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## Gender studies in Poland: prospects, limitations, challenges

The first ever Academic Feminist Congress, an initiative aimed at the presentation of the achievements of gender studies centers operating in Poland since the mid-1990s, took place in Słubice on November 26-29, 2009. The highlight of the event, however, was not only the promotion of the accomplishments of gender studies in Poland, but a discussion of pressing issues that have yet to be taken up: the question of an institutional base for gender studies, the place of gender studies among other scientific disciplines, and the challenges of teaching and methodology.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of this paper is not so much to summarize the proceedings of the Congress or reporting on its final conclusions,<sup>2</sup> but rather to put together the issues raised therein, which concerned the current condition of gender studies in Poland and, above all, indicate opportunities and threats faced by the field.

### Commodity in short supply

Accounts of the history of the activity of various gender studies centers, presented at the Congress, revealed a specific pattern of organization and model of functioning of these studies in Poland, the analysis of which was carried out in the broader context of a discussion about the condition of the Polish academia and the ongoing reform of higher education.

The diagnoses made clear that in Poland gender studies are offered in the form of tuition-based postgraduate studies (lasting from two to four semesters), organized mostly in the faculties of social sciences and/ or humanities at major universities. Only a few private schools have set up one- or two-level gender studies specialization courses as part of cultural studies. However, at most faculties of humanities and social sciences at public universities one-off courses dedicated to gender issues, equality between women and men, and the formation and functioning of stereotypes based on gender, race, class, and other differences are available as electives for senior students.

This type of organization of gender studies in Poland is dictated by several considerations, which I will only indicate briefly due to space considerations. First, gender

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<sup>1</sup> So far regular discussions on the opportunities, risks and challenges of gender studies in Poland have only taken place on the pages of *Katedra*, a journal devoted to gender studies published by the University of Warsaw (2001– 2004), and occasionally the issue was raised in the thematic sections of literary and cultural magazines such as *Teksty Drugie* and *Ruch Literacki*. In 2006 the online academic feminist journal uniGENDER ([www.unigender.org](http://www.unigender.org)) appeared, providing a platform for a discussion of gender studies.

<sup>2</sup> More details about the Academic Feminist Congress can be found at the website of the Laboratory of Feminist Criticism of the Institute of Polish Philology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań ([www.pkfem.pl](http://www.pkfem.pl)), co-organizer of the event.



studies in Poland is a young discipline, which appeared as a result of scholars' interest in the tools of feminist criticism developed in the West and the explosion of feminist and LGBT activism in Poland. This relationship of science (analyses of discourse of power and mechanisms of exclusion) and politics (measures to combat discrimination against minorities), the very intersection which gender studies emerges from, evokes strong anxiety in contemporary Poland. Resistance is awakened by the idea of a politically engaged scientific discourse and especially by the left-wing roots of gender thought, as these still have negative connotations in Poland (I will come back to this matter). This is undoubtedly one of the reasons for a cautious approach of university authorities to the idea of organizing faculties, institutes or even smaller units involved in the study of egalitarian discourses and dissemination of knowledge about them within the walls of the Academy.

It is obvious that issues of gender equality, gender roles and relations between the sexes are still – despite particular legislative regulations and numerous awareness campaigns – treated with contempt in Poland and do not usually go beyond a set of several common stereotypes. There follows a strong tendency to marginalize gender courses at faculties of liberal arts (not to mention life sciences and technical fields) at public universities.<sup>3</sup>

The interdisciplinary nature of gender studies is often listed as an argument for maintaining the *status quo*, that is, for the organization of gender studies at the level of postgraduate studies and courses, using the argument that to succeed at doing gender research, students require tools developed in the fields of literature, anthropology, philosophy, sociology, history, art theory, psychology, pedagogy, law, and economics. In fact, the interdisciplinarity of gender studies triggers an avalanche of problems. While the functioning of postgraduate studies is based on “borrowing” researchers from different departments and institutes, the organization of separate research and teaching units would require finding and hiring a number of professors specializing in gender issues. The fact that gender studies is not listed as a discipline in the national science registry makes the whole procedure very difficult: academics/ researchers cannot earn degrees in the field of gender studies, which, consequently, makes it impossible to fulfill one of the basic conditions necessary to create gender studies units and/ or institutes at universities. Paradoxically, therefore, in the absence of specific legislative measures governing this issue, gender studies, which should serve as the model for reorganization of various other research and teaching units in the direction of inter- and transdisciplinarity, in the spirit of the ongoing reform of higher education, is unable to operate independently as a discipline.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See also: *Dlaczego warto studiować gender studies? Z prof. Lucyną Kopciwicz rozmawia Jarosław Chabaj* [Why Is It Worth Studying Gender? Jarosław Chabaj Talks To Prof. Lucyna Kopciwicz], <http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl/Wywiady/Dlaczego-warto-studowac-gender-studies/menu-id-77.html>, 05/03/2010.

