



## From Wallerstein to Rothschild

### The Sudden Disappearance of the Polish School of Dependency Theory After 1989 as a Manifestation of Deeper Transformations in the Global Field of Social Science

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#### Abstract

*This article investigates a neglected issue of the influence of systemic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe on the (sub)field of social sciences and more broadly on local fields of power. Our case study concerns a vibrant and internationally connected network of scholars from various disciplines and generations who were involved in developing and popularizing a dependency paradigm in communist Poland. As we show that the fall of communism and related transformation in the Polish field of power brought about dramatic shift in terms of their career trajectories as well as their ideological orientation and in consequence a sudden disappearance of this academic ecosystem. On this basis we argue about wider changes—encompassing marginalization of the “critical,” autonomous tradition and strengthening of heteronomic trends in social sciences in the region but also at the global level.*

**Keywords:** Sociology Of Science, Intelligentsia, Poland, Post-Communism, World-Systems, Periphery



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As is widely known, the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe generated many radical breaks across various social spheres. Scholarship in many disciplines has since focused on the deep changes that occurred in political and economic spheres as a result of this collapse. However, much less is known about resultant changes in academic fields, particularly in the social sciences. A well-known exception to this case involves changes to domains directly entangled in the ideological legitimization of communist regimes, in particular political science and research focusing on Marxism-Leninism, the history of communist parties, and the “workers’ movement” (Warczok and Zarycki 2018).

Importantly, these changes occurred alongside a wider scientific transformation that encompassed other spheres: the assimilation of Western institutional models and norms of practicing social science. Applied research in “Marxism-Leninism” or the “political economy of socialism” was regarded widely as incompatible with dominant Western scientific paradigms, thus it was quickly dismissed and forgotten.

Less known, however, is that the fall of communism also triggered revolutionary changes in areas of social science that were not only practiced in ways entirely compatible with Western science, but in ways which also established networks of close cooperation with Western scholars.

In this article, we will focus in particular on the case study of Polish scholars whose work related to dependency theory. We are referring to a paradigm that originated in circles of Latin American scholars, such as Celso Furtado or Raúl Prebisch, who first attempted to generalize the dependence of South American economies on Western countries and their histories. Immanuel Wallerstein emerged as one of the main theorists of this approach, referring to his theoretical model as “world-systems” analysis (Wallerstein 1974–1989) and giving rise to a new trend within the dependency paradigm. His approach synthesized the insights of Latin American scholars with the approaches of the French historical school known as “Annales,” associated primarily with Ferdinand Braudel.

A community made up of several circles of Polish scholars was also associated with this international network of researchers. This trans-institutional and trans-disciplinary ecosystem was developed after 1956 and throughout 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Although it never formed the dominant sector of the social sciences, this fairly established network, which operated in several important academic institutions, grouped together many established researchers with extensive international contacts; some of them were important figures for the anti-communist movement too. It also attracted many young and promising scholars. The eminent Swedish historian Magnus Mörner (1987) acknowledged the international recognition achieved by this network during the communist period, writing:

For many years, Polish students of Latin America have been proving themselves to be innovative and dynamic. What’s more, before Poland’s freedom from Soviet control, its scholars showed themselves to be remarkably independent and incisive students of their own Eastern European reality, both past and present. To take just one example, Witold Kula’s theory of feudalism, based on Polish historical experience, was also remarkably enlightening when applied to the analysis of traditional Latin American rural society. (Mörner 1994: 542)

The scientific successes of this milieu have been largely forgotten today, both in Poland itself and internationally. This has happened primarily due to its disintegration, which we will describe in this text. Another reason for the relative oblivion is the incompatibility of the image of the successes of the Polish social sciences during the communist period, particularly in the 1960s, with the dominant negative image of that era. Such a black image has been presented by intellectuals of a right-wing orientation, for whom the communist period is, by definition, the most negative reference point of most of their narratives. However, it is also common for liberal, pro-European narratives, in which it was only the collapse of communism and European integration that brought modernization to Poland, including its social sciences.

As we will demonstrate, this vibrant network experienced a sudden and almost complete disintegration in 1989–1990, following a significant migration of intellectual elites from academia to politics, business, and administration spurred by the systemic transformation of Eastern Europe. What seems particularly striking in this case is its spectacular disappearance, both in terms of time and the unexpected consequences of its dissolution.

No one better illustrates the fate of this milieu than Wiesław Rożłucki. The economist, who graduated from the country's most prestigious economics faculty, the Main School of Planning and Statistics-SGPiS (currently the Warsaw School of Economics-SGH), worked as a researcher at the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IGiZ PAN) until the fall of communism, where as a geographer he studied issues related to dependency. In 1977 he defended his doctoral dissertation there entitled “Modernization of Traditional Agriculture on the Example of the ‘Green Revolution’ in India.”

A transcript of a meeting held at a Polish-Soviet seminar in 1979 provides insight into Rożłucki's research activities at that time. During this meeting, Rożłucki referred to the world-systems approach and its leading American theorist, Immanuel Wallerstein, with admiration (Rożłucki 1981). A year later, reporting on a discussion at another interdisciplinary seminar dedicated to “dependent development,” he wrote:

views expressed by the economists [participating in that seminar – A.T., T.Z.] that the path out of underdevelopment should be based mainly on the capital of multinational corporations without changing their existing mode of operation in Third World countries raised serious doubts. (Rożłucki and Szlajfer 1981: 438)

In 1981, Rożłucki received a scholarship at the London School of Economics, an honor that testified to his good language skills. Arguably, it also provided him with international experience and contacts, which proved crucial at later stages of his career. Scholarships granted to Polish researchers to travel to prestigious Western research centers during the communist period (especially in the 1960s and 1970s) typically feature in the careers of many figures who established spectacular careers outside of academia after 1989 (e.g., Kilias 2020, Duller 2020, Zarycki 2020).

