



METAPHORS IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE POLISH SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN THE 1990S: PROBLEMS OF SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY

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Abstract. A primary assumption made for reflections presented in this article is the possibility of describing social reality using metaphors and their crucial role in creative thinking. The analysis is based on the interdisciplinary research project *Images of the Polish Socio-Economic Transformation in the Eyes of Foreign Researchers in the Context of Their Social Roles and Intercultural Communication* (2023 – now). The article references three metaphorical images of the Polish socio-economic transformation of the 1990s. It shows how they reflect the diversity of social reality and the selective character of its perception. Due to the use of metaphors in describing the analyzed process, it was possible to highlight its specific characteristics, which is typical of this approach. Besides, the article indicates that participants of the socio-economic transformations can perceive them differently than distanced external researchers with different baggage of personal and epistemological experience. Therefore, the article focuses on this rich diversity in the perception of social reality and the creative thinking associated with it.

Keywords: androcentrism, creativity, metaphors, Poland, sociological imagination, transformation images.

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1. Introduction: significance of metaphors and sociological imagination

The significance of metaphors can be associated with the sociological imagination described by Wright Mills (2007). Metaphors and imagination allow for wondering and asking unconventional questions about the nature of an analyzed issue, which is directly connected with creative thinking, particularly in management. To this end, we have adopted a metaphorical Morgan's (1986) approach, which treats them as images, allowing for understanding and "seeing" the analyzed phenomenon from a particular perspective; according to this approach, using metaphors results from "the way of thinking". By definition, it is also a one-sided view of the problem, which allows for showing or even exposing specific characteristics of the analyzed phenomenon and minimizing or concealing other aspects. Also, metaphors transfer attributes of one object to another, which is typical of creative thinking and referring to reality. Morgan (1986), in his analysis of organizations in *Images of Organization*, distinguishes eight crucial organization-related metaphors in which he describes an organization as the machine, the organism, the brain, the culture system, the political system, "psychic prisons",

“constant flux”, or a “tool of domination”. What seems particularly interesting in the context of this study is the political metaphor focused on differences of interests, authority issues, and conflicts. It is worth mentioning that there are three essential reference systems for analyzing the political metaphor: unitarian, pluralistic and radical, while also referring to Burrell and Morgan’s (2005) analyses. In the “unitarian” system, in the study of interests, common objectives are emphasized, the role of authority is minimized, and conflicts are seen as a rare phenomenon, *i.e.* the ones to be eliminated because it is harmful to the organization (resulting from management mistakes, intriguers’ actions or miscommunication). The unitarian system can be exemplified by the management concepts suggested by Frederick Winslow Taylor (Kurnal, 1972), which resembles avoiding conflict analysis in Poland at the time of the centrally controlled Polish People’s Republic (PPR). The radical system described by Morgan indicates contradictory class interests, *i.e.*, conflicts are inevitable and constitute an element of broader class contradictions like authority, which is perceived as a central characteristic shaping an organizational life and is closely related to consequences of class divisions.

Thus, in this sense, it is easy to observe a strong attachment of the radical system to Marxist thought and traditions. The pluralist concept Morgan (1986) described in *Images of Organization* shows the diversity of interests stemming from individual and group factors. Conflicts constitute a crucial characteristic of the organizational life and authorities are treated as a central element of the organizational life. Morgan also stresses the role of the authorities in solving conflicts of interest. Morgan’s analyses are a valuable source of inspiration, though it should be noted that they focus on the level of transformations concerning mainly business and enterprises rather than macrostructural transformations.

Marciniak (2022) claims that metaphors can also enrich methodological classes with students. He observes a limited scale of metaphor use. However, this is not a new concept; it had already appeared in the 1950s when Goffman (2008) wrote the book *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (originally published in 1956), in which he introduced metaphorical terms and expressions into sociological terminology and dictionaries. It became one of the main pillars in which the interpretative paradigm was developed (Marciniak, 2022, p. 173).

