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**Feminisms of “Second World”:
Production of new women’s identities in Poland**

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Abstract:

This paper examines how feminist narratives in Poland build upon and transcend local legacies of Catholicism, socialism, and union organizing, while also engaging with the transnational European discourses of “gender equality” and globalization. Feminist scholars have devoted considerable amount of time to understanding the relationship between feminist and women’s movements and the complex workings of globalization. In particular they have focused their energies on how new hegemonies based on race, class, gender and other identities’ markings develop. These analyses frequently focus on the ‘first’ and ‘third’ world locations. What is often omitted from these approaches are the ‘second’ world location and the understanding of how new hegemonies and counter-hegemonies are produced and employed within the post-communist context. What effects do they exercise on the feminist and women’s mobilizations? How ‘second world’ location implicates women’s mobilizing practices and their struggle with the neo-liberal hegemonies of the west? How can the legacies of the communist past and of the undecided positionality between East-West and North-South axes enrich the understanding and the formation of feminist identities within the “second world”? This paper will examine these questions by looking specifically at the case of Poland and the ways through which the processes of destabilization of the past forms of class, ethnic, or gender arrangements as well as the processes of the new reconfigurations take place.

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Introduction-Are we there yet? Polish Feminism and the “West”

When feminism started, for many women activist it was about importing stuff from the West, United States. But I had a „gut“ feeling that it is not what it is about, that we are importing something, but that there was always something here a –tradition of women’s emancipatory thinking. (r2)

Twenty years after the systemic transformation, Central and Eastern European countries have been considered fully developed European “western” democracies. However, women’s marginalization in various spheres of the social, economic and political life remains the fact of everyday life around the region. To challenge these practices, women have become active agents of change as initiators, mediators, negotiators and advocates; they mobilize as women on behalf of “gender equality” and “social justice” concerns. Over the last two decades, various groups of women have proved to be amongst the most vigorous advocates of social justice. As a result of this phenomenon, the presence of women’s movements in the post-communist societies is no longer problematic. As the implementation of “gender equality” principles requires the employment of practices and mechanisms that empower women and their status, the gender discourses of social justice represent most often the efforts to advance women’s positions and eliminate discrimination of diverse groups of women in various spheres of life. What remains ambiguous, however, is the way through which the concepts of “gender”, “gender equality”, and “social justice” are translated into the practices of mobilization specific to post-communist locations. How do various groups utilize the existing paradigms of “social justice” and “gender”? How can unique modes of women’s mobilizations after communism be interpreted in terms of the existing paradigms of social movement? What is the specificity of women’s mobilizations in the region?

An overwhelming body of the late 1990s feminist scholarship, both Polish and western, wondered “Why there is no feminism after communism?” (Snitow 1997, Graff 1999, Rosner 1997, Goldfarb 1996). In Poland, while problematizing the suitability of the linear feminist chronology of the “waves” for the region, many authors expressed the need to establish a social movement that would meet the standards of the Second Wave Western mass feminism (with its emphasis on free individual choice and the recognition of the shared oppression of women) (Rosner, 1997, Dunin, 2002). The “convergence” conception of feminism, the conception that was popular in Poland and throughout the region, stressed similarities between women from various locations (Szczuka, 2004, Graff, 2004), but simultaneously represented post-communist countries as “lacking” the “potential and conditions to establish feminist movement. Thus on one hand, the convergence theory was optimistic--many authors argued that even though Polish feminism was “late” comparing to the “Western” movement (it has some major feminist goals, such as the right to abortion that remains unfulfilled), it could “catch up” with the “West” in managing to establish the US-like mass feminist movement. On the other hand, however, the list of obstacles on the way to mass women’s mobilization was long and included some of the diagnoses contradicting each other: the post-communist societies were for instance seen as lacking the tradition of liberal thinking;

yet longing for individualism and hesitant toward formulating social justice claims in terms of group identities. Thus women in CEE countries were portrayed as disappointed with the previous system's "forced" and unsatisfactory "gender equality" provisions, but simultaneously hesitant toward feminist "ideology;" tired of mass women's organizations but at the same time "searching for the Polish Betty Friedan..."(Rosner, 1997).

More recently a lot of hope has been put into the Polish accession to the European Union. It has been considered a symbolic victory of the rational tradition of the European Enlightenment. For Poland, as well as for many other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the process of transformation from belonging to the Soviet Bloc was tied to the desire to meet the "standards" of the Western European liberal democracy and capitalism (Walczywska, 1996). For some feminists the process of the European integration was simply a matter of reassuring the previous belonging to the wider Western European society. The integration into the European Union represented a symbolic move of confirming cultural ties to the West while distancing them from the East. As the legacies of the "Cold War" were not fully gone, and the vivid difference between the East and West was still in place, one of the strategies during the transformation was to construct a feminist identity according to the "Western" trajectory, and argue that as Central Europeans we have more in common with the West than with some of the Eastern countries such as Russia or the Ukraine.

Others, however, emphasize the importance of specific feminist genealogies of women's struggles in the region and the need to differentiate them from those of Western feminism. While at the symbolic level, the accession to the European Union is often interpreted as "a return to Europe," it also indicates the revelation of suppressed regional identities, the reconstruction of the cultural ties that bypass national identities and, once again, the repositioning of the center-periphery dynamics. What are the specific factors that have historically shaped the unique character of the post-socialist feminisms in Poland?

In this paper, we ask what is the specificity of the "Second World" feminisms within the framework of the transnational women's activism? We pose this question based on the data from the oral history research project "Polish feminism between East and West" conducted in Poland between 2004-2007 by Magda Grabowska and collaborative NSF funded research "Constructing Supranational Political Spaces" conducted in Poland, Czech Republic and Belgium between 2001-2007. Focusing specifically on the case study of Poland, we ask how local legacies intersect with the global "gender equality" discourses in the production of new types of feminist identities. How do feminist identities emerge at the intersection of contextualized "gender" narratives— in case of Poland, for example, those of Catholicism, anti-communism, and the "Solidarity" movement and the global narratives present in the region, such as those of the internal "colonial" legacies of Europe and the narratives of the EU "gender mainstreaming"? These identities, we argue, are not rooted in the mass mobilization, but located between the Western tradition of liberalism and the local legacies of labor union and community activism. At the same time, these identities lack

steady objectives and clear-cut boundaries and thus become instances of “border” sites that exemplify the workings of scattered hegemonies and competing identity struggles at individual and collective levels. The fragmented and diverse nature of social mobilizations, which is the result of a complex imbrication of the local and the global in the post-communist context, is often misinterpreted for the lack of social movements in the region. The scattered character of social activism is often interpreted as representing either a lack of such mobilizations or a complete demobilization of social movements after the fall of communism in the region. Challenging such approaches, we believe that introducing the examples of unique forms of women’s mobilizations from Eastern Europe will contribute to a better understanding of the new “post-mass” paradigm of the social movement and demonstrate the indispensability of Eastern European feminist theory and practice as a component of the ongoing formulation and reformulation of global gender theory.