<sup>4</sup> See: B. Chotuj, „Dlaczego gender studies?” [Why Gender Studies?], *Katedra* 2001, No 3, p. 4; S. Wenk, „Women’s i gender studies w szkolnictwie wyższym w Niemczech” [Women’s and Gender Studies in German Higher Education], trans. by A. Grzybek, *Katedra* 2001, No 3, p. 32–36.



This institutional paralysis results in difficulties obtaining funding from the state budget for research in the field of gender studies (which *de facto* means continuous underfunding). Hence the success of carrying out gender initiatives, controversial due to the subject of research and made difficult by being attached to no particular institution, depends solely on the (high!) fees paid by students and/ or funds from European Union. Tuition makes gender studies—which promote not only knowledge about mechanisms of exclusion and the fight against discrimination but also a model of ethics based on acceptance of difference and respect for the rights of minorities—a luxury good that few can afford. EU grants enable at least partial reduction of tuition fees, but they are allotted only after carrying out complex bureaucratic procedures and contingent on meeting requirements, such as those related to the institution’s educational offer.

The EU’s current policy of gender mainstreaming, which is supposed to integrate the gender perspective into the mainstream of political, social and economic activities, takes place under the slogan of “promoting equality”, in which the emphasis is often put on “promoting” rather than “equality”. Hence the greatest interest (and support) of the EU funders may be enjoyed by these educational projects that combine raising gender awareness with training skills to work for social change: acting to support democracy and free market economy. In this way, gender studies functions not as an autonomous discipline—the discourse of social sensitivity and the fight against inequalities, but as an attractive component of the educational offer of many schools, which often sell the language of human rights dressed in business rhetoric.<sup>5</sup>

The institutional problems raised above, faced today by gender studies in Poland,<sup>6</sup> contribute significantly to distorting and, in some cases, misrepresenting the idea of gender studies, which involves the dissemination of knowledge about the mechanisms of exclusion, stereotypes, gender roles, as well as alternative projects of organizing social reality. Knowledge, along with sensitivity and critical reflection on the existing order which should be generally available (included in the bloodstream of science), becomes a luxury and a commodity in short supply, which reinforces the existing intellectual, cultural, social and economic inequalities.

### Traps of the discourse

Many Polish academics of both sexes consider gender studies to be politically and socially engaged, and see this as sufficient argument against promoting this kind of discourse

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<sup>5</sup> See: G. Griffin, „Kooptacja czy transformacja? Women’s i gender studies na świecie” [Co-optation or Transformation? Women’s and Gender Studies Worldwide], trans. by A. Grzybek, *Katedra* 2001, No 3, p. 18–24.

<sup>6</sup> For more on gender studies institutional difficulties: I. Kowalczyk, „Bezdomne w nauce – o trudnościach związanych z praktykowaniem badań z zakresu gender studies i queer theory” [Homeless in Science – on Difficulties in Practicing Gender Studies and Queer Theory], *Katedra* 2001, No 3, p. 37–52.



within the walls of the Academy.<sup>7</sup> The idea of active political involvement inherent in gender discourse violates, according to these critics, the foundations of science, which is (or should be) objective and free from ideological temptations. The argument is by no means innovative and has been used in context other than the Polish one: from the time in the late 1960s when the first centers of gender studies appeared in Western universities, researchers in gender issues were forced to counter accusations of the ideological nature of their activity, usually formulated from the position of the dominant discourse threatened in its hegemony.<sup>8</sup> Despite decades of theoretical discussions on ideology (e.g., Louis Althusser), the power of discourse (e.g., Michel Foucault), hegemony of some discourses and marginalization of others (e.g., Antonio Gramsci), the argument about ideological nature of gender studies continues to act as a deterrent, particularly in post-communist countries, where the understanding of ideology is unequivocally negative.