When communism fell, Rozłucki became an advisor to Leszek Balcerowicz<sup>1</sup>, the Minister of Finance in the first non-communist government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki. He reached the peak of his career in 1991, when he was appointed the first President of the Warsaw Stock Exchange, an institution symbolically located in the former building of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. He remained in this position until 2006, two years later becoming a Senior Adviser at Rothschild & Co, a position he still holds today. Presently, he is also a member of several supervisory boards of large listed companies, most of which are controlled by foreign capital (Tychmanowicz 2017).

Rozłucki's career is extraordinary, and the reversal from academia to economic field it took after 1989 is probably unparalleled in terms of changes in both professional trajectory and ideological orientation. But it is not unique. In fact, as we will show, it epitomises the dynamics concerning the shifting professional trajectories of an important part of the Polish intelligentsia.

By analysing the career trajectories of a select group of Polish cultural elite members forming the dependency paradigm network, our study will attempt to provide a complementary answer to the important question that has been already asked in academic debate on the logic of the so-called transition the capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe: namely, the question about the origin of the first groups of politicians, business leaders, and experts responsible for developing capitalism in Poland after 1989. This question has been addressed with important contributions, most notably by Joanna Bockman and Gil Eyal (2002). As Bockman and Eyal advance, during the Cold War a “forgotten” cooperation developed within a transnational network of economists that crossed the “iron curtain,” one that brought together researchers from the United States and Eastern Europe. In Poland, the most prominent representative of this network was Leszek Balcerowicz, an advocate of the radical “shock therapy,” a standard implementation of neoliberal ideas. However, Balcerowicz was only the best-known among a broader faction of Poland's intellectual elite, which in 1989 and in the following years entered what Pierre Bourdieu called the “field of power” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1993)<sup>2</sup>.

As we would like to point out, this neoliberal transnational network was not the only determinant responsible for the circulation of ideas between Western core and East European periphery. Parallel to its collaborations and circulation of ideas on economic planning, a network consisting of researchers developing a dependency paradigm, critical of capitalism, emerged. It included scholars both in Eastern Europe (Sosnowska 2019), Latin America (Palma 2016), and Western Europe (Weissenbacher 2017). The aforementioned changes in Eastern Europe after 1989 brought about dramatic changes to the organization and professional activities of this latter network. Indeed, as Sosnowska and Palma explain, a widespread marginalisation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Both Rozłucki and Balcerowicz studied at the most prestigious faculty of foreign trade at the School of Planning and Statistics which might possibly explain the former's nomination.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu introduced the term “field of power” to conceptualize the “elite,” defined as “systems of positions occupied by the holders of different forms of capital which circulate in the relatively autonomous fields which makes up an advanced society” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1993: 20).

dependency paradigm in academia as well as in the public sphere is notable both in the Eastern Europe and Latin America after this moment.

This article contributes to this scholarly literature, particularly by focusing on an important feature of the above-mentioned changes; namely, the unprecedented radicalism of this rupture. We will present an analysis of the causes, course, and consequences of these abrupt changes. Although our case study concerns a sub-sector of the social sciences in which described tendencies were strongly pronounced, we argue that 1989 stands as a moment of critical significance for the entire field of social sciences. The changes it precipitated were particularly revolutionary in Poland, but more generally they are indicative of processes that were taking place in other communist countries, and to a certain degree on a global scale.

In particular, what we have in mind involved the weakening of academic circles which can be described as “critical” (broadly understood as the so-called critical school in the social sciences including various currents of Marxism, structuralism, and post-structuralism, focused on the deconstruction of obvious and concealed dimensions of authority), especially those that analyze various kinds of economic inequalities. To this end, we may even speak to the diminishing role of the social sciences as such, related to their shifting position as a source of legitimisation for economic or political decisions.

### **Mapping the Social Space of Dependency Paradigm**

#### **Economic Historians**

In this section, we will map several circles of Polish social scientists whose research contributed to or who were inspired by the broadly understood dependency paradigm, and who formed what we might call a research ecosystem. We will begin with the circle most closely related to the above-mentioned eminent researchers from the United States and France, that of the Polish economic historians who dealt with the problem of the underdevelopment of the region located between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas. The group was affiliated with the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Science and led by Marian Małowist (1909–1988) and Witold Kula (1916–1988). The former’s work played an important role in the development of Wallerstein’s model. Małowist was, along with Ferdinand Braudel, one of the two scholars to whom Wallerstein dedicated his ground-breaking book—*The Modern World-System I* (1974). Kula, for his part, was cited by the creator of the Annales school with whom he collaborated on a research project (Sosnowska 2019).

As shown by Valentin Behr (2017), this network of researchers belonged to a relatively independent group within the Polish field of historiography. It mainly involved historians educated before the war, often from the intelligentsia, who neither wanted nor needed to assume the role of party propagandists. They accepted, for the most part, a Marxist methodological framework. At the same time, they opposed applying it in a way that would valorize ideological dimension of their academic work at the expense of its academic merit, as was the case of “scholars” whose university appointments were mainly due to their services to the communist party. In order to maintain a certain autonomy from political pressures, they created an environment valuing

scientific inquiry as practiced at a maximum professional level<sup>3</sup>. More generally, their situation was an illustration of the relative weakness of the state structures in Poland (in comparison with other countries in the Eastern Bloc) vis-à-vis the key figures from the academic field, what resulted in a significant dose of continuation in relation to the pre-war academic habitus (Zysiak 2019).