Between “East” and “West”: Poland and the “postcolonial” Europe

“We are the postcolonial country that at the same time – which happens often- feels superiority over its colonizer- Russia. In this we have been identifying ourselves as Europe, struggling with the Asian barbarism. As true Latin Catholics and Mediterranean Europeans we are not able to identify with Slavs, because this would make us closer to the “inferiority” of Russia. (Janion, 2004)”

The major narratives of European imperialism focus on the rise of the capitalistic empires of 19th Century Europe, mostly Great Britain and France, and follow their trajectories embodied in their 20th century heir, the United States. For a vast majority of the mainstream as well as feminist postcolonial theories, the relationship between the First and Third worlds remains a central point of inquiry (Said 1979, Spivak 1989, Mohanty 2001, Eisenstein 2006). The so-called Second World is significantly absent from this scholarship as relations within Europe remain at the periphery of postcolonial theorizing. The ambiguous positionality of the “Second World” seems to be inconspicuous, self-evident, and further substantiated by the fact that this region, located in the “heart of Europe,” is also hardly considered part of the European continent’s historical narratives. Historians in Germany and some intellectuals in Poland are currently challenging the mysterious silence around “colonial legacies” of the Second World and argue that over the centuries, Poland along with the most of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe constitute particular instances of colonialism *in* Europe (Jedlicki, 1999, Janion 2003, Cavanagh 2005, Kapuscinski 2005).

The Russian empire and its descendant Soviet Union can surely be considered as an example of the appraisal of the internal European imperialism and its cultural consequences in the Eastern parts of Europe. It is perhaps needless to say that the experience of war and the ensuing postwar geopolitical order in itself makes for the experience of “colonization,” as Poles watched their country divided between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939, and incorporated into the Soviet Empire’s sphere of influence after the “Yalta” conference in 1945. The Soviet Union had not been dismantled until recently, just more than a decade ago, which leads

Cavanagh to suggest that some European “colonies” had not achieved their independence until 1989, forty years after India, and twenty-seven years after Algeria (Cavanagh 2005). But such claims have to face challenges that come with the current formulations of the postcolonial theory. The explanation of why the Second World does not fit into the existing postcolonial framework lies partly in the fact that the assessments of the Western or European imperialism focus exclusively on the appraisal of capitalism and draw from the Marxist critique of capitalism. Since Marxism in Poland has always been associated with the Soviet Empire, which was at the same time the major colonizing force in the region, Polish condemnation of imperialist practices can find no place in the mainstream postcolonial narratives. If Russia and its descendant Soviet Union are to be considered an instance of imperialism, not only the “direction” of colonization will have to be re-defined, but also the perception of the “ideology” that stands behind the colonial practices of the Soviet Empire.

However, the status of Central and Eastern Europe within East-West, South-North dynamics is hard to capture because “colonization” processes in this region were never been performed in a one-way manner. Postcolonial anxieties in Poland are mostly directed toward Russia and its heir, the Soviet Union, but the relationship toward these empires is complicated, not based on the feeling of inferiority. In one of very few accounts on colonization, Maria Janion gives us a hint of the uniqueness of the Polish relation to its colonizer and how it positions Polish identity within Europe:

We are the postcolonial country that at the same time – which happens often- feels superiority over its colonizer- Russia. In this we have been identifying ourselves as Europe, struggling with the Asian barbarism. As true Latin Catholics and Mediterranean Europeans we are not able to identify with Slavs, because this would make us closer to the “inferiority” of Russia. (Janion, 2004)

Thus Polish experience of colonization in Europe, as with many other countries in the region, is far more complicated and irreducible to the Russian “westward” expansion. It is also much “older” than the Second World War. The region had been the subject of interests of both Eastern and Western imperial powers. Indeed, one of the most prominent features of the political geography and the history of the region is its traveling status – between East and West, North and South of Europe. As Eastern colonization goes as far as the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th Centuries, over the 18th and 19th Centuries, a majority of the Central and Eastern European nations were also “colonized” by the Western Empires—Prussia, Austria (and then Austro-Hungarian). For instance, Poland was partitioned three times between 1772 and 1793; it disappeared from the map of Europe for almost 200 years and existed merely in the realm of narrative, fantasy or to borrow Said’s term, in “imaginative geography.” The only other region that has a similar experience of the early and late colonialism in Europe is Ireland.

Further complication of the Polish colonial status comes with the realization that besides being colonized, it also acted as a colonizer: throughout centuries, this country attempted to take possession of the nations east of it:

“(A)s a postcolonial country we are not a real Europeans, since as Slavs- we are inferior, we are stigmatized by the Russian- Slavic “bad blood”. We have been at the same time the colonized and the colonizer for the Slavic Brother-land. Till today we feel superior towards it, but at the same time some kind of relation to its “inferiority.” Some of these features characterize also the relations between Poles and Jews (Janion, 2004)”

Because it colonized parts of its eastern neighbors, Lithuania and Ukraine, several times over the years, Poland holds a double positionality as the “colonized” and “colonizer” of Europe.

Finally, as much as the discussion on the workings of the European empires will benefit from the analysis of the experience of the Second World countries, it will also introduce a major challenge to categories of the postcolonial studies. The inclusion of the Second World in the postcolonial theory will have to address a broader question of how far a certain theoretical framework can be stretched. Can we really claim that throughout European history there have been instances of the European empires with European colonies? For a start, the overseas aspect crucial for the colonial dynamics is missing here. The lands taken away from the countries within the European continent had actually never been called “colonies;” the term was reserved for the overseas protectorates. While the Western European empires used to represent parts of the partitioned Poland as “properties,” “provinces,” “eastern borderlands” or “eastern frontiers,” in Russian terminology the name Kingdom of Poland prevailed over the idea of the “Polish protectorate”.

Moreover, although both eastern and western empires employed various practices of “racialization” of the “colonized” European provinces, the question of the significance of “race” in the relations between empire and its borderlands is yet to be explored. In her work, Lenny A. Urena explores the “colonial turn” in German historiography and connects it to the racial construction of border subjects located at the eastern Prussian frontiers from 19th century to Nazi Germany¹ (Urena, 2003). The nineteenth-century relations between the German empire and its overseas colonies, Urena argues, had its impact on relations “at home,” that is, the relations between the metropolis and its European properties. Thus the postcolonial framework may help us put into perspective the social conflicts experienced by minority groups in the European realm of the empire and gives us tools to understand the ideologies and images of that realm’s cultural tensions.

Local legacies-Solidarity, Catholicism and anti-socialism

Solidarity

¹ The “Colonial turn” has not only represented a major methodological shift in the way recent literature reevaluates Imperial Germany, but also brought back important debates about continuities/ruptures between this period and Nazi Germany. This new analyses tend to locate the origins of the Final Solution in the scientific ideas about social engineering and population policies that were advanced during the imperial era.