Using metaphors in this approach seems to have a significant cognitive impact, but issues related to their construction, deconstruction, and application in teaching are still underestimated. The research conducted by Marciniak focuses on discovering the central metaphor (in this case, it was treating qualitative research as “a jigsaw puzzle and puzzle”) and submetaphors seen firstly as qualitative research seen as a puzzle and, secondly as “a research puzzle with connecting dots”. Interestingly, the author also observed metaphor combinations not only in terms of creating a point of reference to experiences and actions but also for evoking emotions that can have a positive, negative, neutral or diverse character due to ambivalent feelings.

This last thread also indicates the sociotechnical potential of the metaphor use, which can play a significant role, particularly in political activity.

Thus, it is no wonder that using metaphors in politics is becoming very common since it includes significant emotional markedness (Kaczmarek, 2001, 2005). It is impossible to list all metaphors appearing in various areas of politics, which can be closely associated with the Goffmanian theatrical metaphor (see Goffman, 2008). It is worth noting, however, that

metaphorical references expressing acceptance or discredit are also present in press news and politicians' statements and opinions. In this sense, metaphorical images are closely related to their sociotechnical and manipulative potential, so they can be used to inform and disinform. Therefore, one can also point to the marketing and unavoidable nature of metaphors, *i.e.* it is worth seeing the permanent nature of the relationship between politicians and voters, which is typical of democratic countries (Burzyński, 2012). The specific complexity of metaphors in politics needs to be recognized because, on the one hand, they serve as a tool for categorizing politicians (*e.g.* as "country saviors" or "political bankrupts"); on the other hand, it is politicians who give the metaphors their carrying capacity by creating and popularizing them. According to Burszta (2016), the use of metaphors in political speeches is a general phenomenon, independent of political systems, which can be found both in the spectacular speeches of Mao Zedong, Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler and in more recent speeches made by contemporary leaders of the democratic world. The use of appropriate metaphors can be associated with political influence and the art of persuasive speech.

Inspired by Morgan's (1986) research, we decided to investigate metaphors used to analyze descriptions of the Polish socio-economic transformation of the 1990s. In our view, this period seems particularly important and interesting from the perspective of creating new systemic rules for the functioning of Poland's economy and politics. For the needs of the analysis, we have chosen findings of the field research investigating this period conducted by Ost (2007) and Dunn (2015). This was an arbitrary choice justified by the similarity of the methodological approach adopted by both researchers and their consent to participate in our research (including also consent to waive anonymization of the interviews given). We set two main research objectives: the first focused on identifying metaphors used in analyses of the Polish transformation conducted by the American researchers; the second was aimed at suggesting a general categorization of key metaphors found in their works. Our intention was to draw attention to the complexity of memory culture, its imperfections and its connections with the sociological imagination.

2. Images of the Polish transformation: methodological and theoretical analysis framework

The analyses presented here are based on our research project *Images of the Polish Socio-Economic Transformation in the Eyes of Foreign Researchers in the Context of Their Social Roles and Intercultural Communication* conducted at the University of Silesia in Katowice (USK), Poland. By definition, this project carried out in Poland, is concerned with approaches to the Polish transformation of the 1990s from the perspective of researchers culturally rooted in other countries, particularly in the context of how it is addressed mainly by American and British scholars. On the one hand, it is the perception of the autonomy and boundaries of the research field and, on the other hand, identity and choices of research topics (Dunn, 2015; Ost, 2007; Penn, 2003). The whole project has been inspired by the description of the changes in the Polish labor market made by foreign researchers and the connection of the Polish sociology of work with its history in the international context (Stewart et al., 2019). Bearing this in mind, one may wonder to what extent looking at national or even local labor

markets from the perspective of participating in a different organizational culture promotes the reliability and relevance of the analyses. Research focus has been put on the findings of foreign scholars who investigated the Polish socio-economic transformation of the 1990s and the related research opportunities, difficulties, and challenges of intercultural communication seen by them from a contemporary perspective.

It is about answering how knowledge transfer can markedly contribute to shaping civic sensitivity, particularly regarding sensitivity to democratic freedoms and equal opportunities in the labor market. Therefore, the research uses individual in-depth interviews with researchers of the Polish socio-economic transformation of the 1990s and focus group interviews with students of social sciences while also analyzing existing publications concerning the analyzed transformation period.

