Mikołaj Pawlak

Tying Micro and Macro

What Fills up the Sociological Vacuum?

PETER LANG

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This study critically discusses the thesis on the sociological vacuum formulated
by Stefan Nowak. The author's aim is to refute the claim that the sociological
vacuum is relevant for major social processes occurring in Poland. He presents
the sociological vacuum in the context of the debate on micro and macro levels
and discusses how the theory of fields and social network analysis is useful
to reconcile the micro-macro divide. The book considers the uses of the sociolog-
ical vacuum in explaining such phenomena as the Solidarność social movement,
civil society, social capital, and democracy. In the empirical part, the author
confronts the data on identifications with the data on relations and claims that
the vacuum is not in the society but it in sociology.

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Tying Micro and Macro

STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF IDEAS

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

The concept of the sociological vacuum was coined by the prominent Polish sociologist, Stefan Nowak (1979a; 1979b), by the end of Gierek's era, in the 1970s. It expresses the idea that although Polish people are bonded with their families and close circles of friends on the level of primary groups, as well as with their national community, they have no significant bonds with other structures existing between those two levels. The thesis was stated in a pessimistic tone and to this day continues to occupy the minds of Polish sociologists (Pawlak 2015) who use it to explain negatively evaluated social phenomena. The thesis on the sociological vacuum has undoubtedly a very strong status in Polish sociology and is treated as a certainty or quasi-axiom (Cześnik 2008a). I, however, believe it is always worth to question influential ideas; and indeed – after a closer inspection of the thesis itself, or of the narratives applying it to explain other phenomena, one can see its theoretical inconsistences, which are often covered with persuasive rhetoric. The present book belongs to the school of critical sociology defined by Michael Burawoy (2005: 10) as examining "the foundations – both the explicit and the implicit, both normative and descriptive – of the research programs of professional sociology." The main claim this book makes is that the misuses of the thesis on the sociological vacuum are caused by the under-theorization of the links between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis; the book's objective is to refute the claim that the sociological vacuum is relevant for major social processes occurring in Poland.

The term "sociological vacuum" is in a way misleading. The idea can be better expressed through the term "social vacuum," because the intention of its author was to describe the lack of something in the society, which is the reason why literature dealing with Nowak's thesis uses both of these forms. Ironically, however, the term "sociological vacuum" is – although not in the sense that it was originally intended – accurate too: the vacuum in society is perceived because of the vacuum in sociological theory, which does not see the links between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Documenting the way in which the theoretical framing of the issue consequently produces artifacts is yet another objective of this book.

In my claims about the problems with theoretical framings of important processes present in Poland, I do not simply call for more nuance, which has recently been criticized by Kieran Healy (2017), provocatively calling to "fuck nuance" in sociological theory. I do not claim that the thesis needs more complex theoretical elements or that it should be confronted with a very detailed empirical analysis. I agree that the thesis on the sociological vacuum is very interesting – in a sense,

it brings attention and triggers other researchers to work on it. At the same time, however, I track how it is grounded in theory and how it fails when used to explain phenomena. In my opinion, the problem lies in the under-theorization of the micro-macro link between the levels of analysis. This is why the story of the sociological vacuum is presented in the context of important sociological debate on micro and macro.

The discussion of the current state of the micro-macro issue in sociological theory is an equally important objective of this book. The book may therefore be read in two ways: (1) as a book about the development and reconciliation of micro-macro dualism in theory, illustrated with the case of Polish sociology preoccupied with a thesis on the sociological vacuum; (2) as a book about the thesis on the sociological vacuum analyzed from the perspective of the micro-macro problem. Since the 1980s debate on micro-macro dualism, there have been no new summaries of this debate published. This book contributes to the sociological theory by presenting new developments in this area and by integrating the theory of social fields and social network analysis into the body of micro-macro literature.

The linking of micro- and macro-levels of analysis is not an easy task. Finding relations between what is micro (connections between individuals, small groups, interactions, relations, and situations) and macro (social classes, states, nations, and societies) is key for the development of comprehensive theory. Especially the social field and social network perspectives build on theoretical and empirical elements which are not easily noticeable. The social field as a level of analysis and the salience of various social ties constituting social networks are counterintuitive both for social actors and for sociologists. Their theoretical understanding is possible thanks to the conceptualization of the links between micro and macro. In this book, I attempt at tying micro and macro in order to bring a new contribution to sociological theory. At the same time, I show the usefulness of these theoretical accounts on the example of the sociological vacuum problem.

The subtitle of the book is the question: "What Fills up the Sociological Vacuum?" It has been raised by a number of sociologists, who suggested their answers; these, however, have been only of an allegorical character. I, too, am not going to provide the ultimate answer. Instead, I use the question as an opportunity or a pretext to play with various possible theoretical approaches and try to see what was so far described as an empty space. Therefore, in this book, the narratives about the micro-macro issue and about the sociological vacuum are mutually feeding each other. By the same token, by discussing the micro-macro issue and the sociological vacuum in one volume, I am able to make the claim that the debate on the sociological vacuum – which, as a crucial concern of

Polish sociologists since the late 1970s, might seem as a very local problem – is, in fact, a quite universal tension in the development of the discipline worldwide.

I was trained as a sociologist at the University of Warsaw by the disciples of Stefan Nowak, who worked there from 1972 to 1989 as the head of the Chair of Methodology of Sociological Research. For this reason, I can proudly define myself as his intellectual grandson. In the environment of the University of Warsaw, the legacy of Nowak is very important: the main auditorium has been named after him, the methodological award granted by Institute of Sociology carries his name as well and, finally, the course in methodology is recognized as key for sociological education. I did not have a chance to meet Stefan Nowak in person because he passed away when I was a child, but I guess that he must have had a certain charisma which one cannot simply sense when reading his publications. In this context, the interest in the thesis on the sociological vacuum came to me as something natural, although I am not able to recall the exact moment when this happened. My first theoretical problems with the sociological vacuum started when I was reviewing literature inspired by new institutionalism on the post-communist transformation in Poland. To my surprise, scholars were not applying the category of the organizational field, which is located on the intermediary level of analysis and is an important part of new institutional theoretical toolkit. On the contrary – the analysts of Polish transformation were often recalling the thesis on the sociological vacuum and lamenting on the void on the meso-level (Pawlak 2013). The sociological vacuum was appearing nearly in all of the publications I was studying, not because of my interest in it, but because of the objective of reviewing the works on transformation that I had. Some time later, I had the opportunity to read the famous paper by Mark Granovetter (1973), "Strength of Weak Ties," which turned out to be an eye-opening experience. I realized that the sociological vacuum actually might be filled-up with something that Stefan Nowak and other scholars were unable to perceive. At this point, I decided that the sociological vacuum thesis needed to be reinterpreted and confronted with theoretical accounts which problematize structures which are not easily noticeable.

