

# Polish Studies Today and Tomorrow

BASEES Polish Studies Group and SSEES Polish Studies  
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## Abstracts

Monday 13 September

### **Norman Davies**

#### History of Galicia

The Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, previously a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was a province of the Habsburgs' Austrian Empire from 1772 to November 1918. Its main cities were Krakow (in 1795-1809 and from 1846) and the capital, Lemberg/Lwow/Lviv. In the interwar period, the former Galicia belonged to the Second Polish Republic. But in World World Two, as a central element of Europe's wartime 'Bloodlands', its human fabric, together with its social structures and culture, was irretrievably torn apart.

Apart from the crust of German-speaking Austrian officials, the main ethnic composition of Galician society was made up of a threefold mix of Poles, Ruthenians (later called Ukrainians), and Jews. Each of the constituent communities displayed considerable religious, social and economic diversity. Life in the province, therefore, was multilingual, multireligious, and in later decades multinational, creating an inimitable series of fruitful and not so fruitful interactions.

In the century or so since Galicia's political collapse, its history has tended to develop in three separate narratives – Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish.

The present book aims to re-integrate those narratives, giving equal emphasis to all of Galicia's different communities in each chronological period. It gains its special effect by combining general historical descriptions and analyses with a large number of quoted extracts from Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish memoirs, many of them by women.

## **Gabriella Elgenius (University of Gothenburg)**

### Civil Society Trajectories Abroad, Mechanisms of Solidarity and Division

(preliminary title)

This paper problematizes the ethnic framing of social solidarity as utilized by diasporic organizations and civil society formations abroad, taking the self-identified Polish civil society in Britain as the case in point over pivotal times of civil society making. The aim of this paper is to contribute towards explanations as to how and why diaspora civil society trajectories develop the way they do, through uniting and disuniting mechanisms conditioned by external and internal pressures. The marked juxtaposition between the ethnic framing of diaspora claim-making and internal division is of particular interest as it contributes towards civil society development over time. Key terminology associated with the ethnic framing of diasporic practice, stance and claim is provided by Brubaker and is theorized in relation to homing desires (Brah), discursive social solidarity (Calhoun), gate-keeping and positionality (Elgenius and Garner) from a relational approach to civil society (Elgenius, Jacobsson and Korolczuk). The ethnic framing of shared history and shared experiences has enabled the Polish civil society abroad, but the diaspora-terminology stand in contrast to dividing homing desires, stratified bonding capital and internal division. This paper explores this civil society abroad over time in order to problematize the ethnic framing of diaspora activities and claims during pivotal times of civil society building pre- and post-European expansion. In so doing, the tensions between discursive solidarity and division, the role of dividing homing desires, stratified bonding structures and internal protests are highlighted as key contributing factors to this civil society trajectory. This paper builds on interview material collected 2009–2018 through projects funded by the British Academy, John Fell, and the Swedish Research Council. The findings over-time draw upon 120 in-depth and semi-structured interviews from these projects.

## **Carolin Heilig (UCL SSEES)**

### **Civil society in the face of pillarization: Insights from Krakow**

Since 2015, Poland underwent considerable political change that has also changed relations between the political and civic sphere. This paper focuses on the gendered dimension of this shift that has led to serious challenges for many women and the LGBTQ community. Over the last years, we have seen increased and evolving mobilisation of civil society in Poland responding to PiS's populist politics (Korolczuk, 2016). Feminist mobilisation such as the Black Protest and the 2020 protests against the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling to restrict legal abortion constitute "a struggle for a democratic Poland" (Graff, 2019).

This paper wants to contribute to our understanding of how relations between political and civil society shape democratic trajectories, drawing on the example of mobilisation around gender issues in Poland. Through original social network data collected in the city of Krakow in 2020/2021, it examines the phenomenon of polarization and pillarization of Polish society (Ekiert, 2019). This paper maps out the social network between civic actors and political parties and traces strategies and hurdles of civic actors mobilised around gendered issues. It contrasts the proximity of values and actual cooperation on the ground within civil society and assesses the potential of movements to effectively push back illiberalism in Poland in a pillarized society where cards are increasingly stacked against liberal forces. By focusing on relations between apolitical and politicized civil society actors and their ties to political parties, this paper wants to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of polarization of Polish society.

## **Paulina Lenik (UCL SSEES)**

### **Trusting the untrustworthy: an exploration of attitudes towards populist government in Poland using survey data**

Should we start to accept that populist parties are here to stay? Populists are militant defendants of the 'supreme will of the majority' (Weyland, 2001, p. 16) which shakes foundations of liberal democracy. With the voices of minorities subdued, growing concentration of political power, and the subsequent undermining of constitutional order, democratic system of governance is effectively decaying (Bustikova & Guasti, 2017, p. 166). In such context, examining the sources of electoral support for populist parties remains critical. This paper offers a fresh perspective on how electoral attitudes have evolved since Poland's conservative right-wing populist Law and Justice party (PiS) came to power in 2015. It identified social trust, political trust, and satisfaction with governance to significantly influence the demand for populist parties at instances where (1) populist party runs the campaign as an opposition and consequently when (2) PiS remains the incumbent governing elite.