The project was started in 2023, so it is only the beginning stage of the research. By far, we have conducted two individual in-depth interviews with American researchers of the Polish transformation and six focused group interviews with social sciences students at the USK. Individual in-depth interviews with Ost and Dunn were conducted online. By design, we wanted to obtain consent for the two interviews to waive the anonymization of the interviews, to which both interviewees consented. Lack of anonymity allows us to contribute to disseminating the knowledge about the researchers of the Polish transformation. Conducting interviews is a seemingly easy research technique, but doing it requires a great deal of attention, empathy and involvement (Kaufmann, 2010). The in-depth interviews we conducted in this project were not typical since we encouraged our interlocutors to present a broader biographical narration, particularly in the first part concerning experiences related to the research into the Polish transformation. The inspiration for using this technique came from the research into the history of Polish sociology of work (see, among others, Giermanowska et al., 2016; Czeranowska et al., 2022). In this project, however, we use individual in-depth interviews only to a limited extent as we focus more on analysis of existing publications concerning the Polish socio-economic transformation of the 1990s. Here, we want to emphasize that we do not intend to discuss the entire work of the two interviewed researchers, with whom we have already conducted two individual in-depth interviews. Our purpose here is only to reflect the key metaphors (at least in a part of their output) that can be captured in the university communication, with the concept of the sociological imagination as inspiration for this approach (see Wright Mills, 2007; Giddens, 1998) and metaphorical thinking used by Morgan (1986).

3. Metaphors used in the description of the Polish transformation: preliminary research findings

We started the research by interviewing Ost and his publications, which are a starting point for our analyses. The author of a book with a provocative title, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe* (Ost, 2006, Polish: *Kłęska "Solidarności". Gniew i polityka w postkomunistycznej Europie*, originally published in 2005), indicated in the interview with us that he dealt with the failure of the trade union due to the betrayal of workers' interests; hence we suggest using the metaphor *transformation as the betrayal of workers* referring to his works. This author's first book, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Opposition and*

Reform in Poland since 1968 (Ost, 1990), is worth mentioning here as its message was different. The empirical basis of both books was the analysis of existing materials and field research in Poland. An additional factor worth mentioning here is the researcher's biographical experience, *i.e.* functioning in the American capitalist society. In the interview, he said:

"I think it was absolutely crucial, of course, not for the first book, because then I had to personally experience and get to know the state socialist society. [...] But then, obviously, after 1990, my understanding of capitalism was really crucial. Again, it was obvious to me that the beginning of capitalism and the end of state socialism meant [...] the emergence of class society and class conflicts" (Kamińska-Berezowska et al., 2023b).

The opportunity to conduct field research in another country allows for gaining a certain perspective and distance from the investigated reality, and, in this case, it was also related to the knowledge and experience connected with functioning in the capitalist market society. In his second book, published two years after its American publication (see Ost, 2006, 2007). Ost also uses metaphors to describe the Polish socio-economic transformation of the 1990s. He writes that Polish workers were heroes of the 1980s. A decade later, however, after the victory of the *Solidarity* (Polish trade union, founded in 1980) (Polish: *Solidarność*), they started being treated as a symbol of backwardness or "the ugly relic of the old system" (Ost, 2007, p. 93). The main activists of the independent self-governed trade union *Solidarity* also changed over this decade and, according to the American researcher, moved away from employees or even came up with anti-worker ideas and restrictions on the privileges of the world of work, so, metaphorically speaking, they betrayed the workers. In the 1980s, the working class world was adored by Polish intellectuals for its causality and was treated as an expression of civil society. Still, this vision gradually changed after a period of legal action of the first *Solidarity*. Similarly, the character of alliance between workers and intellectual elite evolved, which is reflected in the book mentioned by Ost (2007, p. 100), namely *Times like These... It Is All about Compromise* (Polish: *Takie czasy... rzecz o kompromisie*) by Michnik (2009, originally published in 1985). These transformations are even more conspicuous in the round table talks that commenced in February, 1989. It is worth noticing that the round table can be analyzed from many different perspectives, not only as a way of conducting negotiations but also as highlighting the equality of negotiating parties through the shape of the physical space in which talks took place. During the round table talks, there were two distinct negotiation groups, *i.e.* the governmental one and *Solidarity*, represented by Lech Wałęsa and his advisors. One can, therefore, say, following the author of the book *The Defeat of Solidarity* was also a shift from a conflict that initially was a dispute between the bureaucratic apparatus of the communist government and the protesting world of labor (industrial workers) to another strictly political conflict. It was associated with gradually downplaying workers' issues, which was particularly conspicuous in the 1990s. Hence, the terms of change worked out during negotiations, according to Ost (2007), were highly differentiated, or even Janus-faced, because, on the one hand, they offered basic democratic rights and free trade unions but, on the other hand, they pointed to costly or even painful transformation aspects such as salary cuts and the reduction of social security. Transformation costs meant at least a temporary decline in living standards or increased social inequalities, evoking a wide array of emotions ranging from disappointment to anger. New *Solidarity* leaders who were relegalized in April, 1989 were fully