This book is an effect of applying manifold research approaches. First, I decided that I did not only want to discuss the thesis as formulated by Stefan Nowak, but also as it was used by other scholars. The first step was therefore to study all works which cited the thesis. The method of acquiring the literature and the results of its analysis are presented in my paper entitled "From Sociological Vacuum to Horror Vacui" (Pawlak 2015). The thesis on the sociological vacuum seems to be the most popular idea to emerge from the field of Polish sociology, yet still, the literature that discusses it is of the volume that allows a single researcher to

process all the production citing it.[1] The analysis of the publications resulted in creating a typology of sociological problems identified by scholars as connected to the sociological vacuum Thus, the references to the sociological vacuum appear in five contexts: as an element of background description in the works on Polish society; in the works on Solidarność social movement; in the works on civil society; in the works on social capital; and in the works on the quality of democracy. These are important and huge problems for social science, indeed!

The fact that the concept of the sociological vacuum is mentioned in the background introductions to studies on Polish society proves its significance in Polish sociology, but this context did not occur to me as interesting. Many of these citations have a rather ceremonial character: authors who need to write any short description of the Polish society, mention the sociological vacuum without giving it much thought. Yet, the remaining four contexts pertain to some of the most important topics of Polish sociology after the 1980s. The next step was therefore to study the general literature on these four topics in order to learn about the relevance they had for the sociological vacuum and the micro-macro problem.

Here, I need to make a caveat about my own dilettantism. When writing my book about the sociological vacuum, on many occasions I had to struggle with my ignorance. The sociological vacuum is a concept applied in so many contexts, that it is impossible to be competent in all of them. I have to be honest and admit that as a researcher I do not feel comfortable and confident when dealing with topics of Solidarność and democracy. Yet, the central subjects of this book are the sociological vacuum and the micro-macro problem in sociological theory, therefore I write about Solidarność or the quality of democracy only when it is relevant to the main theme of this book. Certainly, I do not have the ambition of contributing much to the discussion about Solidarność or democracy, although I aim at making other scholars more aware when connecting these themes of study with the sociological vacuum.

Last but not least, the inquiry on the sociological vacuum had also its field research component. Together with Michał Kotnarowski, we designed a survey study on labor market behaviors, which was conducted by Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej [Public Opinion Research Center]. One of the objectives of this study was to confront Granovetter's and Nowak's perspectives. The design

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1   The updated index of publications citing the sociological vacuum thesis is available at: http://mikolajpawlak.bio.uw.edu.pl/research/sociological-vacuum/bibliography-sociological-vacuum/. At the moment of preparing the book for publication (28.08.2017), there are 222 publications in the index. In this book I do not cite all of them, but only those which I use as illustrations to the more general tendencies I discuss.

14

and results of the study, which are relevant to this book, are presented below. The survey also provided us with data, which is not presented in this book. It is not related to the issue of the sociological vacuum, yet, I believe that it contributes to the understanding of the role played by social networks on the labor market. The general results of the survey study were presented in Polish in the article "Siła słabych powiązań na rynku pracy w Polsce" [The Strength of Weak Ties on the Labor Market in Poland] (Pawlak, Kotnarowski 2016). There are also forthcoming publications which explore the more narrow research questions and use the data set acquired through the survey.

I also need to point to that which is not present in the book. It certainly does not contain much about identities, mostly because the problem was not taken up in the debate on the sociological vacuum, and the thesis formulated in the language of identities soon became treated as a thesis on bonds per se. Thus, I do not provide a revision of studies on identity. At the same time, however, I believe that an in-depth review of publications by social psychologists on identity could shed some new light on the perception of the sociological vacuum. The sociology of Stefan Nowak was very much dealing with concepts which are key to social psychology, such as attitudes, identities, or worldviews. A more sociological approach to identity might be an interesting perspective to discuss the sociological vacuum's role in the institutional construction of biography or national identity. Another field which deals with identity is political science, and recently the public debate has undoubtedly been focused on identity politics, to which the notion of the sociological vacuum might be relevant as well. Yet, in this book the topic of identities is explored in a very limited scope. Still, it needs to be highlighted that it is somehow ironic that the statement formulated in the language of identities was later never seriously considered in the studies of identities.

In this book, I write a lot about social structures, but not in the traditional understanding of the term embedded in sociology of social stratification. I understand social structures as patterns of relations, therefore including in this category also social networks, organizations, and social fields – terms densely occupying the pages of this volume. I do not, however, take up the problem of social classes or social strata, defined according to other criteria. Again, the reason is the fact that the sociological vacuum as a topic was not taken up by the researchers of social structures. This is yet another ironic thing about the sociological vacuum, because Stefan Nowak (1979b: 160) was thinking about his thesis precisely in terms of a subjective social structure.

I would also not consider this book as a study in sociology of knowledge or history of ideas: it concerns sociological theory, in the text I critically discuss

important theoretical concepts of empirical relevance. When writing about theory, however, in most cases, the history of concepts is relevant for their proper understanding, and proper evaluation of theories. For example, I cannot judge Nowak for not using some concepts embedded in relational theories, because I know that at his time they were only in their nascent form. Quite similarly, some assumptions from the sociology of knowledge are always useful for dealing with concepts, especially when there is a wish to understand the context of their formulation or diffusion. For this reason, I have devoted much space in the book to the reconstruction of the history of the micro-macro issue in sociology. Nevertheless, a strict study of social conditions of knowledge creation is beyond the scope of my interest.