Concepts and debates of Polish post-war economic historians have been described in details in Anna Sosnowska's exemplary work (2019). As mentioned, Małowist was probably the most important representative of this group. In 1958, he went on a one-year fellowship to Section VI of the Sorbonne as the first director of the Centre d'Études Polonaises at the Sorbonne (Batou and Szlajfer 2010; Siewierski 2016). In the following years he developed international scientific contacts with researchers from other Western countries and published in several renowned foreign scientific journals. As a result, he became not only one of the most recognizable historians from Poland in the West, but also an internationally recognised authority on the economic history of Europe. Małowist's special position among Polish post-war historians is illustrated by the fact that as many as 17 of the participants in his seminars became professors. Some of his students also played important political roles during the Solidarity period and after the breakthrough of 1989.

Witold Kula also played a significant role within this group, educating many famous professors. He was president of the International Association of Economic History (of which he was later also honorary president) from 1968 to 1970, and vice president of the International Commission of Historical Metrology from 1974 to 1983 (Blackwood 1999; Sosnowska 2019).

### **Latin Americanists**

The group of scholars of the so-called Third World (especially Latin America) formed important section of dependency studies in Poland, especially those researchers centred around Tadeusz Łepkowski, the well-known historian of Poland and Latin America (1927–1989).

Łepkowski, a disciple of Witold Kula, can be considered a representative of the following generation of Polish intelligentsia, which maintained affinities to Marxist thought while at the same time retaining a significant level of autonomy from the Communist Party. Like Małowist, Łepkowski was also born into an affluent bourgeois-intellectual family. His scholarly activities laid the foundation for the development of Polish research on Latin America. For these contributions, he was awarded the honorary presidency of the European Association for Latin American Studies (1978–1981), demonstrating that this Polish network of dependency theorists

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<sup>3</sup> As a recent study based on the archives of Poland's former communist security service (SB) shows, the autonomy of most prominent Polish scientists vis-à-vis the state was significant. In particular, after 1956 they were able to travel quite freely to Western countries (passports were mainly denied to those who openly engaged in politically motivated protests). The special services tried to monitor the foreign contacts of Polish academics, but their ability to influence was limited. Most susceptible to political control was the faction of scientists loyal to the authorities, particularly members of the Communist Party. However, as security service agents themselves noted, most of the loyalists compensated for their poor scientific achievements by being politically available to the authorities (Pleskot and Rukowski 2009). As it seems, one of the reasons for the relative tolerance towards the independence of outstanding researchers was that the communist authorities were keen to develop world-class science in Poland in order to legitimize the political system in place.

was also quite well-integrated and appreciated by international academia (Zahorski 1990; Zajewski 1991; Gielawska and Dzierżanowski 2018).

The Department of American, African, and Asian History at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences served as the institutional center of Latin American studies in Poland. Within the department, Łepkowski led a seminar that brought together many young Third World scholars. The prestige of Łepkowski's seminar attracted left-wing scholars interested in non-European regions other than Latin America as well as members of the Polish elite from outside academia, including Adam Michnik and Ryszard Kapuściński (Gielawska and Dzierżanowski 2018). Some of his students, in particular Antoni Macierewicz, were founders of one of the first anti-communist opposition movement: the Committee of the Defence of Workers (Gielawska and Dzierżanowski 2018).

Two young participants of Łepkowski's seminar, Ryszard Stemplowski and Henryk Szlajfer, advanced research on Latin America from the point of view of dependency theory. In this text, we wish to focus more closely on their fates because of their clear-cut but largely standard trajectories<sup>4</sup>. Stemplowski defended his PhD, prepared under Łepkowski's supervision and titled "Dependency and Challenge. Argentina and the Rivalry between the Anglo-Saxon Powers and the Third Reich," in 1973. Szlajfer defended his dissertation titled "The Latin American Bourgeoisie: An Attempt at a Sociology of a Dependent Ruling Class" at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw. Stemplowski and Szlajfer, as well as other scholars gathered around Professor Łepkowski, maintained relatively strong international contacts. Due to trips abroad (Łepkowski went to Oxford and Szlajfer to the University of Coimbra), they had the opportunity to learn about the latest trends in the dependency paradigm, which they then disseminated in Poland (Borodziej and Debski 2009; Stemplowski 2013; Szlajfer and Zaborowski 2014)<sup>5</sup>.

It should also be noted that after the gradual retreat by historians from the study of historical dependence in Eastern Europe (to be discussed later in the text), Third World scholars began to play a major role in the described ecosystem. They more closely followed foreign academic debates within the dependency paradigm and sometimes attempted to adapt them to local circumstances.

Geography was another subfield where dependency paradigm was adopted and developed in communist Poland. The main centres included the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning at the Polish Academy of Sciences (IGiPZ PAN) and the University of Warsaw. The above-mentioned Rozłucki, who introduced the dependency paradigm into local scientific inquiry, was among the researchers affiliated with the IGiPZ PAN, arguing that "the paradigm shift in interdisciplinary development studies that we are currently observing should not remain without an impact on geographical research" (Rozłucki 1981: 254).

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<sup>4</sup> The career trajectories of Ryszard Stemplowski and Henryk Szlajfer were reconstructed based on the following sources: Borodziej and Debski (2009), Stemplowski (2013), Szlajfer, Zaborowski (2014), the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, and interviews conducted by the authors of this text.

<sup>5</sup> The career trajectories of Ryszard Stemplowski and Henryk Szlajfer were reconstructed based on the cited sources and interviews conducted by the authors of this text.

Piotr Szeliga, another scholar affiliated with IGiPZ PAN, published a paper in 1986 discussing the Latin American and North American trends within the dependency paradigm. However, in his next text, published already in 1991, he attempted to adapt Wallerstein's three-tier hierarchy of the world system to specific Eastern European conditions, which encompassed the functioning of centrally planned economies (Szeliga 1991). Andrzej Wróbel (1928–1999) was another researcher in this milieu concerned with Latin America. Between 1970 and 1972, he was the chief scientific advisor and manager of the research project “The Central Region of Chile-Development Prospects,” carried out for the National Planning Bureau at the Institute of Urban and Regional Development (CIDU) in Santiago.