aware of the potential of workers' anger and social protests, so they did not attempt to recreate a new large trade union. Still, instead, they focused on elaborating a protective umbrella for reforms. According to Ost, "the protective umbrella" metaphor for the socio-economic transformation of the 1990s can be associated with the myth of good capitalists who will replace "the red" capitalists. This way, Polish entrepreneurs or owners were depreciated in the trade union environment, particularly those connected with the Masovian *Solidarity* leader Maciej Jankowski (see Ost, 2007, pp. 116–117) or treated as less "authentic" actors of the market economy. Thus, there have been attempts to channel workers' anger against owners and managers because of who they are, not because of the way they act. Besides, the analyses of the American researcher show not only metaphors of "authentic" or "red" capitalists but also metaphors of "the genuine" economic reforms, *i.e.* the ones that actually cause social inequalities in capitalist economy entities. In this sense, the role of *Solidarity* was seen as providing support in creating a business climate for developing entrepreneurship rather than supporting rank-and-file members. Ost (2007, p. 121) comments on this, quoting Wałęsa, who said that it is impossible to catch up with Europe if a strong trade union is built. These analyses confirm the metaphor of the *Solidarity* trade union as the one that betrayed workers because its objective was to build a capitalist economic system, not protecting rank-and-file employees against excessive economic inequalities. *Solidarity* leaders believed in the metaphor of capitalism seen as a tide, which lifts all the boats but failed to see that the tide also sinks some "boats – households". Based on such an assumption, it was possible to carry out radical economic reforms in Poland in the 1990s, known as the "shock therapy", or Balcerowicz Plan (Polish: *plan Balcerowicza*). It should be emphasized that the plan implemented by minister Leszek Balcerowicz was unprecedented since European countries had never before moved from a socialist centrally controlled economy to a market economy. As Ost admitted, this plan proved successful in the long run, but this was also due to the protective umbrella offered by *Solidarity*. There were also social costs to bear; they affected social actors of the Polish transformation of the 1990s who failed. The Polish socio-economic transformation has become the research subject of Polish researchers who analyzed the TINA, *i.e.* slogan *There Is no Alternative* (see Żakowski, 2005). It is worth recalling that TINA, is an acronym for the slogan there is no alternative, which was used by Margaret Thatcher (prime minister of United Kingdom). In Polish economic reality, the slogan was thought-provoking, as it referred to the view that there is no alternative to global capitalism based on the free market and free trade.

Another researcher who conducted field research in Poland was Dunn (2015), an author of a popular book translated into Polish, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor* (Polish: *Prywatyzując Polskę. O bobofrutach, wielkim biznesie i restrukturyzacji pracy*, originally published in 2008). To describe her considerations, we coined a metaphor transformation as flexibility and mobility typical of post-Fordism, the opposite of which is Taylorism's mechanistic and static nature. In addition, the author uses numerous metaphors to describe and analyze issues in her research. Dunn conducted a participant observation, which constituted the basis for her analysis. That was a study of one enterprise in Rzeszów, Poland, where she spent 16 months. She analyzed the *Alima Gerber* factory (fruit and vegetable processing plant) belonging to the food industry. Before 1989, this plant and other enterprises were state-owned. In the 1990s, *Alima Gerber* was privatized, and it founded