However, an analysis of current intellectual trends and directions in the development of gender studies seems to reveal an increasing tendency to objectify and neutralize gender discourse. This phenomenon occurs not only in Poland, and its presence exerts an impact on the role of gender discourse in the Academy and beyond. Its causes must be ascribed, first, to the external factors discussed above (institutional paralysis and related problems with financing gender initiatives from state budgets, which force reliance on private sponsors and funds of the increasingly professionalizing European Union as well as international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc.) and second, to the evolution of the discipline itself (reflected in its name change): in the first phase, women's studies, openly acknowledged its connection to the feminist movement, while in its reincarnation as gender studies, the field was gradually cutting itself off from its feminist roots.<sup>9</sup>

Changing the name of discipline formally sealed the process of shaping the new directions of women's studies, transforming the field from the archaeological project (search for traces of women's political, social, economic, artistic activity) into a criticism of discourse reproducing inequalities based on gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc. Instead of focusing on "women's issues" – analyzing the causes of social oppression of women and seeking ways to fight discrimination – scholars and researchers in gender studies have begun to deal with the broader category of gender identity: the mechanisms of its construction and social, cultural and economic reproduction. The inspiring philosophical disputes of the 1980s

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<sup>7</sup> See, eg.: A. Kołakowska, „Barykady politycznej poprawności” [Barricades of Political Correctness], *Rzeczpospolita*, 29.01.2000; Ł. Konarski, „Gender studies na UG? Dziekan prawa: To ja zakładam ośrodek badań nad pedofilią” [Gender Studies at the University of Gdańsk. Dean of Law Faculty: I Launch a Center for Research on Pedophilia], [http://trojmiasto.gazeta.pl/trojmiasto/1,104524,7566336,Gender\\_studies\\_na\\_UG\\_Dziedkan\\_prawa\\_To\\_ja\\_zakladam.html](http://trojmiasto.gazeta.pl/trojmiasto/1,104524,7566336,Gender_studies_na_UG_Dziedkan_prawa_To_ja_zakladam.html), 16/02/2010.

<sup>8</sup> See: B. Chołuj, „Różnica między women's studies i gender studies” [The Difference Between Women's and Gender Studies], *Katedra* 2001, No 1, p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> See: B. Chołuj, „Różnica między women's studies i gender studies”, *op. cit.*, p. 26–33; G. Griffin, „Kooptacja czy transformacja?”, *op. cit.*, p. 16–18.



and 1990s on the understanding of the category of gender and of women as the subject of feminist political activity were thus reflected in the new name for the discipline, but the charge also expressed, in the opinion of many, the discipline's moving away from its roots, that is, the political and social background of the feminist movement.<sup>10</sup>

In the ever-expanding spectrum of interests of gender studies, "women's issues" seem fragmented, dispersed, and at times – diluted. Mired in philosophical debates about women's subjectivity, women as an interest group and a political constituency seem to lose sight of the overriding objective – the choice of methods to combat discrimination in the public sphere. Feminism without women as the subject of its political activity becomes an unnecessary movement, which, to survive, must form coalitions with movements working on behalf of other minorities.<sup>11</sup> This "loss" of women and, thus, loss of connections with the feminist movement as a political initiative for the rights of women accounts for, in the opinion of skeptics, the weakest point of gender studies today: too much theory (visible in the West since the late 1980s) locks gender studies in the ivory tower of the Academy, while neutralizing the power of the field's socio-political impact.<sup>12</sup>

The issues mentioned above were also discussed in Słubice, where representatives of feminist NGOs were present in addition to representatives of academic gender studies. The former were the ones who highlighted the deepening gap and the weakening of cooperation between academic feminists and social activists and the increasing professionalization of gender discourse in Poland, both in its academic and non-governmental spheres. In their view, the division into theoretical and practical feminism, which has been a fact for quite a few years in the West, has arrived in Poland, leading to a no-win deadlock: feminist organizations carrying out arduous "work at the grassroots" lack tools for the description and critical analysis of reality, and academics working in the field of gender studies, possessing powerful analytical instruments, seem to lose contact with everyday reality.

This discussion of institutionalization focused on positioning gender studies in an "in-between space": outside the walls of the Academy and closer to informal groups, a space

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<sup>10</sup> See: M. Evans, "The Problem of Gender for Women's Studies", [in:] *Out of the Margins: Women's Studies in the Nineties*, ed. by J. Aaron, S. Walby, London 1991, p. 67–74; *Surviving the Academy: Feminist Perspectives*, ed. by D. Malina, S. Maslin-Prothero, London 1998.