The chapters of this book have been arranged in three parts. Part I, entitled "The micro-macro problem in sociology: theoretical background," consists of three chapters on the classical accounts of the micro-macro problem, the theory of fields, and social networks. In chapter 1, "Classical approaches to the micro-macro problem in sociology," I introduce the issue of the micro-macro in sociological theory. For the sake of conceptual clarity, I show the affinities and differences between micro-macro pairing and individual-society, as well as agency-structure pairing. Afterwards, I present the views of the classics of sociology on relations between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis, and then move on to the theoretical debate, which was conducted in the 1980s, and in the course of which sociologists of various paradigms discussed the possible ways of reconciling the micro-macro divide in theory. In the two subsequent chapters, I present the newer approaches which are helpful in linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis to social fields and social networks. In chapter 2, "Social fields: the meso-level of analysis," I present various approaches to the social field theory and I discuss it as a theoretical tool to integrate micro- and macro-levels of analysis by introducing an intermediary level. In this chapter, I compare the insights from the thought of Pierre Bourdieu, new institutional theory of organizations, and strategic action fields theory. The last chapter of the part on the micro-macro problem in sociology entitled "Social networks: tying micro and macro" discusses the social networks approaches to studying social reality. In this chapter, I focus mostly on social network analysis and discuss the conceptions of social embeddedness of action as a promising way of linking micro with macro in sociology. This part of the book provides the theoretical background which allows to see various ways to look at micro- and macro-levels of analysis. The readers who are interested only in the issue of the sociological vacuum may omit it. I am convinced, however, that this part of the book has its own value

as a new discussion of the micro-macro debate, which since the work of Derek Layder (2006)[2] in the early 1990s has not been updated.

Part II, entitled "The sociological vacuum: the story of the spell cast on Polish sociologists,"[3] is a study of the uses of the sociological vacuum in explaining such important phenomena as Solidarność social movement, civil society, social capital, and democracy. My strategy for each chapter is not only to present how other scholars employed the concept of the sociological vacuum to explain or understand phenomena they considered interesting. In case of each discussed large sociological problem, I show the theoretical framings which are sensitive for the micro-macro problem. This allows me to confront the issue of the sociological vacuum with fine-grained theory, linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis. However, to open this part I need to discuss the thesis on the sociological vacuum itself. In chapter 4, "Polish sociology in the 1970s, Stefan Nowak, and the sociological vacuum thesis," I introduce the context of coining the thesis and the research program of survey sociology of Stefan Nowak. Then, I present research materials which later became the empirical basis for the thesis on the sociological vacuum and provide its internal and external critique. Having clarified the sociological vacuum thesis, I move to the discussion of the four large topics, in which it has been involved. In chapter 5 – "Solidarność: how atomized individuals mobilized as a social movement?" – I discuss how the emergence of Solidarność social movement contributed to the popularity of the thesis which it seemed to contradict, and analyze the sometimes even metaphysical references to the sociological vacuum thesis in the context of Solidarność. Afterwards, I present how the research oriented towards social networks and inter-organizational relations (elements not existent in sociological paradigm of Nowak) can be helpful in understanding the emergence of the movement. In chapter 6, "Civil society: in search of the new actor of the social transformation," I move to another grand subject of sociology in Poland and focus on organizations as a key structure to understand civil society, which I define as a self-organization of society based on free-choice associations. The sociological vacuum is often cited in order to explain the alleged weakness of civil society. I claim that it is a misunderstanding: the grounds to connect the sociological vacuum with civil society are questionable, and there are reasons not to lament so much about the condition of civil society in Poland. In chapter 7, "Social capital: what mediates between individuals and society?"

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2   In this work I cite the second edition of Derek Layder's (2006) book entitled *Understanding Social Theory*, which was originally published in 1994.

3   The expression "spell cast on Polish sociologists" is borrowed from Janine E. Wedel (1992b: 10).

I mostly focus on networks as key structures to the understanding of the social capital. The concept of social capital is a very fuzzy one, but it has a huge potential for linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Here, I also show that in the case of conceptions of social capital defining it on the individual level in terms of social networks, there is no reason to see the influence of the sociological vacuum on the quality of social capital. Finally, in chapter 8, "Quality of democracy: social base for political institutions," I examine the possible influences of sociological vacuum on democracy. I discuss various conceptions of democracy, and I show that for each of them the micro-macro link is a very important element, because – regardless of the way it is defined – democracy requires a mechanism translating wills of individuals into the decisions of the macro-actor – state. In this chapter, I show that the relations between the sociological vacuum and democracy depend on the way democracy is conceptualized. For some conceptualizations of democracy, the sociological vacuum is an irrelevant problem. Some see it as an advantage, as the lack of strong intermediary identities inhibits the disruption of polity (Cześnik 2008a); for others it might be disadvantageous, as a low level of certain identities might be recognized as suppressive for participation. The overall conclusion of part II of the book is that the assumed negative influence of the sociological vacuum on the social movements, civil society, social capital, and democracy in Poland is very much exaggerated.

In the last, and the shortest part III – "What fills up the sociological vacuum? Empirical illustration" – there is only one chapter 9, entitled "Getting a job in Poland: how weak ties fill up the sociological vacuum?" This part might be considered an empirical illustration, or empirical appendix, to the whole book. It presents the results of the survey in which both Granovetter's questions regarding relations and behaviors, as well as Nowak's questions regarding individuals and identities were asked. The confrontation of these two different ways of looking at society at first seems inconclusive, but this inconclusiveness is, paradoxically, very conclusive. The data on individuals' identifications with groups are a very weak proxy for real relations and real actions. I treated it as evidence of the weak explanatory power of the sociological vacuum thesis.

In the conclusion of this book, I repeat and summarize the most important findings. I also present recommendations for future research. I call for a more cautious use of certain sociological notions, more attention to theoretical links between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis, and more focus on relations and behaviors. I also suggest that if there is really a need for the macro-synthesis about a given society, it should be built in a bottom-up manner on the basis of various studies conducted on the meso-level.