a new enterprise called *Alima Gerber S.A.* (joint-stock company). Dunn (2015) observes that the Polish press presented this process not just as a trade transaction but as “the marriage of Alima and Gerber”. This metaphor was to promote a better understanding of privatization and actions of American managers who took over plant management, so in this sense, it was possible to talk and write in the press about the marriage of beautiful but poor *Alima* to a wealthy American called *Gerber*. Thus, it can be observed that Dunn deliberately uses metaphors in her analysis to make her analysis sound more suggestive. In our reception of the author’s book on the Polish transformation, however, we can see a possibility of summing it up with a key metaphor, *i.e.* the message of the Polish change as a break with Fordism in favor of flexibility and mobility. The analyses of transformations in the *Alima Gerber* factory conducted by Dunn reveal a picture of the Polish transformation of the 1990s as a flexible transition from the economy of Fordism to the economy of post-Fordism. It is connected not only with privatization but also with cultural changes, including new models of market functioning and disciplining employees.

While characterizing Fordism, it is worth noting that it incorporates the concept of Taylor combined with the production belt typical of plants of Fordism, mass production and consumption. In her case study of *Alima Gerber*, Dunn emphasizes that managers treated Polish workers as those from the Fordism era in the United States, so they defined the transformation as a necessity of transitioning to post-Fordism with its whole flexibility. Like Ost (2007), Dunn also observes the presence of anger or its specific array. It was not only about financial or material concerns but also a fear of losing power and control over the management process. The consequence of privatization was the loss of the employees’ and trade unions’ influence on management at the workplace level, which was taken for granted (mainly in the declarative sphere) in the era of a centrally planned economy. In her description of *Alima Gerber* privatization, Dunn (2015) mentions several harsh metaphorical terms coined by employees, such as Dunn observes that they sold us like “a flock of geese or slaves” or “they treated us like a marriageable miss”. Economic transformation and property changes are also associated with a new approach to employees, including a decision whether they should be treated as a “resource” or “burden”. Negative emotions of workers stem from their concern for their workplaces and the quality associated with them, but also with several concerns about the so-called hostile takeover of the company, that is, only to close it and eliminate competition in the food processing industry. However, employees’ concerns about a hostile takeover proved unjustified in the analyzed case.

In the analyses of niche marketing as a specific symbol of post-Fordism, Dunn distinguishes two models of employees: old employees who, by definition, are supposed to be old (but, in fact, they were young) and uncreative, and another group is their opposition, *i.e.* employees at higher levels of organizational hierarchy. The author stresses that such an approach promotes employee inequality and classifies people according to previously prepared schemes. Ost (2017) comments on this phenomenon in the introduction to his book and stresses that it is adapting reality to the assumed model, not vice versa, as real people are forced to enter into accepted models of real people. Additionally, this differentiation of blue-collar workers and managerial or physical and white-collar positions was associated with an increasing differentiation of financial remuneration and non-monetary compensation. These differences

were legitimized by the methods of assessing employees' work, particularly scores granted for innovation and creativity, and by definition, did not apply to blue-collar workers. Essentially, a perspective proposed here by Dunn has the character of the class sensitivity presented here. However, she also notices differentiations related to gender since she emphasizes the feminized character of the factory and a lack of analogous representation of women at the higher levels of the hierarchy, including its sales representatives. Another research issue was the attitude of female employees of *Alima Gerber* to maternity. It seemed to enjoy widespread respect among working women, as well as being associated with breastfeeding babies, preparing home-cooked meals and being responsible for feeding other household members. In this sense, maternity is treated as an antidote to the feeling of lack of importance or subjectivity in professional life. According to the researcher, home gardens and allotments are of similar significance since they allow for the kind of activity that not only supports household budgets but also provides a sort of escape from the formal discipline of the company and thus allows for individual agency. Dunn, when asked about the perspective from which she analyzed findings of her field research, replied in the interview:

"Yes, there was a lot of sisterhood in it, but I think that in those times, the feminist movement was talking about what women did at home or about childcare as a worthless job. People used to think this way in those times, but the women I spoke to told me that housework was valuable to them. I also felt that it was simply a value. I thought a lot about it in general. Perhaps it would have been better if I had had some theoretical feminist view of this situation. In the end, however, I rather consciously analyzed the situation in *Alima Gerber* from the point of view of social classes because feminism, in those times, did not give me such a perspective" (Kamińska-Berezowska, 2023a).