## **Karolina Rosiak (AMU Poznań)**

### **The linguistic integration of migrants in Poznań, Poland – Polish Café as a grassroots initiative**

Although immigration to Poland is not a new phenomenon, in recent years we observe an influx of migrants to Poland, mainly due to significant increase in immigration from Ukraine. Despite that fact, Polish authorities have not yet implemented an official migration policy. Consequently, no policy exists regarding linguistic integration of migrants and there is little institutional help in teaching Polish to migrants, limited to a large extent to language courses organized by NGOs. For many migrants, then, formal instruction is limited to language courses in the workplace or private classes. It is in this context that grassroots non-profit Polish Café meetings were established in the spring of 2019, i.e., informal regular meetings of immigrants in Poznań (Poland) learning Polish with native speakers of Polish. The meetings are organized by two teachers of Polish, who have observed that somewhat surprisingly their students do not have opportunities to practice Polish outside the classroom. Hence, the meetings take place in a café and consist in informal grammar and vocabulary learning, and conversations.

The present paper will discuss initial findings of an ethnographic study of Polish Café as a grassroots initiative with linguistic integration at heart. Data for this study was obtained between May 2019 and October 2020 (with breaks as of March 2020 due to lockdowns) through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and action research. The emergent themes discussed in this paper will include the importance of skills in Polish for integration, linguistic repertoires, (un)belonging and identity. All themes will be discussed from the point of view of migrants as well as Polish native speakers.

## Tuesday 14 September

### **Agnieszka Kubal (UCL SSEES)**

'I want to sue my government!' – a socio-legal analysis of Skarga Kobiet before the European Court of Human Rights

The decision of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal (CT) from 22 October 2020 has severely curtailed women reproductive rights in Poland. As a result, massive thunderbolt protests followed across cities, towns and villages all over the country. With a benefit of a hindsight many commentators now talk about the unrealised potential of these protests, but is that really so? This paper focuses on one case study of the assemblage of feminist protests which followed in the immediate aftermath of the CT decision called 'Skarga Kobiet'. There, a group of Polish women lawyers drafted an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights to challenge the decision of the CT using an innovative (and therefore risky) concept of 'a potential victim' – meaning all women in reproductive age in Poland are affected by this new law. Over 8,000 Polish women downloaded the text of the appeal and over 1,000 appeals have been registered by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Less than 6 months since the submission of the appeal, the ECtHR has initially communicated a group of 12 cases, and as a priority had asked the Polish government for their observations and explanations. This draft paper presents a socio-legal analysis of Skarga Kobiet. Methodologically, I draw on over 30 interviews conducted with the human rights lawyers, activists and claimants before the ECtHR conducted between June and July 2021 in Poland, the established ECtHR jurisprudence and legal desk research.

### **Aleks Szczerbiak (University of Sussex)**

Is Law and Justice a clerical party?

Although Law and Justice claims to be informed by Catholic teaching and values in its programme the party has never been primarily and explicitly clerical in its appeal. Law and Justice argues that the Polish state should recognise the importance of and respect Christian values, which it feels provide an axiological underpinning for associational activity in the public sphere. The party has often made a clear pitch for the religious electorate and at times been closely associated with Radio Maryja and its network of associated organisations and media outlets. However, although on occasions the party has tried to mobilise support around moral-cultural issues linked to the Church's policy agenda (such as sexual minorities), Law and Justice never had any organic links with either the Catholic Church hierarchy or official Church structures, and that its programme is only loosely and implicitly informed by religious values. Indeed, the party has, at times, been cautious about adopting too high a 'religious' profile and often

shown restraint in using such rhetoric for fear of putting off 'secular' voters who might otherwise have been attracted by its broader socio-economic and anti-corruption programme, the ideological core of which was a commitment to the radical reform of the Polish state and creation of a new moral, political and social order.

## **Anne White (UCL SSEES)**

### **'Not too big and not too small': Polish medium-sized cities as migration magnets**

Political divides in Poland, as in other countries, often seem to correlate with population size, with cities of over 500,000 population displaying liberal attitudes. This is partly because of greater prosperity but also, linked to this, their social composition, such as higher than average shares of university graduates. Since the 1990s, the biggest cities and their suburbs have also attracted more internal and international migration than other locations. However, this situation is changing, as more immigration is to smaller cities, and it would be misleading to divide Poland sharply between the metropolises and the rest. Second-ranking regional capitals and 'medium-sized' cities display a wide variety of different attributes, as indicated for example in the indicators grouped together to create city rankings like [https://www.polskawliczbach.pl/Rankingi\\_Polskich\\_Miast](https://www.polskawliczbach.pl/Rankingi_Polskich_Miast).

Polish cities of 'middling' population size differ so much from one another that it would probably be too ambitious to use the portrait of any one medium-sized city to represent some 'average' Polish Middletown. My paper draws largely on statistical studies by Polish geographers, which explore city identities, including the rapid development of many 'lesser' cities in recent years, while often missing another dimension of recent social change: expanding ties between Polish cities 'across' to cities and towns abroad (not just 'up' to Warsaw and 'down' to local smaller towns and villages). The empirical part of my presentation is based on qualitative sociological research into how Poles and foreigners in Poland choose their migration destinations and in so doing conceptualise size and draw comparisons between locations. Why do some people disparagingly label cities of over 100,000 'small towns' or even 'big villages'? What makes a medium-sized city attractive to migrants? How does quality of life (however defined) rate against employment-related considerations? I draw on background research for my current project examining migration to and from Kalisz, Piła and Płock.