Part I: The micro-macro problem in sociology: theoretical background

1 Classical approaches to the micro-macro problem in sociology

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to briefly present and summarize the main stances on the micro-macro problem in sociology. I discuss the differences between the micro-macro pairing with other – sometimes overlapping but still different – pairings important for sociological theory: individual-society and agency-structure. The proper understanding of the micro-macro debates and possible links between the micro and macro is an important context for the interpretation of social processes with the use of the concept of the sociological vacuum. As Jonathan H. Turner (2016: 123) noticed, "the failure of closing the micro-macro gap in sociological theory was often used by enemies of sociology that it is not a science." Yet, Turner (2010c: 1) in his other works showed that problems with the micro-macro link are not just a domain of sociologists: in physics, subatomic physics is not very well integrated with astrophysics; in biology, genetics is still not integrated with population ecology; while in economics, the gap between micro- and macroeconomics is still not filled.

I believe that the story I present in this chapter is a story of relative success. Debating about connections between the micro and macro from the times of Karl Marx to the present, in my opinion, have brought conceptual improvement and theories which allow to understand different levels of social reality in a more refined way. The newest solutions to the micro-macro question will be presented in Chapters 2 and 3, therefore this chapter also serves as their introduction. For this reason, I do not include the network theories in this chapter and only discuss Pierre Bourdieu's conceptions very briefly. Both social fields and social networks as links between micro and macro will be discussed in detail in separate chapters. This chapter owes very much to the works by Jeffrey Alexander and Bernhard Giesen (1987), Derek Layder (2006), and George Ritzer (1990), who made their own summaries of the micro-macro debate in sociology. I cite their remarks on the issue, but I do not fully agree with their insights. All four authors were not only reviewing the debate, but they were also taking part in it and promoting their own theoretical agendas.

The chapter is organized in the following manner: I start from presenting the differences between micro-macro pairing and the pairings of individual-society and agency-structure, and I clarify that micro-macro needs to be understood as an analytic dichotomy, even though some social scientists see it as an empirical dichotomy. Next, I discuss the six classical for sociology authors and try to distill their views on the micro-macro problem. Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, George Herbert Mead, and Florian Znaniecki were all concerned with the micro-macro dichotomy, although they were presenting it in the terminology of individual-society dichotomy. After presenting the views of the classics, I discuss the 1980s debate on linking micro and macro in sociological theory. After a period of divide between the micro- and macro-extremism in the sociological theory in the 1980s, theorists discussed vigorously the possibilities of integrating the levels of analysis. The divide was tackled from the micro-perspective and the macro-perspective, but also from the dialectical "in the middle" approach. This debate, in my opinion, turned the theoretical focus towards the agency-structure pairing. In the subsequent section, I discuss the solutions to the micro-macro link, which are distinct to the majority of solutions from the 1980s debate, because they call for introducing intermediary levels of analysis (by some authors called meso-levels) linking micro and macro. The chapter finishes with concluding remarks.

1.2 Micro-macro and other pairings in sociological theory

To understand the issue of the micro-macro problem in sociological theory, it is necessary to start from looking at it in the context of other so-called pairings in sociological theory. Sociologists tackle pairs of concepts which cause tensions and often paradoxes. Next to the problem of micro and macro, the central sociological parings are individual-society and agency-structure. By a similar token, debates in sociological theory are organized also by other dualisms such as objectivism-subjectivism, dynamics-statics, materialism-idealism, and rationalism-empiricism which, in turn, lead to the formation of opposing camps and paradigms, thus revealing huge divides in the general understanding of what sociology is. I am not going to reconstruct all the possible dualisms in sociological theory, and in this section my focus is on understanding the basics of the micro-macro problem. I am sure that a better understanding of this problem is possible when it is presented in relation to the issue of individual-society and agency-structure. In the last paragraphs of this section I will also try to reconstruct how the notion of meso is understood in the theory.

20

1.2.1 Other pairings: individual-society and agency-structure

The individual-society pairing certainly has some overlap with the micro-macro pairing, as the individual is a phenomenon of a micro-scale, and society, as something large, obviously seems to be something of macro-scale. Yet, the individual is not the only entity placed on the micro-level, and there are also many other phenomena, which are to be regarded as occurring on the macro-level. Quite many theoretical approaches deal with macro-processes and macro-phenomena but reject the concept of society. The individual-society pairing is the oldest among the three and has been seriously considered in the works of social philosophers for a very long time before the establishment of sociology as a legitimate mode of theorizing about social processes. In the next section, where I am going to discuss how the classics of sociology perceived the micro-macro problem in the theory, I will demonstrate that they were rather tackling with the individual-society problem. What is now anachronically concluded about their stances on micro-macro is based, to a large extent, on their statements about individuals, society, and relations between the two. On this subject I will say more in Section 1.3 of this chapter. Here, however, I will focus only on the conception of the individual, and the way in which the individual and society mutually defining each other, as analyzed by Norbert Elias.

The reason I choose here Elias' work is because it serves as an illustration of the mutual defining of individual and society, but also because the author provided a convincing history of the concept of the individual in Western culture. Although the word "individual," which is used in English to denote an entity (usually bringing to mind a human individual), comes from Latin, it was not used in the classical Latin of Roman empire. The word appears for the first time in medieval theological treaties about discussing the indivisibility of the Holy Trinity. "Individual" originally denoted an entity, which could not be divided (Elias 1991) and it was only later that the term was also attached to the concept of a human individual. As Elias claims, the concept of the individual and our self-perception as individuals is a product of the Western culture and the processes that started in Medieval period and then flourished in Renaissance. Elias (1969; 1982) calls this a "civilizational process." In Elias' interpretation of Western culture, the conception of the individual dominated our thinking (Layder 2006: 153). This obsession with our own individuality is for him also present in sociological theories which focus excessively on social roles and the individual-society relation. His way of breaking with this, as he perceived, ill-thought dilemma was the figurational theory, which highlighted that society and individual are mutually creating, which means that it is not possible to think of one them without referring to the other.