Thus, it can be concluded that Dunn, who conducted her research on the feminized enterprise, noticed women's problems at the time of the Polish transformation of the 1990s but deliberately resigned from elaborating on her analysis. Instead, she has chosen a more universalistic approach, *i.e.* focusing on the general model of a worker and transformations related to it.

4. Images of the Polish transformation: discussion and interpretation

The optimal way of interpreting analyses of the Polish socio-economic transformation conducted by Ost and Dunn seems to compare them with other research also based on field research. Therefore, we want to present the third perspective on the Polish socio-economic transformation of the 1990s by referring to the book *Women's Underground* (Polish: *Podziemie Kobiet*) by Penn (2003). This book can be considered a breakthrough in looking at the nature of the Polish transition because it challenged the image of this process as a "male affair". Penn conducted qualitative research in Poland in 1990, 1991 and 1992 based on free interviews conducted with representatives of Polish elites selected by the so-called snowball method (*i.e.* contact with one of the interlocutors was used to contact and interview another person). This researcher also observed that press reports from the 1989 transformation showed that men were mostly the authors of the Polish resistance movement in World War II (WWII), the struggle for democracy, and, later, the negotiators of the Polish Round Table Agreement. Only one woman was present among the 60 negotiators representing the opposition at

the Polish Round Table Agreement. As Janion (2003) writes in her introduction to *Women's Underground*, such a book about Polish transformation was written by an American woman who noticed what was invisible to direct participants and interpreters of these events. Then she adds, "Sometimes a foreigner sees what we no longer see" (Janion, 2003). By laboriously learning our language and our world, she acts as a cultural anthropologist who, before our eyes, according to a well-known saying, changes the foreign into the familiar and *vice versa*. In this way, it allows us to touch the outlines of some other, literally underground, reality situated in this already well-known and described underground (Janion, 2003, p. 5).

Penn notices that the negative connotations of the word *feminism* in Poland in the 1990s are associated with the government functioning at the time of the PPR, which had just been overthrown. She also notes the spontaneous assurances of her interviewees, who, when not asked about this issue, spontaneously, often in their first words, stressed that they were not feminists. One of the key metaphors used by the author in describing women's activity related to the transformation is "women's invisibility"; in its background, there are also other metaphors, like "conspiracy stars", portraying the male leaders of the martial law period in this way. However, the question arises about who was hiding and feeding them (literally and figuratively) and helping them survive. This also relates to the title metaphor – *women's underground*. In the interviews mentioned above, Penn deviates from their anonymization to present specific women's profiles in the Polish opposition. As Barbara Labuda comments: "Poland owes a lot to women. They did a lot, but somehow there was no place for them in this beautiful story, the story about the struggle for independence" (Penn, 2003, p. 45). What is noticeable here is a relatively common Polish stereotype assuming that an actual leader is a man, which is also commonly observed in the description of history as a fight and politics that men fight, *i.e.* descriptions like *his story* and not *her story*. This is how Penn talks about descriptions of the Polish struggle for a democratic country in the second half of the 20th century:

"The American press, so seemingly accustomed to the presence of women in structures of power, somehow overlooked the fact that Polish women were publishing an underground press and hiding men from the security forces. In the books and documents I knew, there was no mention of women. I read reports by Timothy Garton Ash, Lawrence Weschler, Neal Anderson, David Ost and other authors writing about *Solidarność* and martial law. Still, I found no mention of women who were leaders of the Polish opposition" (Penn, 2003, p. 51).

In this sense, the research presented in the *Women's Underground* documents the women's role at this time.