The geography department at the University of Warsaw was another important centre for the study of dependency. The Institute of African Studies at the University of Warsaw (1962–1977), once part of the Department of Geography, played a special role to this end. It hosted a number of scholars of African Studies who were involved not only in the systematic study of the continent but also lectured at local universities and worked for UN agencies in African countries. Not all of them were involved in the development of the dependency paradigm, but they were usually aware of its existence and referred to it as one of relevant intellectual frameworks. Those active in this circle include such figures as Stanisław Komorowski (1917–2007), Andrzej Dembicz (1939–2009), Antoni Kukliński (1927–2015), and Bogodar Winid (1922–1996). Jan Milewski (1937–), who participated in this circle, cooperated with the famous Western European scholar of dependency Dudley Seers (Seers 1980; Weissenbacher 2017).

### **Economists**

Another centre for the development of studies within the dependency paradigm was the elite university of economics, the Central School of Planning and Statistics (SGPiS). As already mentioned, several future influential liberal economists and politicians counted among SGPiS's alumni, including Balcerowicz. During the communist period, the university also housed the Institute of Economies of Developing Countries, where research related to the dependency paradigm was conducted, among others, by Zbigniew Bąblewski (1985), Zofia Kozak, Aleksander Sulejewicz and Anna Wziętek-Kubiak (Wziętek-Kubiak 1986, 1987). Already in 1991, Wziętek-Kubiak and Kozak edited a volume titled “Dependence Contra Development: The Approaches of Dependency School” (Wziętek-Kubiak and Kozak 1991).

### **Sociologists**

The field of sociology does not seem to have developed an institutionalised community of scholars that advanced the dependency paradigm, but a few sociologists have referred to its approach and methodology. References to dependency theory can be found primarily in publications by researchers associated with institutions concerned with non-European issues. These included Marek Szczepański from the University of Silesia. His habilitation thesis, titled “Modernisation, Dependent Development, Endogenous Development. A Sociological Study of the Theory of Social

Development,” included a discussion on the contributions of modernization theory and the dependency paradigm. During the 1980s, he also published texts on critical theory (1986) and urbanisation in Africa (1984), where he conducted field research. Interestingly, in his article published in 1991, he referred to the dependency paradigm in order to interpret challenges related to the ongoing transformations steered under the slogan of “return to Europe” (Szczepański 1991).

### **Party-affiliated Scholars**

Institutions directly affiliated with the Communist Party (since 1948 called the Polish United Workers' Party, PZPR), such as the above-mentioned Academy of Social Sciences (ANS), also counted among those where researchers interested in the dependency paradigm worked. The Academy hosted a circle of young economists and political scientists interested in Latin American countries and/or the criticism of global capitalism and “imperialism” in line with the communist ideology, including Tadeusz Iwiński, Wojciech Lamentowicz, and Wiesław Czyżowicz (later affiliated with the Warsaw School of Economics). These institutions (another similar one was the Military Political Academy – WAT), although having the status of state universities like all the other institutions we have mentioned in this text<sup>6</sup>, had clearly limited autonomy, and employed mostly Communist Party members. This diminished their broader legitimacy, and was probably the reason why the system of party universities was not expanded too intensively, and especially after 1956 did not pose much competition to regular universities. However, even in party-affiliated institutions, as their former employees stressed, lively intellectual discussions took place, and the use of Marxist and, more broadly, critical theory in ways that were not entirely consistent with party guidelines was tolerated.

### **The Broader Context**

As we have tried to demonstrate, a network of various circles involved to varying degrees in the popularization and development of the dependency paradigm thrived in communist Poland. We propose to call this network an ecosystem, because although this community was diverse, most of its members were aware of the activities of other scholars and drew inspiration from them, allowing for an exchange of knowledge across intellectual groups and disciplines.

The development of this ecosystem was partly inspired by the state authorities, although the relations of individual groups comprising the ecosystem to the authorities were not always smooth, and often even tense. However, in general, the communist authorities championed their critique of the capitalist system, which to a greater or lesser extent was an integral part of the various approaches advanced within the dependency paradigm.

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<sup>6</sup> It should be added that in Poland throughout the communist period, in addition to the state universities, there was one university with the status of a private university, which was an exception in the entire communist bloc. We are referring here to the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL). However, as far as we know, no research in the paradigm of interest to us was conducted at it.

The involvement of the Soviet bloc in various activities in the Third World as a part of its global confrontation with Western capitalist countries constituted another important condition for the development of this ecosystem during the communist period (Mark, Kalinovsky and Marung 2020). It is worth noting that a similar network of institutions and research communities was also created in the Soviet Union, the main actor in the above-mentioned global geopolitics.<sup>7</sup> There, too, some researchers followed dependency theory (e.g., Azarh, Malysheva and Shestopal 1979; Khoros 1984), although until Perestroika unorthodox Marxism was much less tolerated<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, direct collaborations were wrought between some Soviet and Polish researchers, both on the official governmental level (Kieniewicz 2015) and on a purely scientific level. The collective work titled “Latin America: Discussion on Development” (Stemplowski 1987), in which studies by Third World (Celso Furtado, Theotonio Dos Santos, or Samir Amin), Western (André Gunder Frank), and Soviet (Victor Sheinis) researchers were published, stands as a tangible example of such scientific collaborations.

### **The Decline: a Slow Shift Toward the Field of Power and Culturalist Positions**

Due to space limitations, we will not be able to present here a detailed analysis of the Polish social sciences as they related to the field of power, an important context for this study. Instead, we would like to briefly highlight two processes which heavily influenced the fate of what we call the dependency paradigm ecosystem.