The discussion of the pairing of individual-society requires having the concept of the individual rooted in one's conceptual toolkit. The second concept – society – demands some explanation as well. It is commonly believed that sociology as a science was created when thinkers started to problematize society as a population of a modern state. Later, the concept was either rejected, or made more complex. The fact that society is made-up of individuals (but is not always understood as a simple aggregation of individuals), and that humans are at the same time social animals unable to function without their social environment, is a kind of quibble requiring explanation from sociologists. Another issue is the double meaning of the term "society" which does not only denote a population of a large size, but also a company, an association, or a club, which is yet another reminder of the fact that the existence of an isolated individual is impossible. For the sociologically trained, it is a banal statement, but as Derek Layder (2006: 3) noticed, there are still people who speak about individuals as if they were outside of social forces. For this reason, it is important to recall the individual-society pairing, even though as a theoretical problem it is no longer particularly interesting for sociologists.

I will now turn to the agency-structure pairing, which is now at the center of the sociological debate. Although it was also not directly described by the classics, its strong traces can be found in their works. According to the agency paradox, people are able to act while simultaneously being constrained by structure, and through acting, they are capable of influencing this very structure. To understand this pairing, it is necessary to understand both notions, which, of course, have many definitions in sociological theory. To simplify things, I will assume after Layder (2006: 4–5) that structure can be defined as "the social relationships which provide the social context or conditions under which people act." The tradition of sociological studies of the social structure is a very long one, and it includes classical analyses of social classes, as well as recent works on social networks. What is common in this thinking is the understanding that a structure which contains elements and the relations between these elements is, in a way, stable or durable, and constrains social actors (individual and collective). Agency is a capability of acting, the state of being a subject not an object. As it was understood by Anthony Giddens (1984), it is the ability to make a difference in the world. Agency is connected with the key sociological notion of social action since Max Weber (1978) recognized it as a crucial subject of sociological inquiry. The tension in the agency-structure pairing is therefore connected with more classical tensions, such as voluntarism-determinism or change-stability. It is a pairing which is strictly a product of the sociological way of theorizing and has occupied the minds of sociologists in the recent decades. A good example of

this sociological focus on agency-structure pairing is the monumental collection of readings edited by Mike O'Donnell (2010a). This collection of four volumes includes the works of classics and current theorists tackling the problem of agency and structure. The most influential contributions in late 20th century sociological theory by Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (1984), and Habermas (1984) are recognized as valuable because of their attempts to solve the agency-structure paradoxes. In the introduction to the above-mentioned collection of readings discussing the agency and structure issue, Mike O'Donnell (2010b: xxvii) stated that the proper understanding of individual-society and micro-macro pairings is necessary for dealing with the crucial for social theory pairing of agency and structure.

What is thus the difference between micro-macro pairing and agency-structure pairing? George Ritzer (1990: 363) defines it in the following way: "Agency is usually micro, but may be macro. Structure is usually macro, but may be micro. Micro usually indicates agency, but may include mindless behavior. Macro usually means structure, but may refer to culture." Agency is the ability of a social actor, which as a point of departure denotes a human individual (which is connected to the earlier discussion of individual-society pairing). There are, however, also large collective actors, whose agency is performed on macro-level. A canonic example of this is the state, but some authors treat as collective actors (of obviously macro-scale) also nations or social classes.

Many – usually the ones closely attached to methodological individualism – would reject treatment of such large objects as actors (Hindess 1986: 115). According to Hindess, acting requires two capabilities: the capability to make a decision, and then to act on this decision. A nation or social class cannot be treated as an actor because it does not have a mechanism of decision taking, and calling either of them an actor cane be done only in an allegorical sense (Hindess 1986: 115). The state, however, with its procedure of taking collective decisions is, according to this approach, an actor. Hindess (1986) persuasively claims that the macro perspective is also a reductionist one. Conventionally, the micro-perspective is treated as a reduction of complex social processes into their "atomic" level. Yet, holistic approaches are also reductionist, because they reduce the complexity of actors' internal construction to simple consequences of structural determinants. This reminds of the famous critique of sociology by Denis H. Wrong (1961), claiming that it employs the oversocialized conception of man which reduces human individuals to enactors of social pressures. In a similar fashion, classical economics undersocializes the concept of man, reducing the complexity of social forces influencing decisions of individual. According to Hindess (1986), social structures of macro-level influence the action in its both phases. The decisions are to be taken

only in the framework of certain discourses which allow perception and categorization. Decisions are influenced by macro-cultural structures and acting on these decision is constrained by social and material conditions external to the actor.

The micro-macro pairing was firstly introduced in economics. The author who is credited for coining the terminology to distinguish micro- and macro-economics is Ragnar Frisch (1933), however, it is conventionally regarded that the creator of the subdiscipline of macro-economy is John Maynard Keynes (Canterbery 2011: 490). Keynes (1937) focused his studies on employment, interest, and money. His approach was labeled as "macroeconomics" because it was focused on the processes occurring on the national level of economy: aggregate national income, product, employment, and overall price level. In comparison, microeconomics is focused on choices of smaller decision units (as sociologists would say, "social actors") such as consumers, households, and firms. Since that time, the division between micro-economics and macro-economics, institutionalized in economics teaching curricula, became commonly accepted. As economics is for sociology very often a discipline to look up to – although sociologists very rarely admit to it – it was quite easy for them to start thinking about the processes they were considering in terms of micro or macro as well.

1.2.2 What does micro and macro actually mean?

Jeffrey C. Alexander and Bernhard Giesen (1987) in the introduction to the collected volume *The Micro-Macro Link* (Alexander et al. 1987) state that the micro-macro dichotomy is an analytical distinction. This, according to Alexander and Giesen, is what distinguishes micro-macro from previously discussed concrete (substantial) pairings. Individual versus society, and action versus order (another label for agency-structures dichotomy) are of substantive nature, which means that is possible to indicate the real entities behind them. Yet, seen from the more constructivist perspectives, this is not so straightforward: there are quite strong arguments to claim that both individual and society, or agency and structure, are notions developed by researchers in order to better understand social reality. To support Alexander and Giesen's view, it is necessary to state that "individual" and "society" are categories of practice, while the micro and macro distinction is only used by social scientists analyzing social phenomena. It would be also hard to point to agency and structure as categories of practice but – putting aside the huge sociological debate about agency and structure – it is possible to point to their substantial designates.

Having agreed that micro versus macro is a distinction of an analytical character, I need to point to the consequences of this fact: it is the decision of a

24

researcher what to name micro and macro; it is also his or her decision how to conceptualize their relation. There are two possible general ways of conceptualizing the link between micro and macro: the first approach is to describe the mechanism mediating between the two; the second one is to introduce another analytical category of meso.