I realized that my experience of the mass movement concentrates around the national, patriotic and independent state narrative. I remember from mid 80 Solidarity demonstrations, which were often initiated by people coming back from the Sunday mass (...) I think that Solidarity had a major impact on perception of the Polish feminism in the beginning (r4)

Our resource was this „can of worms“ that got opened in 1980-1981, when the society got „de-frosted“. It was thanks to Solidarity that the space got opened (...) We first tried out the free space, and then some of us decided to become feminists. It was only thanks to the Solidarity that we could organize open meeting for people from outside our own group (...) Solidarity gave us a framework in which we could do something beyond the strict control of the (communist) party's state. Solidarity opened the space and that space we could enter with our feminism (r2)

“Solidarity” movement that throughout the 1980s represented values of freedom, equality and social justice, seemed like a decent alternative to the politically corrupted and imperially dependent Communist state and constituted an important lineage of feminist genealogy. Even today, for many women’s activists in Poland 1980s “Solidarity” remains a template of the social movement itself. Women’s involvement in the “Solidarity” was not an accident, as they constituted half of the membership of the union throughout the eighties². At a figurative level, union’s leaders and historians made sure that women’s presence did not interrupt the proper national narrative³. The “Solidarity myth” represents women either as anonymous wives or the hostesses (and often lovers) of the hiding “Solidarity” leaders during the martial law. One of the most powerful of all is the image of women awaiting their husbands in front of the Shipyard gate in the summer of 1980. While women are situated outside the strike, the banner on the Shipyard gate depicted an image of the Virgin Mary and the slogan “Women Go Home! We Are Fighting for Poland!”

During the lesser known mid-1980s period of the Solidarity’s history, in Polish historiography known as “Second Solidarity”, women’s activism played an important role in the restitution of the “civil society”. While the communist state was still in the

² Only two of them; Zofia Kuratowska, and Krystyna Starczewska were invited to “round table” negotiations that peacefully dismantled the communist regime in 1989.

³ Deprived of women, the myth of “Solidarity” goes as follows: on August 14th, 1980 Lech Walesa jumps through the fence of the Gdansk Shipyard to join his fellow workers on strike of which he himself is an immediate cause (workers were protesting his dismissal). Later on that day, five intellectuals, all men except for one woman, come from Warsaw to support workers on strike in their negotiations with the government. They are representatives of the KOR (Workers Defense Committee). Their presence in the shipyard symbolizes the alliance between intellectuals and proletariat unprecedented in the history, the alliance that in a straight line leads to the defeat of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. Negotiations with government end with the legalization of an independent labor union, the first such union in post-war Poland and in the whole region.. About 10 millions people become members of “Solidarity” (out of 40 millions of Poland’s population). One-and-a-half-year festival of freedom ends suddenly on a cold winter night in the middle of December 1981 when general Wojciech Jaruzelski announces martial law under which “all kind of gatherings, agreements, and collective meetings are abolished”. Most of the “Solidarity” leaders get arrested and stay in prison till the end of 1982; some of them remain in hiding and continuing their struggle against communism.

picture, it started to fall apart “from within”; the society already knew that the end of Communism was approaching. Of course there had been no feminist organizations yet. Feminism, however, as a part of the “civil society” was emerging quite fiercely. At this point, the status of feminism among other segments of civil society was also very different from how it came to be represented during the abortion debate:

(Middle 80s) was a time when everybody was doing something, starting something; every decent person had a life beyond the dying and demolished socialist state. It was really nice to have „that something” with other women (...)F)eminism wasn't terrifying to people, like it started to be later in 1990s. It had no connotations, good or bad. It wasn't ridiculed. We were treated very differently then we are now. Back then feminism was a part of emerging civil society, which units didn't judge each other. (r2)

Drawing on previously established connections and mobilizing resources located in the Western Europe, feminist movement “began”:

Feminist movement began in the middle of 1980s. It started after the Warsaw Film Festival “Kino Kobiet” in 1986. We talked a lot then; we had few very crucial meetings. Even though there were only few of us, when one of our friends was coming back from Amsterdam and Berlin, we all got together (sw)

As there were no possibilities of expanding institutionally yet- free association independent from the Communist party were still illegal- reciprocity and connection became central to the aim to re-constructing the experience of “gender:”

*What was very important was mutual attraction, we liked meeting, talking to each other. These meetings had order though; they had an aim to talk about us. The language we had at that time was very poor, it lacked conceptualization of how day-to-day experience relates to gender, how we are “in” gender internally (...) These meetings for a long time took place in the **private** apartments, in the kitchens. They were by all means support groups. It was so beautiful, and this is how we thought about it, that these are groups to support women, in the new less recognized and newly defined femininity (r2)*

The need to recognize women’s own experience came first; the actual interpretation of the experience and the link between experience and feminist theory was yet to be formed. The language of Polish feminism was rooted solely in the experience of particular locations, as the Iron Curtain, still in place, made it impossible to initiate the transnational dialogue:

What was the most important for us at that time was to recognize our experience within our misogynic culture. We were trying the possibility of looking at our own and women’s lives through the feminist lenses. And in the group it was easier to be done. It was really some kind of the consciousness raising (...) the texts came much later (...) At first we just sat and talked (r2)

Although the feminists aimed at the separation of women's experience from the anticommunist struggle, they by no means rejected it; it remained central to their genealogy:

Our resource was this „can of worms“ that got opened in 1980-1981, when the society got „de-frosted“. Before then if you wanted to do something, just talk only, you had to get the permission of the institution, school, university and so on. If they gave you permission they usually required modification of your topic so it fits into the official propaganda. It was thanks to Solidarity that the space got opened (...) We first tried out the free space, and then some of us decided to become feminists. It was only thanks to the Solidarity that we could organize open meeting for people from outside our own group (...) Solidarity gave us a framework in which we could do something beyond the strict control of the (communist) party's state. Solidarity opened the space and that space we could enter with our feminism (r2)

In the 1990s, “Solidarity” attained a bitter taste of betrayal. As union leaders celebrated their political victory, women experienced the opposite: a radical turn right in the area of women's issues. After the defeat of Communism, “Solidarity” “took care,” ironically speaking, of women with the clear agenda that “in free Poland, a woman is not a free individual, but a family being, who instead of politics should take care of the home” (Janion, 1999, p.25). Such agenda was clearly embodied in the way “Solidarity” handled the “abortion issue”.

Catholicism

I'm a feminist with the Catholic background; it is very strange. I'm an ex Catholic, a recovered Catholic, as some people are recovered alcoholics. I was brought up in the very conservative family; very conservative but at the same time very deeply involved in the opposition movement during the communist time, which often came together as you can imagine. I was in the Catholic scouting movement and I was into organizing a lot. At some point I realized that I'm organizing things that I don't fully agree with. Why do I spend all my strength on organizing sewing or cooking classes for girls? (r7)

Of course in the 1980s I was a member of Solidarity, but not very active. At that point I was mainly preoccupied with procreation. But at the end of 80s, and in the 1990 my feminist consciousness started to rise. It was the reaction and resistance to expansion of the Church its aim to limit women's rights to decide. The first instance of obligatory religion school classes in primary schools. Then there was abortion (r1)

For many women, an unexpected turn taken by the newly established Polish democracy in the early 1990 abortion debate was a single, most important impulse to become a feminist. The increasingly prominent political position of the Catholic Church, the sudden, and for many unexpected, devotion of all Polish governments (no matter left or right) to “religious values” caught many women “off guard”:

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In the narrative of Polish feminism, the abortion debate is often recognized as the time when the Polish systemic transformation reached its momentum, the time when standards and limits of the human rights discourse to be used in public space by major political actors were set up for the years to come. The rising position of the Catholic Church in the public sphere intersected with the beginning of the debate over what “values” new Polish democracy would represent. While “Solidarity” and Church established themselves as frontrunners of this debate, feminism became its “pariah”, stigmatized as a “foreign” ideology and represented by the slur of “Western bourgeoisie” ideology and “communist legacy”.