As mentioned above a relative autonomy of the social sciences in Poland began in 1956 with the liberalization of the political system taking place that year. A key change in the system occurred in 1968 when the liberal faction within the party and intelligentsia lost a clash with hard-line Communists with a nationalist orientation, and was politically marginalized as a result. This caused some scientists to emigrate, and a significant number continued to conduct autonomous scientific research without participating in political life. The political climate began to change in the second half of the 1970s when the anti-communist opposition began to consolidate. In effect, from the mid-1970s, some scholars engaged in the political or quasi-political activities of the anti-communist opposition. For example, in 1976, Marian Małowist signed a letter condemning the suppression of workers’ protests in June 1976. In 1978, he was one of the initiators of the establishment of Towarzystwo Kursów Naukowych (Society for Educational Courses), which conducted educational activities independent of official institutions (Siewierski 2016).

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<sup>7</sup> One can also mention famous Hungarian scholars associated with the dependency paradigm, in particular Iván T. Berend and György Ránki.

<sup>8</sup> Throughout the communist period, but especially after 1956, Poland was relatively the most politically liberal country in the Soviet bloc. This was due to both its geopolitical location and the specific configuration of its elites and the power of the Catholic Church. An important aspect of this liberalism, was the considerable autonomy of the social sciences, which appeared to be much closer to the West than those practiced in the Soviet Union (Connelly 2000). An excellent documentation of this distinctiveness of the Polish social sciences is a 1967 work on Soviet science (Fischer 1967).

The workers' protests of 1980 and the creation of the “Solidarity” movement initiated an even greater political involvement on the part of scholars. Both Małowist and Łepkowski signed an appeal by 64 scholars, writers, and publicists to the communist authorities to enter into dialogue with the striking workers. Łepkowski, Stemplowski, and Szlajfer, as well as a number of other scholars who attended Łepkowski's seminar, and became members of Solidarity. Łepkowski himself became the chairman of its company branch at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Also Małowist, despite his strongly left leaning orientation, finally expressed support for the movement, whose members eagerly referred to religion and national tradition (Siewierski 2016). Łepkowski and Szlajfer were even involved in the creation of an underground, illegal press. Finally, it is worth recalling that one of Małowist's disciples, Bronisław Geremek, was a close advisor to Lech Wałęsa and a key figure in Solidarity's leadership. Thus, a significant number of the scholars creating the dependency paradigm ecosystem, including Szlajfer and Stemplowski, can be regarded as members of the then counter-elite.

Second, the political engagement of intellectual elites involved in matters of cultural production was accompanied by an ideological shift that encompassed a gradual abandonment of a materialist perspective, in particular analyses of the economic sphere to focus instead on the cultural sphere. We will refer to this process as “culturalization.” This phenomenon may be regarded as a factor that both weakened research interests in the dependency paradigm as a whole but also led to deviations from standard approaches within this trend (focused on analysis of economic relations) among those who kept referring to core-periphery relations.

This tendency was particularly striking in the works of the aforementioned Polish economic historians. Although Małowist himself remained committed to a strongly economic vision of global dependencies until the end of his career, at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, his numerous followers gradually abandoned the part of his scholarly output, which constituted a major input into the de-dependence paradigm (Siewierski 2016). This process can be associated with a general decline of interest in economic history in favor of cultural history among majority of Polish historians (Wyczański 2006).

The career trajectories of Małowist's two outstanding students, Bronisław Geremek (1932–2008) and Henryk Samsonowicz (1930–2021), are characteristic of this process of culturalization. Both wrote their PhD theses on medieval economic history under Małowist's supervision. Over the years, however, their interests shifted toward cultural history. At the same time, in the political sphere, they moved from membership in the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) through active participation in opposition movements, including Solidarity, to the highest political positions after 1989. Characteristically, after 1989, the change of scholarly interests of a large part of Małowist's disciples was assessed positively by the new generation of scholars. It was argued, for example, that their intellectual break produced a desirable effect in its departure from Małowist's “wooden Marxism” (Siewierski 2016: 227).

Another characteristic of the changing intellectual climate after 1989 was a critique of a perspective which argued for relevance of comparisons between Eastern Europe and Latin America based on economic factors. The new stance—also advanced by Małowist's students—

brought to the fore differences between the two regions in the cultural and political spheres and argued for relevance of Catholicism for analysis of historical ties between Poland and Western Europe (Kieniewicz 1992; Mörner 1994). The aforementioned change in the intellectual climate is also evident in the works of Stemplowski and Szlajfer published after 1989. Here, one can discern, for example, a complete change in Stemplowski's attitude toward modernization theory. While at the end of 1970s he was very critical of the theory and pointed to Wallerstein's works as a promising alternative direction of research (Stemplowski 1979), after 1989, he presented a revised stance. Stemplowski advocated for development of ties between core and periphery to create the necessary conditions that would enable the diffusion of solutions from the core. This perspective was championed with an eye to improve the country's position in the world-system (Stemplowski 1992). Commenting on current affairs, Stemplowski expressed support for Poland's integration with NATO and the European Union, presenting this goal as another possibility for improving Poland's position in the global hierarchies (Stemplowski 2001a). At the same time, he questioned the persistence of the economic division in Europe on core and peripheries, which can be seen as belonging to the core assumptions of the dependency paradigm (Stemplowski 2001b).

Szlajfer's scholarly works on twentieth century history were more consistently fit within the framework of dependency theory (Szlajfer 1992). However, his expert analysis of Polish foreign policy after 1989 presented an unorthodox understanding of core-periphery relations, moving away from an emphasis on the economic dimension toward political and cultural spheres and concerns (Szlajfer 2020)<sup>9</sup>.