Popular metaphorical expressions related to martial law in Poland include those referring to a "darkness" or "night". That was when authorities imposed a ban on association, a curfew and a ban on travel without permission from the authorities and introduced state censorship. In her analysis, Penn juxtaposes the metaphor of the "martial law night" with its opposite, *i.e.* "the light of information" – the light carried by women in the underground movement. In this sense, "information means the light" (Penn, 2003, p. 63), and the female oppositionists working to spread knowledge about the news of the underground life of the opposition are those who dealt with the "distribution of wood and matches". However, it can also be seen from a broader perspective resembling the history of Poland at the time of its partitions, when

men fighting against invaders were sometimes arrested, deported or died during the fight. As a result, Polish women deprived of male support often became self-reliant in controlling the upkeep of their households and raising their children. Therefore, as Walczewska (1999) observes, in Polish history, women are held in high esteem by men, which can be associated with the figure of the "Polish mother" (and the duty to give birth to male offspring to support the fight for an independent country). The fact that female oppositionists dominated information management during the martial law period can be seen as forced by circumstances, as it was men who constituted the majority of people who were interned. Therefore, it was a matter of not succumbing to the narrative of the regime media and carrying the "light of information", which was essential both for Polish citizens and for informing foreign media centres. A fact worth noting is an activity connected with the systematic publication of the weekly *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, including statements from hidden leaders and a clear message that *Solidarity* is still alive and fighting. To this end, female oppositionists had to find well-known trade unionists who managed to avoid internment, establish contact with them and secure their further functioning in hiding. Today, it is known that a group of seven women took the helm of publishing *Tygodnik Mazowsze* and protecting formal opposition leaders, popular Zbigniew Bujak in particular. The oppositionists called it the Women Operational Group (WOG, Polish: *Damska Grupa Operacyjna*, DGO) and sometimes signed their texts using the DGO abbreviated form. Still, they soon resigned from using the name for fear of it being deciphered. The whole publication work (information compilation, editing, printing and distribution of printed copies) was illegal, but sometimes circulation reached up to 80 000 copies.

Following Penn (2003), we want to highlight the specific status of women in Poland during the communist era, caused that even militiamen were reluctant to decide to beat protesting women. This state of affairs, similar to opposition activities or undertaking negotiations, can be associated with the metaphor of "keeping face". A sense of responsibility for the country also meant undertaking voluntary work to bring "the light of knowledge" via *Tygodnik Mazowsze*. This often was done at the expense of activists' free time. The last issue of this illegal newspaper was published in August, 1988. It was devoted to strikes in Szczecin, Poland and Silesia, Poland and aimed at encouraging protesters and increasing their influence. This was crucial because strikers' demands were associated with relegalizing *Solidarity*. Unfortunately, the whole 25 000-circulation was confiscated by militia. However, nobody was arrested because regime authorities started considering an agreement with the opposition. Finally, in February 1989, the female activists of the WOG came out of hiding. Wałęsa soon appointed the civic committee of *Solidarity* activists and advisors to assist in the upcoming Polish Round Table Agreement meetings.

Soon, the old PPR regime fell, and the 1990s began with the establishment of a new democratic state and socio-economic order in Poland. It should be stressed once again, following feminist-sensitive publications (Penn, 2003; Graff, 2001), that women who were active during "the darkness of the martial law" carried "the light of information" and, thus, significantly contributed to creating a new history of free Poland. In this way, the WOG's successful activity contributed to the macro-structural success of the country and *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, despite ceasing its activity, contributed to the emergence of the free press, e.g. *Gazeta Wyborcza* (that accompanied Poland's first partially free elections to the Sejm and completely free elections

for the senate after the WWII). Penn in her analysis of the individual lives of the women involved in the WOG group, observed that after the victory of 1989, their life trajectories took different paths. Their common denominator was a departure from politics and a need to break away from the requirements of conspiracy. It resembled a transition from reality drawn in shades of white and black to a full range of colors. Interviews with female activists also revealed recurring ambivalent assessments of the time devoted to the struggle for a new order.