<sup>11</sup> A discussion on this subject is referred by J. Mizelińska, *(De)konstrukcje kobiecości. Podmiot feminizmu a problem wykluczenia* [(De)constructions of Femininity. The Subject of Feminism and the Problem of Exclusion], Gdańsk 2004.

<sup>12</sup> The skeptical voice resounded loudest in D. Patai, N. Koertge, *Professing Feminism: Cautionary Tales from the Strange World of Women's Studies*, New York 1994. But one cannot underestimate the contribution of academic gender studies in the emergence of "the instruments needed to analyze the socio-political phenomena, texts, works of art". A. Titkow, „Gender jako źródło instrumentarium badawczego” [Gender as a Source of Research Instrumentation], *Katedra* 2001, No 3, p. 7. It is also impossible not to appreciate the critical potential of gender studies, whose edge is turned against the discourses of power within the Academy. See: *Feminist Academics: Creative Agents for Change*, ed. by L. Morley, V. Walsh, London 1995; J. Kochanowski, "Wiedza, uniwersytet i radykalna demokracja" [Knowledge, University and the Radical Democracy], *uniGENDER* 2006, No 1 (2), <http://www.unigender.org/?page=biezacy&issue=01&article=03>, 05/05/2010.



out of which emerge both social movement and critical thought—critical also of university structures, often supporting the dominant (patriarchal) order. Organization of gender studies in a space outside the Academy, but not far from it, could provide some solace from the aforementioned ills with which the discourse of gender has been struggling for some time: acceptance of its socio-political commitment, antiauthoritarian nature (manifested, e.g., in disapproval of hierarchical relationships, depersonalization, and other forms of symbolic violence present in the university), and the affirmation of its openness (evident in the never-worked out canon of gender readings, interpretations and inspirations).<sup>13</sup>

The question of whether and how gender studies structured in this way would become a part of current social policy (including the paradigm of production and dissemination of knowledge) remains open, but the concept itself certainly deserves the attention of the authors of the reform of science and higher education, which is now in progress.

### Practice of criticism – criticism of the practice

Gender studies, from the beginning influenced by psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, Marxism, and postcolonial studies quickly became an equal partner for those already well-established theories: the category of gender, included in the methodological toolbox, has become an instrument without which analysis of socio-political phenomena and the various texts of culture (literature, film, art) is now impossible.<sup>14</sup> The internal diversity and the richness of perspectives within gender studies has resulted in multiple new theories, which—although under the umbrella of gender studies—gain increasing autonomy: apart from women’s studies,<sup>15</sup> men’s studies<sup>16</sup> and gay/lesbian studies<sup>17</sup> have developed as well. Queer studies,<sup>18</sup> involved in the study of sexual difference, desire, deconstruction of sexual norms, deserve a separate mention. They create, based on works by Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Michel Foucault, a discourse of non-identity, or—more strongly – anti-identity

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<sup>13</sup> See: b. hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness”, [in:] *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader. Intellectual and Political Controversies*, ed. by S. Harding, New York–London 2003, p. 153–159.

<sup>14</sup> See: I. Iwasiów, *Gender dla średnio zaawansowanych* [Gender for the Intermediates], Warszawa 2004, p. 12–27; A. Łebkowska, „Gender – dylematy badacza literatury” [Gender – Dilemmas of the Literary Researcher], *Ruch Literacki* 2005, v. 6, p. 525–537.

<sup>15</sup> Currently, in Poland this type of research is widely spread in the field of humanities. Work in history (e.g. the series of “Kobieta i...” [A Woman and... ], edited by A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarc), anthropology (e.g. G. Kubica’s book about “Malinowski’s sisters”) and literature (work by G. Borkowska, K. Kłosińska B. Umińska, A. Górnicka-Boratyńska, A. Chałupnik) undertakes a revision of the canon and analyzes the causes of women’s absence, as well as tracks the traces of women’s work.

<sup>16</sup> In Poland, the work by such researchers as Z. Melosik and K. Arcimowicz.

<sup>17</sup> In Poland, the work by such researchers as B. Warkocki, K. Tomasiak, J. Kochanowski, A. Weseli, A. Laszuk, Y. Kostrzewa. Lesbian studies have found a space for themselves on the pages of *Furia Pierwsza* (1997–2000), reactivated in 2009.