As George Ritzer (1990: 349) noticed, many sociologists use the analytical distinction between micro and macro empirically. The reason for this may be the strong institutionalization of these analytical categories in the scientific field. The consequence of such an use, however, may be their reification and production of artifacts. Thus, scholars often make an equation between the micro-level and the individual-level reality of everyday life, while the macro-level is equated with the social world or whole social reality. The artifacts of analytical framing might be easily produced if what is useful as a tool to analytically perceive reality (i.e. as social processes on different levels) might be smuggled – or in unnoticed way transformed – into the statements on the substantial entities. This is an important lesson regarding the recurrent problem of social theories in which analytical categories are often treated as empirical categories, which may lead to the production of knowledge that does not pertain to social reality but the sociological perception of this very reality.

It is a contingent outcome of the development of sociological theory that micro and macro are so close to other theoretical pairings. As an analytic categorization they are both relational and arbitrary, so something treated as micro from one perspective could be treated as macro from another (Alexander 1987: 291). Apparently, there is some overlap between the analytical micro-macro distinction and the two other key theoretical distinctions, which I have already mentioned in the previous section. My guess would be that many scholars do not sufficiently understand this overlap and the differences between the pairings, and often treat the micro-macro dichotomy as more or less equal to, for instance, individual-society dichotomy. This makes it quite easy to state something about the micro-level having in mind individuals or their interactions. Although in this chapter I often interpret claims of classical theorists regarding other pairings as claims about the micro-macro dichotomy, I keep in mind that this has to be done very cautiously.

It is also important to be very cautious in the attempts of operationalizing micro and macro as observable and unobservable. It is not true that it is possible to plainly observe micro-level entities or processes such as motives, personalities, or biographies. On the other hand, some macro-entities (like legal systems or income distribution) are quite easily to be seen by social scientists (Alexander, Giesen 1987: 21), which is an important argument for treating the micro-macro

pairing as an analytical distinction. Another similar assumption made by some authors is that processes and entities on the micro-level are simple or uniform, whereas processes and entities on the macro-level are complex (Knorr-Cetina 1981: 20). It is not true, because the micro-transactions of everyday life might be enormously complex, while some processes (or at least their representations) on a macro-scale might be quite simple. Some approaches to macro-level treat it as an aggregation of micro-level processes or entities, which in consequence may lead to the assumption that macro-level is more complex as it is a totality of micro-level phenomena. It is a naive way of thinking, because – having in mind that micro and macro are analytical categories – it is necessary to reduce the complexity on both levels through the development of models of reality. The model of macro-process does not include all the elements of its micro-components.

Another important point about the micro-macro pairing is that it might be treated as a dichotomy or a continuum. George Ritzer (1990: 364) claims that micro and macro are just ends of a continuum. Yet, as they are analytical tools, only their usefulness for a better understanding of reality should be important here. Again, the treatment of micro-macro as a dichotomy is quite often connected to its overlap with other pairings which are "more dichotomous" in nature. In the case of individual-society, there is no place for continuum, although researchers often show that in social groupings of different sizes there are different dynamics of social processes. In the case of agency and structure there is no place for continuum as well. Thus, to picture micro and macro as a floor and a ceiling, to some extent arbitrary set by a researcher, it is possible to point to the space between them and try to conceptualize it, as if it included some other levels (i.e. meso); it is also possible to talk about something being more macro (i.e. closer to the imagined ceiling) or more micro (closer to the imagined floor).

Figure 1.1 Micro and macro as ends of continuum
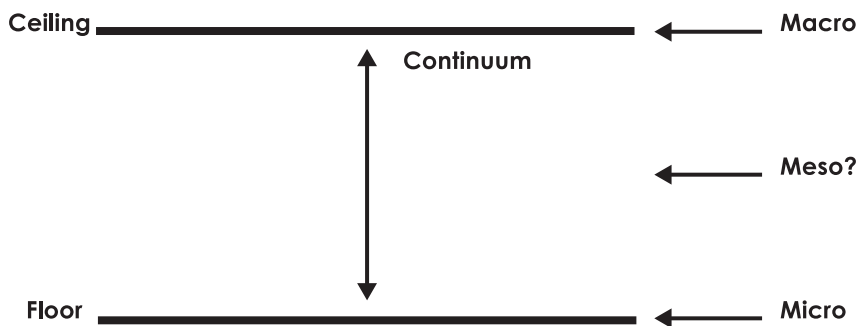
To conclude, micro and macro do not mean anything, or they might mean quite a lot. As analytical tools they might be very handy in order to better understand the social reality, but taking them as something substantive might be very deceptive. I truly believe that the use of micro and macro in sociological analysis is helpful in creating a conceptual order in the chaos of various substantive entities. Yet, we – as scholars – need not to reify it.

1.3 The classics on micro-macro and macro-micro

As pointed out by George Ritzer (1990: 349), the classics of sociology such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, and Mead were very much concerned with the micro-macro linkage. The problem of the relation of individual and his or her experience to the processes of the whole society was preoccupying them because its appropriate tackling would allow to claim that they created a social science – meaning the science of the society – which would help in understanding individuals. In this section, I will briefly present how the relation between micro and macro was theorized by the authors recognized as classics of sociological thought. My arbitrary – though, in my opinion, not controversial – selection of classics includes: Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, George Herbert Mead, and Florian Znaniecki. Much of the discussion of their views on the micro-macro linkage is indebted to authors who were analyzing and sometimes refreshing their ideas, because – what needs to be emphasized at the beginning of this section – the classics were not using the terms "micro" and "macro." This goes along with a postulate, expressed by George Ritzer (1990: 366), that there is a need to rethink the work of theory of the masters in line with the new perspectives on the micro-macro problem. Their interpretations require, as mentioned in the previous section, distilling the micro-macro question from overlapping questions concerning individual-society and agency-structure.