As feminists were widely perceived as losers in the abortion debate, this failure of Polish feminism is seen in a wider perspective as impotence of the women's movement altogether. Nevertheless, one of the consequences of the abortion debate that are rarely considered in such analyses is that it paradoxically authorized the existence of feminist identities; it enriched them through the experience of exclusion and alienation that became the foundation for future mobilization. In many ways, as Justyna Włodarczyk argues, an involvement in the abortion debate translates directly into the emergence of the women's movement itself and the formation of feminist identities (Włodarczyk 2006). In Poland, women's deprivation of reproductive rights became an impulse for the emergence of one of the most vibrant and diverse feminist movements in the region. It is a case without precedence in Europe (especially in its Catholic parts, such as Ireland) that the rise of Catholicism provoked the resistance that became one of the catalysts of the feminist movement (McPhail, 2004, NSF, Grzybek, 2004, NSF). The role of the Catholic Church in the rise of feminist identities is highly peculiar not only because its strengthening in the political sphere translated directly into feminist mobilization, but also because many of the feminists were Catholic themselves and their Catholic upbringing often became a ground on which they built their feminism. One such a woman, Justyna, explains:

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⁴ Abortion was legal in Communist Poland; the 1956 law allowed legal abortion for the “social reasons”. Between 1991-1997 abortion law was changed several times to finally being accepted in 1997 in its current form. Termination of the pregnancy is possible in three cases; if pregnancy is a result of rape, if women's health and life is in direct danger, and if prenatal examination indicates heavy irreversible changes to the embryo.

don't fully agree with. Why do I spend all my strength on organizing sewing or cooking classes for girls? I don't want to cook. I have others things to do (jw, pennelopes).

Rejection of socialism

When I hear „socialism” I'm all turned off, I just don't like socialism. I like welfare state and I like social policy but I have repulsion when it comes to socialism. It comes from my youth, I can control it and I'm trying to overcome it, but I was brought up by the opposition movement and in the axiom that the free market guarantees freedom of speech (...) So on one hand I repel socialism, on the other I know that socialism emancipated women. (r3)

I was always astonished and disgusted by conversations with women who placed their hope in the post-communist left. It was beyond my mind, feminism to me made sense only as a continuation of the „democratic opposition“. Feminism coupled with communism I've been perceiving as an aberration.(r4)

Rejection of Marxism as general concept or theoretical, intellectual possibility is, we believe, one of the crucial factors responsible for major difficulties that Polish and other CEE feminisms experience while entering transnational feminist debates. The disparity between the post-communist context and the transnational feminist discourses that are often times based on Marxist critique makes the Central and Eastern European feminist narratives incompatible with the narratives from other geographical locations and often translate into a notion of the “lack” of feminist organizing after socialism. Extensive literature on feminism in post-communist societies persistently asks: “Why there is no feminism after Communism” (Snitow 1989, Watson 1996, Matynia 2003). Well known list of reasons for this absence includes (Snitow 1997) the cancellation of the social security provisions, introduced by the socialist state, the decrease of the number of women in central eastern European Parliaments, the growth of nationalism, and religious fundamentalism and the lack of the political consciousness among women (Golfdarb 1997, Watson 1993, Snitow 1996, Snitow, 2003).

Slawka Walczewska, an activist and leader of one of the first Polish feminist organizations proposes an alternative and somewhat more contextual explanation as to why in the 1990s feminism failed to enter public discourse, why it became stigmatized by apparently contradictory labels of “bourgeoisie ideology” and “communist legacy”, and why this somewhat paradoxical slur made sense in the public debate and distanced women from feminism. First of all, she points to the fact that popular explanations of the feminist failure in the abortion debate suffer from a double misunderstanding of the Polish transformation and its effect on the emergence of the feminist movement. On the one hand, they appropriated the Western model of feminist movement trajectory into the Central and Eastern European context. While asking why there is no feminism in Poland, they, in fact, ask why there is no Western-like, mass, liberal movement. Furthermore, drawing on official statistics that compare situation of women and women's movement before and after transformation, they often concluded that

Communism was “good” for women. Such conclusion, however, cannot be further from what Polish feminists themselves think about the previous Communist regime.

The specific positionality of women within the Polish post-communist context can be captured neither by the liberal framework that was often used by proponents of the liberal abortion, nor by its association with Marxism. Liberalism and Marxism fail to “fit” the needs of those women in Poland who position themselves both outside the derivative Marxist idea of universal “women’s standpoint” and outside the capitalistic paradigm of “pick and choose” and who construct their subjectivity around different ideas, such as the idea of solidarity (Gwiazda in Kondratowicz, 2001). In other words, both liberal and Marxist traditions are similarly “foreign” to the experience of Polish women’s activism, which is why the “burgouise-marxist-idology” representation successfully shielded women away from feminism. The failure of the abortion debate and the alienation of feminism from the public debate might have its roots in the elimination of the solidarity-based discourses, discourses that have been shaping feminist identity during the previous, so to say, “pre-transformation” phase. The abortion debate revealed that the specific Polish context, from which liberal traditions are similarly absent, situates the feminist identity in between legacies of the previous system on the one hand, and appropriation of solidarity on the other. Failure of the abortion battle not only worked as a “wake up call” for the feminist mobilization in Poland, but it also had theoretical implications. It provided an impulse to reflect on the appropriation of the liberal, individualistic discourses into the debate on women and pointed to the fact that intellectual horizons of Polish feminism must reach outside and beyond liberal and Marxist discourses.

A certain inconsistency between the evaluation of undeniable achievements of the socialist state, its ideology and origins is characteristic to current feminist thought in Poland. Polish feminists have no doubt that the Communist regime provided women with certain social security services, such as free day care, maternity leave and possibilities of full and part time employment (Titkow 1999, Fuszara 2001). Throughout the post-war period in all Central and Eastern European countries, the participation of women in the labor markets increased and outnumbered by far their Western European counterparts. In the eyes of feminists, however, the Communist regime’s commitment to gender equality was highly limited and often times reduced to empty slogans represented by the image of “women on the tractors” (Fuszara, 2003). Solutions provided by communist ideology did not go any deeper below the surface; traditional women’s roles as mothers (most powerfully embodied in the image of Mother Pole) and wives were never challenged (Brach Czaina, 1998 Walczewska, 1996). The damage that Communism caused to feminism has been far bigger than the advantages it granted.

Joanna Bator certainly captures what many feminists think when she states that we should turn our analytical focus on communism in order to search for the causes of the abortion debate failure in the 1990s. She argues that while making gender difference an ideological tool of the empty propaganda, the communist regime led to both the erosion of the sense of a bond between women as a group and the rise of the

Catholic Church as a site of resistance to the communist ideology (Bator, 1999). In tune with Bator, Fuszara argues that the façade character of communist emancipation became evident already in 1989 when, after the first free election, the percentage of women in the Parliament drastically decreased. As the abortion battle bitterly proved, when the Parliament gained real legislative power, men took over and eliminated women (Fuszara, 1999).