<sup>18</sup> In Poland, this issue is dealt with by such researchers as T. Basiuk, J. Mizielińska, E. Majewska, M. Skucha.



discourse, which results in the “destabilization of the meanings of words such as ‘femininity’, ‘masculinity’, ‘homosexuality’, ‘heterosexuality.’”<sup>19</sup>

In Polish gender studies, developing dynamically in spite of many difficulties, the transformation and development processes mentioned above are also taking place. This is all happening very rapidly, because Polish gender studies have assimilated the achievements of these (mainly) Western gender studies in a very short time. The pro-Western orientation is indeed one of the main charges against indigenous gender studies, formulated by both Polish academics working in foreign research centers and foreign Slavonic scholars.

The crux of the criticism concerns not only flouting the Eastern perspective by Polish gender and queer researchers, but also the superficial reception of Western theories – especially Anglo-American and French, which had the earliest and strongest impact on Polish gender and queer studies. Halina Filipowicz draws attention to the shallow and uncritical transplantation of Western concepts onto Polish ground, without taking into account the socio-cultural context in which they arose, or the disputes and controversies that take place around them in the native language circles. As an example she recalls the reception of Judith Butler’s theory: her concept of gender as a “continuous performance”, taken in Poland as an “undoubted fact”, has been the subject of disputes and controversies among American scholars for over twenty years, as a theory that “removes from sight the problem of the concrete subject making meaningful choices in a particular historical situation.”<sup>20</sup>

Both Filipowicz (Polish researcher, for many years associated with Western universities) and German Ritz (Swiss Slavist) note the ossification and derivative nature of Polish gender discourse, which still tries to adapt tools developed in the West to analyze Polish social, cultural, economic, and historical determinants, tentatively (or not at all) attempting to create theories that could serve as inspiration for research (not only) in the West. Filipowicz regrets how closed Polish gender studies are to the ideas developed by Polish researchers working abroad. She draws attention to the underestimation of these works, whose double research perspective is particularly valuable: while expanding the horizon of exploration, they do not reject the Polish socio-cultural context. In her view, establishing a better dialogue and cooperation between researchers in the home country and abroad would not only facilitate the process of transmitting Polish gender research outside Poland’s borders,<sup>21</sup> but also help start a more lively discussion on the methodology of gender studies, starting with the category of gender as a basic tool for analytical instrumentation.

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<sup>19</sup> M. Skucha, „Męski artefakt i tajemniczy poeta. Wokół teorii queer” [A Manly Artifact and Mysterious Poet. Around the Queer Theory], *Teksty Drugie* 2008, No 5, p. 29–30.

<sup>20</sup> H. Filipowicz, „Pułapki, paradoksy i wyzwania gender studies” [The Traps, Paradoxes, and Challenges of Gender Studies], *Ruch Literacki* 2009, v. 2, p. 107. Filipowicz’s opinion seems to be too categorical and hasty. If one looks through the already-quoted book by J. Mizielińska (2004), he or she finds an overview of the discussions and polemics of Butler’s theses, mentioned by Filipowicz.

<sup>21</sup> One of the (still rare) examples of such cooperation is the anthology *Gender and Sexuality in Ethical Context: Essays on The Times Prose*, ed. by K. Grimstad, U. Phillips, Bergen, 2005.



In Poland, where gender initiatives first appeared at faculties of cultural and literary studies,<sup>22</sup> it has become common practice to understand gender as the socio-cultural dimension of sex and to study its representations in culture. Gender discourse, inspired primarily by psychoanalytical and poststructuralist theories, has concentrated on the body, sexuality, desire, language. Less attention has been paid to the conditions in which gender is constructed, the relations it forms, or to its historical transformation under the influence of various factors: geographical, social, economic, etc.<sup>23</sup> As noted by Filipowicz, “poststructuralist-oriented gender studies produce works that achieve a fantastic level of abstraction, without offering anything that is necessary to understand a concrete, historical reality.”<sup>24</sup>

However, recently, this situation has begun to change. This change has been taking place under the influence of postcolonial studies, which have formed the impetus to begin research on the junction of categories of gender and national heterostereotypes in Poland.<sup>25</sup> According to Ritz, interest in the place where the categories of nation, gender and sexuality intersect is a chance for Polish gender studies to break out of intellectual stagnation and to develop ideas that would take into account local “specificity”: historical, geographical, political, etc.<sup>26</sup>

The phrase “politics of location”, which some time ago became highly popular in the West thanks to Adrienne Rich’s essay, is being more and more boldly voiced in today’s Poland. Location means here not only a point on the map of the world where there appears a certain type of inequality examined, but also the space in which social constructs, such as gender, race, class, experience, identity, body, power, market, etc., are shaped and reproduced; a place of intersection of different mechanisms of oppression. Hence, in recent works, inspired by Marxist theories which are now back in fashion, there is recognition of