1.3.1 Karl Marx: the structural conditions

Marx's perspective on larger collectives' capability of action started a long tradition of treating as social actors large entities who might be called actors only in an allegorical sense (Hindess 1986: 115). Describing a social class as an actor is a generalization which is actually very similar to describing in the same way a social system. This problem is closer to the debates on agency, and it stems from the fact that Marx's structural approach had a problem with emergence. It was a quite persuasive theory of explaining the micro-level phenomena with their macro conditions – i.e. superstructure of ideology with material ground – but it

lacked the conceptual tools of understanding how micro phenomena could be transformed into macro ones.

Contrary to Hechter (1983) and Ritzer (1990), Layder (2006: 63) interprets Marx as not very much interested in the issue of micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Nevertheless, he still believes that it is possible to find in some of Marx's statements hints on how to resolve the issues of agency and structure, and – by the same token – resolve the issue of the micro and macro. One of the most often repeated quotations of Marx comes from the essay "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon" (Marx 1907: 5): "Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand. The tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living." This quote opens an avenue for thinking about agency as something limited by social circumstances, but also of seeing these circumstances as an aggregated product of actions. Marx was also calling for revolutionary action in order to change social conditions. This element of Marxism is often presented as contradictory to his strong views on structural conditions influencing the situation of individuals. These incongruences are probably also the reason why Marx was so passionately debated among his disciples and his work led to the formation of contradictory schools. What is, for example, in contradiction with calling for revolutionary change of social conditions is another famous quote from Marx, stating that the only freedom which the market gives workers is the freedom to starve (Hechter 1983: 5). Thus, despite possible perspectives on linking micro and macro, the problem of structural explanation of agency and the focus on macro-historical processes make it possible to consider Marx as the father of structural explanations in sociology (Alexander, Giesen 1987: 7; Hechter 1983: 5).

1.3.2 Durkheim: the collective representations

For Émile Durkheim there existed five levels of scientific analysis: the physical, chemical, biological, psychological, and social (Durkheim 1951: 325; Wiley 1988: 255). Durkheim's claim that society is a *sui generis* phenomenon impacted sociological thinking for the entire 20th century. *Sui generis* means that the society is of its own genus and it is impossible to reduce that which is societal to other levels of analysis. This holism under the label of sociologism was a powerful legitimization for sociology at its birth as a science. The macro-level of society required its own discipline, if there was no possibility of its simple reduction to the micro-level of individual's psychology. The sociology of Durkheim mostly considers the individual-society pairing, yet obviously his conceptualization of this relation

had important consequences for the sociological treatment of the micro-macro problem. Both levels require its own scientific disciplines – psychology and sociology respectively – but Durkheim's vision of sociology was of an imperial kind. Sociological level of analysis was, according to him, providing powerful explanations for psychological phenomena. The most striking example was *Suicide* (Durkheim 1951), which was an analysis of social conditions' influence on the most individual and most unexplainable act a human is capable of.

The connection between individual and societal in Durkheim's theory is made through the concept of representations. In his sociology there is no place for the micro-phenomena of interaction (Wiley 1988: 257). On the one hand, collective representations are synthesis of individual representations. But on the other hand, collective representations allow individuals to think, perceive reality, and communicate. The collective representations return to individuals as master categories (Durkheim, Mauss 1963). The lack of interactional level in Durkheim's sociology creates a quite large distance between micro and macro, which makes his conception of micro-macro fragile. There is a place mostly for structural and dispositional explanations in this theory, but the relational explanations are omitted. Another possible link between micro and macro in Durkheim's sociology is the social organization. In case of "primitive" societies, the contact of individual and society through collective representations, strengthened by religion was immediate – mechanical. In case of modern societies having a complicated division of labor, the organic contact of the individual and society was mediated through secondary and occupational groups (Durkheim 1933). This mode of theorizing about society opened the way for groupism, which for a long time was the main sociological perception of social structure. The open question for future theoretical studies and revitalization of old concepts remains: was the issue of anomie – disconnection of an individual from society – an artifact of Durkheim's theoretical framework, or was it rather a genuine social problem? If I am right that Durkheim's theory had a conceptual problem with relations and connecting micro- and macro-levels, then the answer to this question would be that the conception of anomie was an artifact.

1.3.3 Weber: the methodological individualism

Max Weber, praised by so many as one of the founders of sociology, among other important contributions defining sociological debates for more than a century, introduced methodological individualism into the sociological toolkit for understanding the social reality. As Lars Udehn (2001: 97) phrased it: "By way of extreme simplification, I suggest that Weber took methodological individualism

from the Austrian School of Economics, supported it by a neo-Kantian view of concept formation and turned it into subjectivist methodological individualism with the help of Dilthey and Simmel." Max Weber rejected what was foundational for classical sociologists (like Durkheim), being the use of collective concepts such as *Volk*, *Volkgeist*, or "general will." According to him, the German Historical School, influenced by German Romanticism and Hegel, relied on metaphysical concepts, and the study of society and its economy should take as a point of departure individual beliefs (Weber 1975; Udehn 2001: 98). Max Weber was very much influenced by economics (many considered him rather as a historian of economy) and modern economy formed with strong individualistic assumptions. Later in this chapter I will discuss how transferring the developments from the field of economics to the field of sociology contributed to the understanding of the micro-macro relations.

Weber in his promotion of methodological individualism was very critical to all forms of holism, thus the subject of sociology for him was not society but social action (Weber 1978). In fact, the concept of society was recognized by him as useless –it was rather a category of practice, which for scientific inquiries could be reduced to social relations and social institutions (Weber 1971: 36; Udehn 2001: 99). Social action could be studied only with the use of the meaningful understanding method (*Verstehen*). Weber, trained not only in economics and sociology but also in law, treated collective actors (organizations, states, and all possible legal persons) as reducible to the actions of human individuals. Thus, he was fully aware that their actorhood was a category of common practice and the use of language, and therefore that the human individuals under study were the ones to give meanings to the acts of collectives. Individuals attach the meaning to actions of other individuals and take them into consideration when acting – this is constitutional for Weber's use of the concept of social relationship.