When scrutinizing why the Polish feminists almost unanimously rejected Communism, one has to keep in mind the “foreign” character of Communism in Poland. As a system imposed onto this country by the Soviet Union, it remained “alien” to most of the population in Poland for almost 50 years of its lasting. While operating without popular legitimization, Communism attempted to control and restrict individual and collective actions. In order to prevent women from organizing around the “gender” outside state’s control, the Communist regime established and maintained the pseudo-feminist organization of Polish Women’s League (Liga Kobiet Polskich, LKP) with 10 million women’s members “on paper” but no real membership⁵ (Walczevska, 1997). Such politics was one of preconditions for women’s hesitation over feminist mobilization in the present. Several decades of communism disrupted the “natural development” and “continuity of women’s movement” and led to the situation when “we have hardly any movement”(r16).

The experience of life under Communism imposed from above and its artificial commitment to social justice created a peculiar social context, in which the word “Marxism” no longer stood for Marx’s theory or even any particular ideology, but represented an undesirable political situation. In the later years, these two aspects of Marxism--as ideology and experience--blended into rejection of “Marxism” altogether and resulted in an inability to comprehend its significance for feminist experience in other geographical locations (Walczevska 1996, Limanowska 1993). Till this day, Marxism remains on the margins of the genealogy of Polish feminists, many of whom still position it as contradictory to the idea of the social movement itself:

I was always astonished and disgusted by conversations with women who placed their hope in the post-communist left. It was beyond my mind, feminism to me made sense only as a continuation of the „democratic opposition“. Feminism coupled with communism I’ve been perceiving as an aberration“ (ag)

European Union, globalization and professional mobilization for “gender equality”

Earlier on we were aware that women from the European Union should cooperate, but they were not ready yet. They thought that they are only for European Union. And then, because of the financial reasons the openness came from them. But there are still serious ideological differences between us” (NWP1)

⁵ Walczevska argues that, like in case of the Polish Communist party, the statistics of the membership LKP were forged.

Polish women with their history and current problems are closer to the Western Europe, more than for example to Russia or Ukraine (NWP10)

On May 3rd 2004, 15 new countries, the majority of which are located in the Central and Eastern Europe, entered the European Union. In his welcoming speech for the representatives of the new members of EU in the European Parliament, British Prime Minister Tony Blair argued that Europe is now united and is now one continent in which the divisions which put shame on it before are now gone. By “shameful divisions” Blair probably meant the division of the western and eastern Europe, or more recently evoked, the division into “Old” and “New” Europe. It is too early to say if indeed such eradication of boundaries will take place any time soon. European Union politics of *gender mainstreaming* represents the approach “from the above”, and is an instance of the new form of supranational “state feminism” (Stenson, Mazur, 1999). While it may bring to mind the past “statist” feminism of the “communist state, it also provides certain tools and institutions for the development of the feminist movement. Although it is debatable if EU is good for women (Regulska, 2000), the discourse of the European Union is almost never questioned in the Central European feminism since the anti-European critiques are reserved for catholic fundamentalists and the radical right. As we argue elsewhere, joining the European Union was accompanied by many hopes and expectations. Women’s groups hoped that they would be able to use resources provided by supranational European “state” feminism and thus they would be included and counted on in confronting the patriarchal and conservative national state institutions. Many women’s groups were also eager to join the transnational organizing efforts to build and shape social agenda (Fuszara, Grabowska, Mizielinska i Regulska 2009). These expectations not always met the reality.

As Barbara Einhorn argues the EU accession can be seen as a transition from bipolar to the unipolar world, dominated by the supranational market economy (Einhorn 2005) As such its not only represents the globalizing force in the region but also is responsible for the significant dislocation in terms of “gender” discourses and practices (Einhorn 2005). Throughout the region at the end of the 1990s, the European Union undoubtedly became the driving force behind the introduction of “gender mainstreaming” into official state discourses and the “gender equality” machinery into the state apparatus. In the context of women’s mobilization, the idea of “gender equality,” promoted by international agencies and EU discourses, has been adapted as a variation on the theme of equal opportunity for free individuals regardless of gender. The accession of some countries to the EU has created a momentum for the introduction of “gender equality” language; it has also meant a symbolic relocation from the East to the West, i.e. to Europe. Finally the EU accession process has coincided with and related to the Beijing mobilisations, the brief stage of “NGOization” of the Polish feminist movement. The EU and other international political institutions, such as the UN, impact the relations between women’s NGOs and the state in at least two ways. On one hand, they enforce the state-NGOs cooperation by creating state institutions and units that require a cooperation with NGOs; on the other, they provide NGOs with new spaces where their claims can be represented. For example at the UN level, it is the Committee on the Status of Women, and at the EU level, it is the

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. The most important role of these international, and in many respects transnational, institutional arrangements is that they allow NGOs to bypass the state level (although in the case of the UN more so than in the case of the EU) and engage in transnational dialogue and policy-making as autonomous political actors. Indeed they do so by conducting research, writing reports, mobilizing media, or establishing alternative means of communication (such as newsletters, bulletins etc). For instance, Polish shadow reports provide statistics about the efficiency of equality mechanisms implemented in the country over the last 20 years to meet the requirements of the Beijing Platform of Action and the EU directives. Since 1994, Polish women NGOs have presented at least fourteen shadow reports including: "Shadow Letter 2004" and also in 2005, a report on women's and adolescents' reproductive rights. Among other reports were: "Shadow Report Republic of Poland" (2006), "On the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women", and "Independent Report submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee" (2004) (www.karat.org). These reports point to disparities between official governments' arguments about women's participation in the political processes and various domains of social life and provide statistics proving that the mechanisms implemented by the state are inadequate. In addition, these reports play an important role in pointing to failures of the official state reports to capture the impact of the current social and economic reforms and of the anti-abortion law. According to the state reports, no more than 400 abortions a year are performed in Poland; the Federation on Women and Family Planning, on the other hand, estimates the number of illegal abortion at up to 80 thousand a year (www.federa.org.pl). In the work of non-governmental women's organizations, the EU has often been utilized as a "watch dog", a tool to impact nation state agendas and institutions and involve supranational bodies in national gender politics. Facing the hegemony of the post-communist nation state, women's mobilizations, positioned both within and without formal politics, often use the neo-liberal rhetoric of the EU and the EU's version of "gender mainstreaming" to integrate women's movements into formal politics⁶.