## **The 1989 Revolution**

### **A Personnel and Ideological Revolution**

One of our study's key theses emphasises the revolutionary yet unnoticed consequences of the 1989 transformation for Polish social sciences. It is widely known that 1989, referred to as the "end of communism," was revolutionary in terms of introduction of parliamentary democracy and implementation of neoliberal economic reforms. In terms of geopolitical orientation of the country, Polish foreign policy was re-oriented towards integrations with the West, famously portrait as a "return to Europe."

Significance of these changes for the social sciences is much less frequently addressed. One of the reasons for this lacuna may be that the institutional foundation of Poland's higher education system remained almost intact. Only those research institutes affiliated directly with the communist party were dissolved. Scholars from the eliminated units were not made unemployed, but trans-ferred to universities and other institutions (Warczok and Zarycki 2018). Moreover,

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<sup>9</sup> One should, however, note that Henryk Szlajfer stands out from the milieu under discussion in that he attached great importance to the legacy of his teachers. In particular he led, together with Jean Batou, to the publication under their editorship of a collection of Marian Małowist's essays in English by Brill (Batou and Szlajfer 2010).

academia was given almost full self-governance and autonomy by non-communist authorities (Antonowicz 2015).

However, changes brought on after 1989 spurred revolutionary shifts both in terms of the career paths of many researchers and the dominant ideological trends in the social sciences. For the former, the first years after the fall of communism witnessed a significant exodus of academics to politics and state administration. They often took up the highest positions in these domains, including posts of ministers, heads of new state structures, MPs, and senators, as well as presidents of foundations and other public institutions.

Many scholars also assumed key positions in economics, both in public and private companies that required local representatives, in part due to foreign capital inflow to Poland after 1989. Foreign language skills and more general knowledge of the West, often acquired during higher studies and academic exchange, were rare assets in the first years after the fall of communism. The social capital accumulated as members of the elite circles of the intelligentsia was also highly valued. Especially given the weak formalization of functioning of the market economy in the first years after 1989, and corresponding importance of personal networks (Wedel 1998).

### **Dissolution of Łepkowski Seminary and Closing of the Institutions**

The Round Table talks and subsequent events brought about an end to the dependency paradigm ecosystem, symbolised by the dissolution of the Tadeusz Łepkowski's seminar. This was precipitated by his death in 1989, but also because of dramatic changes in careers of its members.

For example, in 1989, Henryk Szlajfer became an expert in the Parliamentary Commission on the Economic System and Industry on behalf of the Civic Parliamentary Club (grouping parliamentarians from the Solidarity camp) led by Małowist's disciple, Bronisław Geremek. At the same time, Ryszard Stemplowski became a board member of the Batory Foundation, an influential NGO established to support the transformation in CEE, a member of the network funded by George Soros (Wedel 1998; Krizsán and Zentai 2005). A year later, Stemplowski was appointed Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm, apparently due to lobbying from Geremek (Borodziej and Dębski 2010). Stemplowski was given the task of reforming this institution on behalf of the new political forces.

After a brief assignment in the Sejm, Henryk Szlajfer went to the United States, where he worked as a program manager in a think tank, the Institute for East-West Security Studies. Upon his return to Poland in 1991, he was appointed as Acting Director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM)—a think tank affiliated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1993, Szlajfer served as the head of the department at this Ministry, which he held until 2008, with a break from 2000–2004, when he served as Ambassador-Head of the Permanent Representation of Poland to the OSCE. Ryszard Stemplowski was also active in diplomacy, serving as Poland's Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1994 to 1999. Upon his return to Poland, he was appointed director of the PISM.

Stemplowski and Szlajfer were by no means the only researchers involved in promoting the dependency paradigm. Other participants in Łepkowski's seminar, as well as some other members of the dependency paradigm ecosystem, also entered the state structures of the Third Republic:

**Table 1: Selected Biographical Trajectories of Members of the the Dependency Paradigm Ecosystem After 1989.**

<b>Participants in Łepkowski's seminar at the IH PAN (Institute of History of Polish Academy of Sciences)</b>	
Ryszard Schnepf	From 1991 to 1996, he served as Polish ambassador to Uruguay. From 1998 to 2000, he was a deputy director of the Department of Foreign Affairs in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. From 2000 to 2001, he served as minister plenipotentiary at the Polish embassy in Madrid. In 2005, he was appointed Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. From 2008 to 2012, he served as Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Spain, and from 2012 to 2014 to the United States.
Przemysław Grudziński	From 1991 to 1992, he served as director of the Office of Studies and Expertise at the Chancellery of the Sejm, and then for a year as undersecretary at the Ministry of National Defence. From 1998 to 2000, he was Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He served as Poland's ambassador to the United States from 2000 to 2005 and to Finland from 2015 to 2017.
Tomasz Knothe	From 1990, he worked at the Chancellery of the Sejm as deputy director of the Office for Interparliamentary Relations, and then as head of the secretariat of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Between 1994 and 1995, he was a legal advisor at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner in Warsaw. From 2004 to 2009, he was Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Armenia.
Robert Mroziewicz	From 1990 to 1992, he served as the Permanent Representative of Poland to the UN. From 1992 to 1997, he held the position of Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 1997 to 1999, he served as Deputy Minister of Defence.
Jan Kieniewicz	From 1990 to 1994, he served as Poland's ambassador to Spain, thereafter returning to the University of Warsaw
<b>IGIZ PAN (Institute of Geography of the Polish Academy of Sciences)</b>	
Wiesław Rozłucki	In 1989 to 1990, he served as advisor to the Minister of Finance, and later Director of the Capital Market Development Department at the Ministry of Ownership Transformations. From 1991 to 2006, he served as President of the Warsaw Stock Exchange. Since 2008, he has held the position of senior advisor at Rothschild & Co.
Piotr Szeliga	From 1990 to 1991, he was Head of Securities Trading Department, Capital Market Development Department, Ministry of Ownership Transformations. From 1991 to 1994, he was the organizer and first Director of WSE Listing Department.
Andrzej Wróbel	Since 1990, he is the Director of the Planning and Analysis Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 1992 to 1995, he served as Polish Ambassador to Argentina.
<b>ANS (Academy of Social Sciences of the Polish United Workers' Party - PZPR)</b>	
Wiesław Czyżowicz	From 1990 to 1993, he was the Director of the Department of Customs Policy and Commodity and Currency Trade Control at the Head Customs Office. He also served as Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Finance and Head of the Customs Service.
Tadeusz Iwiński	From 1991 to 2015, he was Member of the Polish Sejm. Since 1992, he has been a lecturer at The University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. From 2001 to 2004, he held the position of Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister.

