”) sector, completely independent from the state.

The discussion was exceptionally vivid, interesting and critical. Most of the comments were directed to the last speaker. Some discussants claimed that actually, in Poland, all NGOs are “governmentalized” (they use governmental grants and serve the state functions), some stressed that the NGOs should cut any ties (being, as such, dangerous) with the establishment. The idea of the “pi” sector (both the potential field of its activity and the very sense of its creation) was questioned by many participants of the discussion.

A brief summary of the content of the “main sessions” of the Congress, which were obviously the most prestigious and collected the largest audiences, can be found in the conclusions of this report.
4. Diversity of thematic groups

Thematic groups were not “imposed” on the Congress participants by the Program Committee but were a result of grass-root initiatives. Everybody was eligible to propose a group. Proposals were discussed by the Committee’s task force and finally accepted by the Committee. No group could have more than two sessions and only groups with at least four speakers were included into the final program. As usual, at this kind of congress, it was completely impossible to participate in all thematic groups (most of them took place at the same time). It was interesting for us that a prize was awarded at the end of the Congress to the “best paper” given in the thematic groups. What was the procedure of evaluation of the papers is a mystery. We will not discuss in this report any individual papers nor the discussions in these groups. Instead, we will present the arrangement of the 85 thematic groups, when the proposals were published on the Congress’ website with calls for abstracts.

The Program Committee divided the accepted proposals of the groups into twenty one unequal categories (we analyze here only the proposals which eventually turned into real groups). We will list them and in each of the categories we will give (in parentheses) one, most interesting in our view, example of a group. These examples were selected based on the abstracts of the groups and the abstracts of the papers submitted to the group organizer(s).

Polish Society in this Historical Moment (Post-Colonialism and Post-Socialism in Contemporary Poland); Politics – Power – Society (Trade Unions and Social Dialogue in Central and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective); Citizenship, Civic Society, Local Government (Deliberative Democracy and Deliberative Surveys); Regions and Local Communities (Europeization of Local Communities in Cultural Perspective); Cities and Villages (Contemporary Cities – New Phenomena, New Dilemmas); Social Structure and Interests (Conflict of Interests in Contemporary Poland); Big Processes in Culture (Cultural Pluralism – Conflict or Co-existence); Anthropology and Cultural Phenomena (Resistance as an Idea and Practice in Post-1989 Poland); New Media (Computerization and Mediatization in the Everyday Life of Poles); Styles and Tastes of Life (Body in Social Space); Memory and Identity (Past as Reflected in Popular Culture); Family and Life Course (Developing of the ‘Sociology of Ageing’ to Tackle the Challenge of Ageing Societies in Central and Eastern Europe); Gender (Queer Perspective in Sociology); Migrations (From Migration to Integration – Polish Experiences in Comparative Perspective); Social Problems, Social Policy and Social Work (Discourses of Poverty and Social Exclusion); Education and Science (Social and Institutional Consequences of the 1999 Educational Reform in Poland);
Religion and Morality (Secularization and De-secularization in the Life of Poles); Social Control and Law (Technological or Social Supervising? New Faces of Social Control); Sociology and Other Sciences (Critical Theory Today); Methods in Sociology (Qualitative Sociology – Innovative Methods in Qualitative Research); Miscellanea (Sociology of Emotions).

In the opinion of many participants of the Congress, the thematic groups were its most interesting events. It is very difficult, based on the analysis of the submitted abstracts of group proposals, abstracts of papers and unsystematically collected comments by participants, to form an adequate opinion on the whole Polish society, methods and approaches of studying it, methods of interpretations of the research findings. However, in our opinion, the Congress (and the thematic groups in particular) proved that Polish sociologists are sensitive to various new, emerging phenomena, processes of continuation and transformation. We could say that the thematic groups showed well “what’s going on with society”.

5. Special events

The Congress’ program lists several special, accompanying events. We will take into account most of them: a) the closing lecture by Michael Burawoy; b) Burawoy’s meeting with graduate students and other young sociologists; c) poster sessions; d) a symposium on Holocaust; e) ad hoc groups; f) a meeting on gender studies. We will not discuss the special sessions devoted to the jubilee of Janusz Marianski (a leading sociologist of religion) nor a session focused on teaching sociology.

The closing lecture by Michael Burawoy was in fact the last plenary session of the Congress. The talk was very interesting and presented in an interesting way, but it was one of the versions of his famous “presidential address” on public sociology, having been published a number of times\(^4\), including in Polish. However, Polish examples of public sociology were presented to the Polish audience.

During his meeting with a large number of Polish young sociologists, Burawoy, as the President of the ISA, was encouraging his audience to intellectual activity, to critical thinking, to public engagement. He wanted young sociologists from the whole world to unite, to keep in touch with each other and with him. The idea of “public sociology” was obviously discussed as well. The speaker was interested in the opinions of his audience on the role of public sociology in Poland. There were

other topics in the discussion as well. Adequate jobs for PhDs in sociology, roles of sociologists in various socio-cultural contexts, influence of the financial crises on the way universities function, belonged to them.