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<sup>22</sup> Gender studies in Poland are still very weakly established within technical studies, mathematics and natural sciences, which stand for, not only “male disciplines”, but also those that produce knowledge of an objective, expert, apolitical character, and therefore are free from the “traps” of the discourse of the humanities. The weak presence of the gender perspective in these disciplines threatens the production of knowledge, which is detached from the real needs of society. The economy, which still barely takes into account the factor of “sex” in budget plans, is an excellent example. Resources directed to the sectors of care, such as healthcare, education and social services (traditionally associated with females) are clearly smaller than those spent on military armaments (traditionally associated with males).

<sup>23</sup> See: J. W. Scott, “Gender As Useful Category of Historical Analysis”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 91, No 5, December 1986, p. 1053–1075.

<sup>24</sup> H. Filipowicz, „Pułapki, paradoksy i wyzwania gender studies”, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> See: M. Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury* [This Amazing Slavdom. Phantasms of Literature], Kraków 2006; B. Umińska-Keff, *Barykady. Kroniki obsesyjne* [The Barricades. Obsessive Chronicles], Kraków 2006; A. Graff, *Rykoszetem. Rzecz o płci, seksualności i narodzie* [Ricochet. On Gender, Sexuality, and Nation], Warszawa 2008.

<sup>26</sup> See: G. Ritz, „Granice i perspektywy gender studies” [The Limits and Perspectives of Gender Studies], trans. by M. Łukasiewicz, [in:] *Gender w humanistyce* [Gender in the Humanities], ed. by M. Radkiewicz, Kraków 2001, p. 213–222; G. Ritz, „Gender studies dziś” [Gender Studies Today], *Teksty Drugie* 2008, No 5, p. 9–15.



gender as a discursive practice which is the product of power relations and sexual difference as the matrix in which domination is reproduced.<sup>27</sup> Such texts allow for a better understanding of the mechanisms of the discourse of power, in order to find points of resistance encoded in it; they also allow for a formulation of an oppositional strategy, including projects of identification alternative to the already existing concepts of social organization.<sup>28</sup> These texts return to the roots of gender studies as a project critical of the prevailing power relations, as well as one engaged in changing them.<sup>29</sup>

This paper is not so much a comprehensive analysis of the condition of Polish gender studies, as a map marking the current achievements of the discipline and institutional problems, pitfalls of the discourse, and prospects for the development of gender studies in Poland. The congress in Słubice, where for the first time past successes and failures of gender studies were collectively summarized, initiated the process of consolidating the community, aimed not only at the *ad hoc* cooperation on research projects, but also at working together on a variety of socio-political initiatives and lobbying for change in different areas of public life. Time will tell whether the network started in Słubice will stretch out across the country and become strong enough to effectively tackle the challenges faced by gender studies in Poland.

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<sup>27</sup> See: M. Barrett, "Words and Things: Materialism and Method in Contemporary Feminist Analysis", [in:] *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, ed. by M. Barrett, A. Phillips, Cambridge 1992, p. 201–219.

<sup>28</sup> See: M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by A. Sheridan, New York 1995.

<sup>29</sup> See: J. Acker, "Rewriting Gender and Class. Problems of Feminist Rethinking", [in:] *Revisioning Gender*, ed. by M. Marx Ferree, J. Lorber, B. B. Hess, Walnut Creek, CA, 2000, p. 44–69; R. Johnson, "Gender, Race, Class, and Sexual Orientation: Theorizing the Intersections", [in:] G. MacDonald, R. L. Osborne, Ch. C. Smith, *Feminism, Law, Inclusion. Intersectionality in Action*, Toronto 2005, p. 21–37. Many Polish articles, reports and analyses written from that perspective can be found in the Online Library of the Feminist Think Tank, [http://www.ekologiasztuka.pl/think.tank.feministyczny/articles.php?cat\\_id=9](http://www.ekologiasztuka.pl/think.tank.feministyczny/articles.php?cat_id=9), 05/05/2010.



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**Abstract:**

The paper aims at indicating opportunities and threats faced by gender studies in Poland. The author presents institutional problems (i.e. organizational, financial), which limit dynamic development of the discipline and its impact on the society. She also discusses tensions between an academic affiliation of gender studies and its political aspirations rooted in the tradition of feminist movement. Finally, the author describes recent methodological debates on gender discourse – its theoretical inspirations and practical use.