It should be emphasised that the above table contains only a few among the most spectacular cases from the two research networks that encountered in this study<sup>10</sup>. The 1989 transformation brought about a reversal in the careers of a much larger number of Polish scholars.

### **Multipositionality**

We may observe two types of the post-1989 career trajectories taken by scholars who belonged to the dependency studies ecosystem. The first entailed a complete abandonment of the scientific field, parting with an academic career. This was the case for Wiesław Rozłucki and Piotr Szeliga, both from IGiZ PAN. The second, apparently more frequent approach involved the pursuit of a career in politics, administration, or business while maintaining at least a formal position in the academy. This latter model can be characterised as multi-positional (Boltanski 1973; Clairat 2013), and it was not one alien to Polish intelligentsia elite even during the communist times (Wedel 1986). There is no doubt, however, that after 1989 the intensity of multi-positionality increased significantly.

For example, both Stemplowski and Szlajfer, despite important assignments in the state administration, continued their scientific activities. Significantly, in 1999, Stemplowski received his habilitation in the History Department at the University of Warsaw, followed by Szlajfer who was habilitated in 2006 at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Science. Both scholars were also awarded the title of professor, in 2011 and 2013 respectively. The above-mentioned sociologist Marek Szczepański became involved in consultancy work, acting, among other roles, as the editor of the first development strategy for the Upper Silesian metropolis and a co-author of the development strategy for the Silesian Voivodship. At the same time he continued his academic career assuming several prominent posts at universities in Poland, as well as in the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Multi-positional career trajectories were typical for the broader milieu of the intelligentsia elite and included individuals who performed key political and economic roles after 1989, including Leszek Balcerowicz and Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, as well as Henryk Samsonowicz and Antoni Kukliński. For example, Balcerowicz was habilitated while serving as the Minister of Finance in 1990, and Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz during her tenure as the President of the National Bank of Poland and then Vice-President of the EBRD. Practicing such multi-positioning must have required a significant reduction of academic commitments and focusing oneself only on these scientific achievements that were required to move up the academic career ladder. Thus, it should not be surprising that the most significant scientific studies of the above-cited individuals were published before the fall of communism and their subsequent entry into the Polish field of power.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, as the new head of Sejm's Chancellery, Stemplowski employed several historians from the University of Warsaw, including Włodzimierz Borodziej, Rafał Karpiński, and Andrzej Krawczyk, as well as lawyers such as Wojciech Kulisiewicz and Wiesław Staśkiewicz (Borodziej, Dębski 2010, 12).

A more detailed analysis of this type of trajectory was conducted, for example, on the career of the geographer Antoni Kukliński (Zarycki 2020).

What seems noteworthy here is that the scientists in question found themselves after the fall of communism on different sides of newly emerging political conflicts. In this text, however, we will not discuss in detail their political affiliations after 1989. Regardless of their political sympathies, practically all of them shared the then-naturalized assumptions about the inevitable need for the so-called shock therapy and the implementation of radical neoliberal reforms in order to bring back the “normal.” Some became somewhat Euro-sceptical over time, others remained Euro-enthusiasts, but all abandoned their former interest in dependency theories and shifted most of their activities from the field of science to the fields of “real” politics, administration, or business.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This article has outlined the development of a diverse network of institutions and more or less informal research groups that in different ways were related to the dependency paradigm during the communist period. This network functioned as an academic ecosystem united by the exchange of inspirations and knowledge. As a result, many insights of its participants were quite original. Moreover, many scholars from this ecosystem were well integrated within the global field of the social sciences.

As we have shown, a great part of this scientific and intellectual capital, accumulated over several decades, disappeared almost overnight on the wave of changes spurred by 1989 and due to deep changes within the Polish field of power. Such changes concerned the assumption of key positions in political, bureaucratic, and economic fields by former counter elites, comprising a significant number of scholars. This phenomenon resulted in an increased prevalence of multi-positionality among the academic elite, which in turn weakened professionalism and inhibited the intellectual autonomy of the sciences in Poland.

However, what the given milieu as well as other similar elite groups had retained was their social capital. It was social and cultural capitals acquired throughout professional and meta-political activities in communism, but also this transmitted within families. This is because several of the academics discussed in this text originated from families of the historical intelligentsia elite. In any case, their networks of informal contacts and competences acquired earlier have allowed many members of the academic elites to assume the new privileged positions in fields of politics, administration, and business, regardless their intellectual turnaround.

The disappearance of the community of researchers working in the dependency paradigm seems to be an especially spectacular case of a much broader phenomenon; namely, the disappearance or at least a deep crisis within a majority of Polish academic circles of theoretical approaches that can be described as “critical.” One can point to many other intellectual networks and approaches, in particular those inspired by various applications of Marxism, such as the so-called “Third World” studies and the fields of regional and spatial planning, political economy, and social policy.

Another well-described case study concerns the disintegration of the class inequality research community in Czechoslovakia (Drahokoupil 2015).