Despite these positive dimensions of engagement, women's NGOs involvement in state politics, or "state feminism", as some call it, has been the subject of numerous critiques. The process of formalization and specialization of civic involvement on behalf of "gender equality," and the cooptation of women's agency into the state framework, led to the professionalization of NGOs' work (Hašková, 2005). While in some countries,

⁶ Besides the clear influence of supranational and global entities, two sites of "professional" women's mobilizations are evident throughout the region: political parties and state institutions. In Poland, the Office of Plenipotentiary of Equal Status was established in the 1989 and was particularly active in the mid and late 1990s. The newly established Women's Party (2006) attracted thousands of women as it aimed at positioning itself beyond the traditional political divisions of the left-right and liberal-socialist politics. While it relies on analyses provided by women's NGOs and attracting women previously involved in the NGOs, Women's Party leaders emphasize the necessity to provide women with equal opportunities at the labor market and possibilities to balance the demands of professional career and motherhood; at the same time, however, this party refuses to voice an opinion on reproductive rights. During its first months of existence, it attracted over 10 thousand women across the country, and it became an impulse for the establishment of sixteen local branches and four "transnational" Women's Party units around the world (Ireland, London, Berlin and the US). However, during the October 2007 elections, it received only 45,121 votes and did not secure any seats in the Parliament (www.polskajestkobieta.org)

such as the Czech Republic or Lithuania, the strategies for employing “gender equality” have been attuned to state anti-discriminatory policies, the main problem is the façade character of the newly established “gender equality” institutions. As Enikő Magyari-Vincze argues, in case of Romania, “there is no will to politicize such issues as: why women represent a significant part of the labor force in the poorly remunerated sector, why women are represented in less paid positions, why the income of women is significantly below the average income, and why their percentage as leaders is almost four times lower than men’s” (2003, 8-9). There is no question that both state institutions and women’s organizations have been focusing on meeting EU standards of “gender equality”, yet at a deeper level concerns important to most disadvantaged women remain unaddressed either institutionally or by social activism.

At the same time, NGOs have been losing their central position as vehicles of women’s mobilizations in the region. Many of them are currently undergoing a major restructuring and experiencing a shift in their focus. With the process of the eastern enlargement of the EU and the withdrawal of U.S. donors, EU funds and its EQUAL program have become the main source of women’s NGOs financing. The change of financial sources and transformation of financing procedures from institutional grants to short-term projects that require partnerships with non-gender equality oriented partners led to the restructuring of many NGOs and in some cases, to a total disappearance of the most radical groups. Such restructuring has yielded instability and uncertainty as NGOs have become more dependent on the changing sources of funding, they have responded by forming broader institutional coalitions. While these new alliances break the isolation of women’s organizations, they tend to weaken the feminist agenda. For small NGOs, this process of restructuring often requires stretching their agenda to meet the partners’ and donors’ requirements, and broadening the generally defined “gender equality”-based agenda. For instance, the Feminoteka Foundation, based in Warsaw, established primarily as an independent Internet bookstore and portal, has been mainly financed through the Gender Index project since 2005. As Gender Index is funded by the EU, the project requires a close cooperation with the employees’ organization (in this case “Lewiatan”) and with other organizations such as the UNDP Poland, the Warsaw School of Economics, leading advertisement agencies and mainstream national media (part of the project is the production of a nation-wide media campaign promoting gender equality in workplace). The focus of the project caused a shift in the organization’s agenda as the Gender Index became its primary focus. Nevertheless, the Internet Portal and bookstore are being continued (www.genderindex.pl.)

European women’s movement - the politics of location, equality and representation of difference

Earlier on we were aware that women from the European Union should cooperate, but they were not ready yet. They thought that they are only for European Union. And then, because of the financial reasons the openness came from them.. But there are still serious ideological differences between us (NWP21)

With the imminent accession of Poland to the EU, Polish women's organizations as well as other women's groups in the candidate countries realized that in order to be able to lobby directly EU institutions and the European Parliament, they had to have their representation in Brussels. It turns out that there were limited possibilities: they could try to establish their own representation or they could join the largest European women's non-governmental organization, the European Women's Lobby (EWL). While the first option seemed attractive at first, it proved unattainable due to a lack of financial resources; also, this option gave rise to worries that a sole-country representation might not be in the end as effective as it first appeared. EWL, on the other hand, had already achieved a strong political position in Brussels and enjoyed a positive image within the EU political space. Joining EWL would bring, as most of the women's leaders hoped, certain benefits for organizations from the CEE. Women would be able to use resources provided by the supranational European "institutional" feminism (mainstreaming), arguing against the national state which remains conservative and patriarchal. This arrangement would further contribute to the supranational women's movement embodied in EWL, which provides institutional and financial support for women's NGOs. Women's groups in Poland that decided to join EWL had to meet certain criteria. In particular, they were required to form a national umbrella organization and show that they had developed an administrative and financial infrastructure. These demands of deeper institutionalization of women's movement were regarded by many as a forced process of convergence of the "East" and "West," an already familiar process of adjustment that was demanded by EU during the accession process. In the process of EU Enlargement, the "readiness" of the candidate countries was measured through existing supranational free market economy standards. While these demands were seen as controversial by some women leaders, others acknowledged the will to unify with the Western Europe: "Polish women with their history and current problems are closer to the Western Europe, more than for example Russia or Ukraine" (NSF data, 2004). This distancing oneself from the "others" that presumably, in the eyes of the speaker, were not as worth as women in Poland of such integration, reveals the desire to become European. At the same time it represents distancing from regional solidarity and that site of women's identity in Poland, that is represented by the belonging to the Central and Eastern European region.

European Union represents the supranational political space (Regulska), within which the politics of identity (represented by Western Europe) will have to meet the politics of difference (represented by CEE). It however lacks the discursive and institutional base to respond to this diversity. European Union neglects the past historical legacies, and simplifies the question of difference by focusing merely on surface differences between nations while promoting the ideal of common European roots. For some, as cited above, the integration with EU constitutes the symbolic confirmation of the European identity of Polish women that has always been there. Others see the accession to EU rather as a "must", a pragmatic choice filled with doubts and fears. Some criticisms and fears of the European Union model of women's activism are expressed by women in Poland who are concerned about the questions of representation and of European identity. In terms of representation, however, one

question remains unanswered in the present model of the European Women's Lobby. As one of the Polish activists put it,

how the voices different from those of the Brussels office can be heard and visible at the level of European Union institutions if EWL remains the only women's representation in it? (NWP 13) .

Unified, single representation of women's issues within the European Union requires a certain, fixed definition of the European women's identity that would underline women's agenda within EU. EWL's sole dependency on the EU funding has been seen as controversial and as limiting its ability to be forcefully critical of the EU discourses on gender. One can wonder to what extent the symbolic and political eradication of the borders between the "West" and "East" will contribute to the erosion of the historically and geographically formed differences and power dynamics between the (economically better developed) West and the (still recovering from the communist past) East. To what extent are the European Union's discourse of equal rights, together with the contextually developed western women's activism, open and sensitive to the difference that Eastern European women bring to the table? Does the accession to the previously created institutionalized system of supranational governance bear the uniqueness of the new member states? Moreover, in the past, EWL has shown a limited understanding of the contexts within which women in CEE countries function and of the challenges they need to negotiate during the transition period. (NSF interviews 2004) Will the specificity of the Polish women, majority of whom live in the rural areas be addressed by the labor market-oriented, equal opportunities politics of the European Union? Will women from Central and Eastern Europe be able to contribute and transform the supranational political space that has been previously created (but not by them and for them), or will they have to adjust to the concept of the "European" identity that is already formed there for them? Will the European Union engage transnational political practices, or will it rather perform the supranational governance from above, based on a fixed, preconceived concept of "East" European women's identity?