On the one hand, it was a sense of determination and enormous deficits in the area of their private lives on the other hand. This way, the feminist slogan *Private Is Political*, described by Ślęczka (1999), has acquired particularly notable situational specificity in Poland. This is also associated with the Second National Congress of the *Solidarity* trade union, which, despite protests of its female members, supported the introduction of the restrictive anti-abortion law in Poland (see Kamińska-Berezowska, 2013). This way in the 1990s, the Polish socio-economic transformation was building the world less favorable to women, their professional activity, careers and equal earnings. This issue was also raised again by the Congress of Polish Women while summarizing the 20th anniversary of the Polish transformation in 2009, which again shows that a more distant, long-term perspective can reveal more (see Piotrowska & Grzybek, 2009).

Comparing Penn's and Ost's researchs, one can observe her feminist sensitivity and approach to Polish transformations in Penn's analyses. In contrast, Ost's analyses (2007) lack a clear representation of women's problems in the labor market. Dunn (2015), in turn, analyses a feminized enterprise, so women's issues are present in her analyses, including family-related metaphors. As mentioned earlier, the American researcher, in her analyses of the Polish transformation based on the study of one factory, notices numerous metaphors used by the factory employees. The employees used the metaphors mainly for describing their relationships with management; the metaphors also created a specific way to regain their definitions of the situation and related to its subjectivity. Dunn also suggests that it can account for referring to company management as sensible parents and rank-and-file workers as obedient children. The author's observations comply with Ost's findings (2006) because they also confirm the trade unions' approval of trade unions for a new type of systemic economic solutions, thus, for the construction of a capitalist market economy, along with the inequalities generated by it on the labor market. However, for Ost and Dunn, the class perspective has priority in looking at the problems of transition, not the feminist one. This simple juxtaposition of the analyses conducted by the three researchers illustrates the diversity observed in interpreting the social reality. It also shows the suggestive nature of metaphors.

5. Conclusions: multiple images of the Polish transformation

The article presents the work of three researchers analyzing different aspects of the Polish 1990s transformation, which allows for seeing three main metaphorical approaches to the transformation. Ost's research shows transformation as a betrayal of workers, for Dunn (2015), the Polish socio-economic transition is a story of post-Fordist flexibility and mobility, while Penn (2003) focuses on androcentrism of narratives related to this period. It can not be said that only one of these images is true; on the contrary, we want to emphasize that this

differentiation of the three descriptions attempts to convey the richness of objective events. A multitude of perspectives enriches our sociological sensitivity. Obviously, these are not all available descriptions or metaphorical images of the Polish transformation of the 1990s. Thus, we decided to present and juxtapose three selected images of the Polish transformation from the perspectives of Ost, Dunn, and Penn. These selected perspectives on not very distant past can help to see how our reality is susceptible to different interpretations and how it is socially constructed also from the standpoint of its researchers. They can also contribute to enhancing sociological imagination.

We want to emphasize that our considerations presented in the article fit into the interpretive paradigm of social analyses and thus are associated with beliefs concerning the unstable and relative nature of social reality (Kostera, 2003; Morgan, 1986). This, however, does not contradict the view that the Polish socio-economic transformation of the 1990s was a pioneering path that led from a socialist centrally controlled economy to a capitalist one. In this sense, it was unprecedented and debates concerning the nature of these transformations still have been going on, which is also reflected by metaphors depicting these changes. With time, the quoted transformation-related metaphors help to understand better various perspectives on contemporary Poland's history and foster reflection on it. In addition, the article also involves a theoretical and philosophical consideration regarding ideas of freedom, equality and social justice, what they actually mean and how they are expressed. Reality is ontologically open to the process of becoming, so it draws on its past but also constructs this reality to some extent or even selects its specific variants. In our view, the recent parliamentary elections in Poland also reflected this state of affairs, as again, there were references to the memorable changes of 1989. This can be perceived as an additional illustration of how a current socio-political reality can benefit from its past achievements. It seems, therefore, that it is still worth recalling past processes and "thinking with images", Morgan (1986), applying them not only to the organizational world of management but also to the analysis of transformations and a broader context of socio-economic changes. Hence, we hope the present study has contributed to deepening insights into various aspects of critical thinking and might be put to positive use.

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