Many of these fields have either been displaced or replaced by imported, ready-made paradigms from the West. At the same time, the post-1989 moment represented a period of the triumph for the neoliberal paradigm. In other words, one can say that a complete retreat from Marxism and a return of the modernization paradigm, both in the social sciences and in public discourse, characterised the 1990s in Poland and Eastern Europe (Kolasa-Nowak 2017; Sosnowska 2019). Research was thereafter dominated by topics related to economic and political transformation. Most disciplines in the social sciences were oriented toward the implementation of the new, neoliberal order within social life, adopting strongly normative approaches. Most of these studies examined the “backwardness” of the former communist countries and participated in drawing up plans for reforms, usually understood in terms of deregulation, liberalization, European integration, and globalisation. To sum up, after 1989, almost the entire field of the social sciences was engaged in the construction of a “democratic state” and a “civil society,” based on a liberal economy that integrated structures of global economics and politics into the structures of the European Union. One of the paradoxes of this transformation was that critical anti-communism which motivated major part of scholars we have discussed in this paper led them to adopt more or less apologetic versions of modernization paradigm, serving as a basis for catching-up strategies. That is the very same strategies that many of them, like Rozłucki, criticized earlier as leading to permanent dependence.

As a consequence, the social sciences lost much of their autonomy. It is a paradoxical outcome, because as discussed, academia was given strong, formal autonomy. However, using Bourdieu’s terminology, one can talk about a weakening of their autonomous sector (especially of critical studies of global capitalism) and strengthening of the heteronomous part (Vaughan 2021).

We have tried to demonstrate how these trends were visible in the output of individual researchers. In the case of the members of the network we studied, one can speak of sudden ideological changes, sometimes even ideological reversals. Over less than a year, some scholars changed the tone of their publications from a criticism of the dominance of the Western centre over peripheries to an apologetic view of the West as a promising source of both economic and civil progress.

The mass migration of academic elites to the key positions in the field of power served a huge blow to Polish academia. Those who left the scientific field were often renowned scholars with significant achievements and international networks. It seems that this factor may explain the decline of many disciplines in Polish social sciences in international rankings that measure publications in recognised journals (Warczok and Zarycki 2018). This sudden and deep crisis in the social sciences and humanities in Poland has sharply reduced their output and international visibility. Marek Kwiek who examined this process on the basis of a thorough empirical research, called it “deinstitutionalization” (Kwiek 2012). As it seems, the fate of the milieu we described in this text was a particularly glaring case within this fairly sudden process of degradation of a large part of the Polish social sciences. One of the aspects of this criticism of Polish social sciences was that

similarly to those in other countries of the region, they have become mainly providers of empirical data about their countries to researchers from the West, who took over the entire burden of theoretical work. Such a division of labor between Western researchers and their junior partners from Eastern Europe has already started to emerge earlier. In particular, it has been insightfully described by Johanna Bockman and Gil Eyal (2002) in their above mentioned study of cooperation of economists from the United States and from Hungary and Poland after 1956. After the fall of communism, such an asymmetrical relationships were described in relation to various disciplines, such as geography (Timar 2004), linguistics (Tarasheva 2011), and political science (Warczok and Zarycki 2018). They seem to fit into a more general pattern of inequality in global scientific cooperation (Keim 2010).

Moreover, the disappearance of the network of researchers inspired by the dependency paradigm can be read as a loss of interpretive and methodological abilities of analysing the position of their countries within the world-system. It resulted in a marked vulnerability of the elites of countries from the CEE region with respect to radical market reform programs. Significantly, critical perspectives on the course and effect of these reforms have been emerging much more frequently in Western social sciences, in which scholars preserved more autonomy from economic and political fields and have voiced much stronger critiques of neoliberalism (e.g., Ost 2005; Appel and Orenstein 2018). The same applies for the critique of economic inequalities within the EU (e.g., Bohle 2005; Böröcz and Sarkar 2005).

One can hypothesize, however, that this unnoticed crisis in Polish academia also reflected a wider crisis in the global practice in critical social sciences as many trends in the Polish social sciences described above were part of global phenomena<sup>11</sup>. One can point here to the trend of emphasising the cultural dimension of social experience at the expense of economic inquiry, which we termed culturalization (el-Ojeili 2015)<sup>12</sup>. Interestingly, such a trend has been also present in the milieu of French historians from the Annalee school, in the form of *nouvelle histoire* (Burguière 2009). Additionally, the phenomenon of multi-positionality of elite members (Wedel 2009) as well as a blurring of boundaries between academia and other fields, particularly of politics, journalism, and business (Medvetz 2012), also occurred in other countries. Thus, the Polish case described in this study seems to be an extreme example of a much broader trend, which involved diminishing autonomy of social sciences, what influenced the status of a scientific inquiry—as a legitimising discourse for political and economic powers.

At the same time one has to point to important differences, testifying to the radicalism of the situation in the peripheral Poland. For example, in the case of the Western academia, one cannot talk about a complete collapse of critical thought (although it has also become more culturalist than the earlier currents discussed here) nor about a personnel changes on the scale described

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<sup>11</sup> In this context, one can point to the closure of the Fernand Braudel Centre at Binghamton University after the recent death of its founder Immanuel Wallerstein.

<sup>12</sup> One can also point to a critique of the dependency paradigm from within the Marxist stream of studies (cf. Warren 1973)

above. Post-colonial theory seems to be a good example of such “limited continuity.” As a matter of fact, this stream of research finally reached Poland too (e.g., Zarycki 2014; Cobel-Tokarska 2020). However, it happened with a long delay, and Polish researchers did not manage to play a role in its development comparable to that of the Polish economic historians mentioned in this article. Another example of partial continuity can be found in the German academia within which several historians (some of them Poles), interested in Central and Eastern Europe, still draw significant dose of inspiration from the dependency paradigm, including from the Polish economic historians (Kaps 2015; Adamczyk 2021). However, these seem to be all exceptions that confirm the rule; that is, the pro-cess of forgetting the achievements of a once very lively and internationally active ecosystem within the Polish social sciences.

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