Five official poster sessions were organized during the Congress. The number of posters was smaller than the program offered. The poster sessions were usually linked to the topics of thematic groups. The poster sessions were devoted to classes and status groups in the city of Poznan; the building of the public spaces; old age, ageing and intergenerational relations at the beginning of the 21st century; network analysis of contemporary Polish society; the state of the art of Polish sociology at the beginning of the 21st century.

A two-session symposium *Anti-Semitism, Holocaust and Auschwitz in Social Research* took place in the Jewish Museum “Galicya”. Young scholars (graduate students, young professors) presented their recent findings on various aspects of Polish anti-Semitism and the ways some segments of Polish society defend themselves against the accusations of anti-Semitism. Nine interesting papers contributed to the accomplishments of the Congress.

Three *ad hoc* sessions, like other special events, were not limited by many formal Congress rules referring to the thematic groups. The topic of the first was the Sociology of Reconciliation which is in fact a newly emerging sub-discipline potentially very significant in terms of scholarly research and public effects. Many different kinds of reconciliation were discussed (however, mostly the ones on the border areas, between soccer fans, between practitioners of various religions). The issues discussed were very important, it is difficult to say, though, in what sense this was an *ad hoc* group.

The second such group had a much stronger justification of its extraordinary (*ad hoc*) character. It discussed social reactions to the Smoleńsk catastrophe (10 April 2010) when 96 Polish public persons died in the plane crash in Russia. Papers analyzed the social atmosphere after the crash and its dynamics, controversies over the burial of late President Lech Kaczyński in the cathedral at the Wawel Castle in Kraków, the dynamics of the mitologization of the late President. In addition to the purely scholarly aspect, the session had for some participants very emotional aspects, since Kaczyński gave an interesting lecture during the former Polish Congress of Sociology (Zielona Góra 2007). The third *ad hoc* group also dealt with the Smoleńsk crash, but focused on its political consequences. The papers discussed two general questions: democratic procedures during the state crisis which would make the power transition easier, and the very political succession in times of crisis. Two detailed issues were present as well: the dynamics of support for political parties and presidential elections before the constitutional term was ended.
Doctoral students and some scholars working at the Gender Studies Program of the Institute of Sociology, Jagiellonian University of Kraków, organized in a coffee-shop a semi-formal (listed in the Congress’ program) session *University – Activism – Emancipation*. The venue is important here, since the organizers, speakers and participants presented themselves as victims of the system, persons strongly contesting the university as the institution supporting the neo-liberal establishment and research programs apologetic toward neo-liberalism, while suppressing the critical approach. Discussion changed the character when a senior professor of sociology from Jagiellonian University, a distinguished scholar in the fields of family patterns and the role of women in contemporary society, who is also a moderate feminist activist, presented her opinion. According to her, if the isolation of the academic critical feminist discourse is really a fact, one of its reasons is the way of operation of the academic feminists who do not try to win allies, do not know how to fight efficiently for their rights.

6. Final remarks

This Congress was “internationalized” in a slightly different way than the previous Polish Congress of Sociology, held in Zielona Góra three years earlier. At that congress, there were three English-language thematic groups; a meeting of the representatives of national sociological associations from many European countries was held; both the then President and then Vice-President of ISA presented the lectures. In Kraków, there were two English-language thematic groups, and one partly in English. In some Polish-language groups some papers were given in English, though (the same occurred in Zielona Góra). The opening lecture was given in English by a European distinguished scholar; an American scholar, a very well known specialist in the field of Polish affairs, gave a regular plenary lecture in Polish; there was an English-language symposium in which several foreigners participated, and the final lecture was given in English by the ISA’s President.

We are of the opinion that the Kraków Congress accurately reflected the state of art of Polish sociology but we cannot be sure if Polish sociology (in fact, any “national sociology”) can accurately reflect the social state of affairs and its dynamics in any society. We believe that sociology provides many, more or less significant contributions which help us understand society in its dynamics. The thematic groups and special sessions of the Congress presented a variety of “old” and “new” social phenomena which are worth studying in a systematic way. Main sessions turned our attention to the increasing diversity, pluralism, dynamics and network
character of Polish society, increasing significance of its cultural aspects, but they also stressed the fact that it is still possible to catch, in social research, the main social actors, decision makers, on different levels of influence on social processes. The speakers did not always agree which the actors and with when they are particularly powerful, but we think that a consensus might potentially limit the chance for further discourse.

We think that this Congress neither brought any breakthrough in the public understanding of “Polish matters”, nor that it set new directions for social research. However, unlike some of the disappointed colleagues, we do not think that that would be the only reason to organize this kind of event.