The question of representation is seen as an opposition between the diversity and possession of political power. On the one hand, diversity and "difference" are the most important priorities for feminism and civil society (our respondents questioned for example the way in which EU money allocation when financing one organization influences the quality of the civil society). On the other hand, however, one strong voice of European women has a greater chance to be heard in EU. Further unified, single women representation within European Union requires a certain definition of the European women's identity on which women's agenda within EU can be based. The lack of the recognition of differences between women from Western and Central Eastern Europe was strongly emphasized by some of our interviewees. They stressed that the understanding of the region's specificity requires the deep knowledge of its particular context. This include, for example, the question of what role the "communist" heritage, with its undesired ideology but some privileges for women (such as unpaid child care), will play in the new, market economy oriented European Union politics. It further rises a question to what extent the anti-discrimination EU

politics, with its focus on the labor market, will work for women who do not participate in it on a regular basis (in case of Poland over 30% of women are rural women). Finally, in case of Polish women's activists, the question about the reproductive rights and the role of the Catholic Church appears as being very specific compared to other EU countries. Looking for both (representation and identity) questions from a broader perspective, which comes back to the geographical dimension of our project, we ask to what extent the symbolic and political eradication of the borders between West and East will contribute to the erosion of the historically and geographically formed differences and power dynamics between the West and East.

“Generation 2000”- New forms of women's activism in Poland

I think we are at the verge of the new wave. Older feminists educated the chorus of young feminist who are reproducing fiercely. And they are more and more ambitious and they want to do more, and they feel suffocated in what is there now. It is not enough for them, and they are not afraid to voice it. They don't want to be volunteers women's organizations; they have their own consciousness and want to do their own things. And in the multiple ways. Lesbians for instance, there was no cooperation between lesbian and feminists movement before, and now I think it is growing, the fact that we have a Lesbian Alliance, it is the mark of the time (r32)

The groups that organize Manifa, or Lesbian Alliance (are the future). I think there are many women, young women who think differently. And they will not be able to institutionalize. Maybe it was a mistake that we institutionalized the movement in a particular moment, because then the heavy burden was on us. But on the other hand it's important to have feminist beacons and maybe once we have these they can do more...” (r14)

The “third wave” is a diversity feminism, we now have a huge lesson of it (...) When the emancipation of gay and lesbian movement has started. But in the meantime there were Roma women, Jewish women (...) and of course Catholic women (r2)

The emergence or reemergence of informal groups and “street” activism is one of the most important shifts within Polish feminism during the last decade. From the perspective of some women, the institutional form of feminism has become both too mainstream and “too tide” to accommodate their goals and aspirations. Both the “mainstreamization” of the feminist agenda and the narrowing the feminist issues to the areas important to the EU agenda have been resulting in young women's frustration with feminist activism:

I think feminism became more and more present in the public life, it is talked about, and it becomes mainstream. As it happens, it begins to have its own margins... (...) It (focuses) on the prevention of the discrimination at the labor market. It aims at equating the opportunities. It states that we cannot afford certain things (radicalism) that we should follow where the EU will lead us. This is a mainstream that everyone

understands now. Even if someone is not a feminist, they are using this language. It becomes a slogan, and it is not as if it is only a feminists matter... (...) (r14)

While mobilizations that utilize the neo-liberal agenda have focused on challenging the hegemony of the state institutions, there is a growing movement of women, particularly those of younger age, who contest the hegemonies of the state without turning into the “professional feminists” who are often times far removed from the broader social context. Younger women have voiced some harsh critiques of the work of the previous generations:

The older generation represents the ghetto mentality (...) For them the priority is to be closed in their own circle. They are not interested in appealing to wider public. (...) And here I'm talking about the group of women who were establishing the first feminist initiatives. First off all they competed about money, second, the problem was that feminism has not been then the grassroots movement (...) The earlier generation started as a consciousness raising group, at the certain point it has been a grassroots initiative but then turned into the association and from that point on they realized that the western donors have been interested in creating the civic movement and civil society and feminism in Poland . When first money arrived there has been a conflict and as a result the association, which had a dozens of women's members, turned into the foundation that hires 3 people. And the whole rest just hates feminism. So money and being attached to the jobs. It's being feminist as a job, treating it as any other occupation (r10)”

Generational transformations, however, cannot be seen solely in the context of this “new wave” of feminist activism. Age differences, while important, intersect with other axes of diversity within the feminist movement, such as ideological differences: regional differences, ideological contentions between liberal and socialist feminists, or the emergence of the Catholic feminism and new forms of secular feminisms . Together, these different streams form feature- fragmented and scattered mobilizations that focus on the recognition of diverse sources of women's oppression (state, media, transnational corporations, Church) and the employment of various tools to fight them. For instance, the work of Women's Alliance established as a reaction to the violation of the abortion law by the police, consists of the coalition of women's organizations, members of alternative movements and gay and lesbian organizations. The Alliance's work focuses on the organization of the yearly feminist Manifa on March 8th. While focusing each year on one particular issue related to gender equality (violence, equality at the labor market, reproductive rights, women's political participation) the Alliance combines traditional activism (the representatives of the women's NGOs and women politicians can give speeches at the demonstration) and the elements of festival (performances and music are crucial part of demonstration) to engage the broader public with women's issues. At the same time, these shifts mark a transition from the fixed feminist identity to the recognition of hybridity and intersectionality of women's subjectivities.

The new forms of activism allow reaching out and engaging women from outside feminist communities. They bridge the gap between generations, classes and ideologies, showing that feminist discourse can be open to many. Engaging a variety of women into the coalition allows both: the softening of the feminist “image” (more women can identify with the feminist cause) and achieving more radical inclusiveness of the movement (identities silenced within the institutionalized feminism such as lesbian can be voiced) For instance, while the 2002 Manifa was devoted to reproductive rights, the 2006 demonstration featured a “special” children section and was partially devoted to the rights of small children’s mothers. Including those groups of women who have been previously excluded or “hidden” in the kind of feminist activism that focuses on “gender equality” is one of the main goals of the Alliance. The 2005 Manifa focused on the rights of lesbians, and together with the newly established Lesbian Alliance, organized “equality” marches across the country. In the same year 2005, these two groups united while organizing Manifa under the slogan “Together we are stronger”. More recently, members of the Alliance put a lot of effort to engage women from workers’ organizations and unions to join the feminist march. Most recently, while expressing support for various groups of working class women, such as nurses in 2006 and TESCO workers in 2008, the emphasis on Manifa’s rhetoric shifts from irony to social justice issues. Thus the 2007 Manifa, for the first time called “March of Women’s Solidarity,” alluded to the “Solidarity” movement of the 1980 and emphasized the commonalities of women’s struggles across class, generations, sexuality and party affiliations.

The conceptualization of complex women’s identities also requires turning to the more contextualized experience of “gender” and “sexuality,” a simultaneous interaction with global and local “gender” narratives. One instance of such a complex imbrication of the local and the global are recent articulations of non-normative, “queer” sexuality in Poland. These new discourses draw upon the already existing discourses of “sexual rights” circulating globally while simultaneously inscribing the question of “sexuality” within a much older discursive frame of the ambivalent “ethnicity” of homeless subjects/strangers, historically represented by Polish Jews. Over the last 20 years, xenophobic rhetoric represented by the slogans such as “Where there is a Gay, there is a Jew,” “Will do with You, what Hitler did with Jews!” has become a cultural code to which the Polish public sphere is unfortunately widely receptive (Graff 2007). More recently, however, the feminist and LGBT groups have been re-appropriating the metaphor of Jewish-gay experience to envision the perils of homophobia, particularly by recalling the experience of the Holocaust. These newly emerging discourses aim at the reconceptualization of the “other” as “one of us” through the idea of solidarity with and care for the most vulnerable social groups:

What it is all about is that when you are on tv or on the radio, and you are there for a feminist cause the status of if you are discriminated against is really uncertain. You are always suspect of making it all up. But when it comes to Antisemitism it is known that it exists. There are different approaches to it, but the fact that it exists is certain. It is a social problem. And everybody knows that it is not just made up. So when you go to talk about feminism and you start comparing sexism and Antisemitism or Antisemitism

and homophobia, then you legitimize a problem. You legitimize a problem, by showing the analogy, you say, here you are, it is the same, and “You, sir cannot deny that antisemitism exists, do you”? (r25)

Drawing the analogy between sexism and racism and homophobia not only legitimizes women’s struggles but also argues that the struggles for social justice are part of the democratic tradition that comes back to pre-war and Solidarity times. It also allows grounding the feminist struggle, often perceived as foreign or as a novelty, within the Polish context of fighting anti-semitism in the 1930s, 1960s and 1990s and manages to move those struggles from the margins to the center of the public discourses.:

It is the same thing that with the Jews and antisemitism before, it is obvious to me that at certain point the scale of antisemitism was so big, that everybody who stood up by their side, said „we are all jews“. I think that there is a same situation now that we all have to say, „we are all gays and lesbian, homosexuals“ (r11)

Finally such new language contributes to the process of re-gaining the ownership of the public sphere and breaking the monopoly for patriotism, the spheres for the last 20 years reserved to the radical Polish left and Catholic fundamentalism. Most recently, in the Manifa’s march, the national, European Union and rainbow LGBT flags were held together by the participants. One of the organizers of Manifa and Equality March, and the head of the LGBT coalition, “the feminist, ecologist, lesbian and a happy illegal wife” from Warsaw has recently proclaimed her patriotism on the Internet:

I’m one of those, who rather than talk and runaway, will try to increase the quality of life, at least in my own yard (...) I describe myself as a „patriot“ and I’m sorry that right now this term has right wing connotations. I couldn’t live in US or any country in Europe for longer. I’m tied here with the invisible string. I can travel, yes, or ever go away for couple of months. But I couldn’t start a new life somewhere abroad (...) Of course it is a matter of friends and family. Also what I do, who I am here and what I’m involved in. I know I have a lot to do here, and I know how to do it. And I love Polish homecooking:). (chylkiem-I-duszkiem.blog.onet.pl)

Conclusion

The fragmented, scattered character of the current feminist struggles, which makes their conceptualization in terms of mass movement almost impossible, have many origins; rapid development of feminism after 1989, the distinct trajectory of the movement within the supranational women’s organizing (many women in Poland claim that they “missed the boat” in terms of global feminism), and the complex relationship with the “left” (post-communist legacies impacted the complicated relation between feminism and the “left”- only recently the coalition between feminist and the left became a possibility) are among them. To acknowledge the hybridity engendered by globalization within the post-communist context, one has to examine directions, origins, and various sites of the emergence of hegemonies and counter-hegemonies in

such areas as the struggle for economic justice, reproductive rights, bodily integrity or ethnic and racial oppression. In order to explore the workings of new geopolitical configurations and their effects on women's mobilizations, we propose employing the concept of "scattered hegemonies" in the analysis of the post-communist location (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). These authors argue that in the new geopolitical context, as a result of globalization, power dynamics and hierarchies have become destabilized. The origins, directions, and means of the hegemonic discourses are not easily identified because the power and hegemony are produced and exercised by more than one site involved in the globalization process (Haweksworth 2006, Rowbotham and Linkgole 2001). In this context, transnational feminism provides the framework within which the intersection and interrelation between the globalization process "from above" and grassroots mobilizations "from below" provide the ground for production and understanding of women's mobilizations. Such a differentiation allows us to conceptualize how contemporary women's mobilizations emerge in various spatial locations and to recognize the political and historic context of regime changes and free-market imposition particular to post-communism. The exploration of the processes of the employment of the hegemonic practices and discourses "from above" as well as the emergence of locally produced counter-hegemonies in the context of post-communism requires a closer look at the specificities of the so-called second world location and an examination of the applicability of at least some postcolonial modes of analysis in the context of postcommunism.

The focus on the particularities of the post-communist context allows us to reveal not only the complex, multi-directional center - periphery dynamics of various women's mobilizations, but also the emergence of multi-sited counter-hegemonies operating in the post-communist world. To envision the complexity of the workings of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces in the region, we propose taking a closer look at the various types of relationships between social, cultural, economic, and political forces. We argue that in the post-communist context, various sites within which hegemonies and counter-hegemonies are produced are not mutually exclusive, but rather intersect with each other and co-produce each other. Moreover, within these various sites, different discourses are repeatedly employed as concurrently hegemonic and/or counter-hegemonic. For instance, although there are many cases of appropriation of the neo-liberal paradigm as a discourse counter-hegemonic to the patriarchal state, discourses and practices based on the critique of neo-liberalism emerge simultaneously within and beyond the institutionalized women's movements. Hegemonies and counter-hegemonies are produced through a number of practices such as demonstrations, petitions, Internet campaigns, publications (brochures, pamphlets, and papers), training, or education. None of these technologies of power serve to organize collective action in one particular direction or around a single ideology, as they are often utilized by women concerned with diverse issues and representing numerous and often contradictory points of view and political agendas.

Feminist scholars around the world propose distinguishing the hegemonic forces within the globalization process from local mobilizations based on transboundary cooperation and solidarity in order to differentiate between globalization

from above and globalization from below and in order to capture ways in which globalization intersects with women's activism (Bayes 2001, Hawkesworth 2006, Lowe 1997, Naples and Desai 2002). Within the traditional, "international" framework, "globalization" has too often been seen as implying a unidirectional flow of ideas and mobilizations from West to East, North to South. The feminist discourse of transnationality, popular within the UN in the 1990s, more fully represents the character of contemporary women's mobilizations that go beyond the borders of nation states and challenge the existing East-West and South-North binaries and the discourse of "development" (Grewal and Kaplan 1994).

But the power within the globalization process is located at various scales and held by actors who engage each other in often unexpected ways (Sandoval 2002). Mohanty and Alexander (1997) argued that one of the crucial elements in the feminist conceptualization of effects of the globalization process on women is the need to destabilize the model that perceives women, particularly the "Third World" women, as victims. In that sense, the process of decolonization means at the same time the decolonization of the third world countries from the dominant model of the metropole-controlled market economy and the decolonization of the first world feminist discourses that perceive the third world women primarily as passive victims of global processes. Yet the destabilization of traditional forms of class and gender arrangements brought about by the feminization of global labor (one of the fundamental outcomes of globalization) facilitates the emergence of women as active agents.