Larger social structures exist for Weber only in the sense that individuals attach meaning to them and thus they drive their actions. It could be said that this way of thinking preceded Thomas' theorem (Thomas, Thomas 1928) that defining a situation as real has real consequences. Micro, for Weber, is concentrated mostly on actions of individuals and individuals relating to other individuals. He was not interested in individual-society paring as he refuted the notion of society. The perspective on the micro-macro link was taken by Weber with micro as a point of a departure. The best example are his writings on the emergence of capitalism (Weber 1930; 1978). In essence, in the view of Weber, capitalism as a social formation – understood as the organization of formally free labor in methodical, rational, and disciplined work (Birnbaum 1953: 137) – developed, because a

growing number of merchants began to emphasize this-worldly values. The aggregation of individual actions driven by the motive to earn and then reinvest the profits transformed the whole order of economy. Of course, there were also certain conditions, such as the development of the bureaucratic state, legal citizenship, and complex of military, administrative, and religious factors, that played important role in the process (Collins 1980). Yet, the key element for the emergence of the capitalism were the values which drove the actions of individuals. The unanticipated consequence of these individuals' actions was the reshaping of the organization of economy (Birnbaum 1953). The theory of Max Weber was praised by Alexander and Giesen (1987:15) at the first synthetic formulation of the micro-macro problem. Undoubtedly, his introduction of methodological individualism in order to understand macro-processes was revolutionary for sociological theory.

1.3.4 Simmel: sociability and money

Georg Simmel is conventionally recognized as the founder of the relational approach in sociological theory. His other idea, which later turned in the attempts to resolve sociological pairings, is his processual approach to society. Frank Lechner (1990) claimed that Simmel's focus on individuals, small groups, and relations is consequential for macrosociology. Simmel's study of social differentiation is a study of co-creation of modernity as a macro-phenomenon and individuality as a micro-phenomenon. As he claimed, in society, which is becoming increasingly diverse, a human individual participates in more than just one social circle and enacts numerous social roles (Simmel 1980; Lechner 1990). This process transformed the human individual into an individuality – a coherent entity which is capable of being in these different circumstances.

Simmel rejected the idea that society, understood as aggregation of individuals, is an object of sociological study. For him, the object of sociology was sociability (*Vergesellschaftung*) – a process of continuous interaction between individuals. Simmel was therefore looking at the micro-macro problem from the micro-position and he did not perceive that there exists any kind of *sui generis* macro-entity. Yet, as Lechner (1990: 172) claims, Simmel was interested in studying a larger process that was making the encounters of individuals possible: "Sociability, as specifically social form, is quite independent of either objective (functional, specific) or subjective (psychological, emotional) contents; rather, it is the form of interaction in which individuals from different specialized sphere can engage without having to give up any part of their individual autonomy."

In *The Philosophy of Money* (Simmel 1978), Simmel argued that contacts between individuals require mediation and some sort of standardization. Money,

in his view, is here a perfect tool which serves not only for economic exchanges, but also contributes to the process of individualization, as it makes the human individual more independent from specific collectivities. The work of Simmel is called impressionistic, it usually took the form of essays, and his approach rejected the possibility of creating theoretical systems. Yet, his remarks still include quite a lot of valuable, theoretical framing for the connection between individuals involved in never-ending interactions and exchanges, and larger scale processes. What is interesting for the subject of this book is that Simmel was not only interested in the individual-society pairing, but he also brought into the equation interactions and mediating entities.

1.3.5 Mead: "The self, the I, and the me" – and the society

George Herbert Mead is recognized as a classic thinker for interactionist sociology, symbolic interactionism, and interpretive thinking in the social sciences. For this reason, the references to this author will be found mostly in works of scholars interested in analysis on the micro-level. There is not much to be found in Mead's work on macro-processes and, as Alexander and Giesen (1987: 9) put it, Mead lacked an institutional theory linking the interactions with larger social entities. Yet, as George Ritzer (1990: 349) claims, Mead was also among the founders of sociology who were very much concerned with the micro-macro link in the theory, despite the fact that he was not using this kind of terminology. Mead's biggest concern was how the society shapes different aspects of the human individual constitution, yet in his work there are also remarks on the individuals' influence on society. Thus, in his view it is apparently a feedback mechanism.

In his considerations on the expression of self, Mead highlights that "me" is a member of social group or community, while "I" is expressed in relation with others. "Me" is said to be more sophisticated and suppressing the "I" (Mead 1934: 207). The "self" is a product of the tension between "I" and "me." Thus, a human individual cannot be considered without his or her relation to other individuals and a social group as an important reference. This analysis is well known and was a strong drive for the development of social psychology and micro-oriented sociology. Mead also had some remarks about the impact of an individual on larger social entities, but he did not conduct an in-depth analysis of this part of the micro-macro interdependency.

As to the aforementioned feedback mechanism, Mead (1934: 202) described it in the following words: "The individual, as we have seen, is continually reacting back against this society. Every adjustment involves some sort of change in the community to which the individual adjusts himself." When an individual

is an artist, inventor, or scientist, then – according to Mead – his or her impact on society is stronger: outstanding individuals are even capable of forming society. Mead was mostly interested in the individual-society pairing, or maybe rather – using his words – "individual-community" pairing. Yet, this pairing has consequences for other pairings and passages of Mead's work on realization of self in social situations are also quoted in regards to the agency-structure pairing; thus, they are consequential for the micro-macro pairing. Mead analyzed mostly phenomena occurring on the micro-level – how an individual is shaped in interactions with other individuals and how an individual perceives himself or herself in relation to the society. Yet, he also provided statements about the change on the macro-level. This relation is not theorized by him: he simply states that an individual triggers some (usually) incremental changes of the larger grouping.

1.3.6 Znaniecki: from the attitude to norm and back

According to Norbert Wiley (1988: 260), the most interesting conceptualization of the micro-macro link in classical sociological theory was the one provided by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918) in their work on Polish immigrants to the USA. On the individual level, members of social groups were attributed with subjective attitudes, while on the societal level, were the values – objective elements of culture. This shows that another important sociological pairing which troubled the authors was the subjective-objective. Yet, Thomas and Znaniecki's approach was processual and structurational: they were neither micro- or macro-imperialists. In their view, individual attitudes were in constant interplay with societal values, so "structural closure was never complete" (Wiley 1988: 260). Thomas and Znaniecki, like other classics, were also obsessed with demarcation between disciplines of social sciences. According to them, social psychology was the study of attitudes, while sociology was the study of social values.

The interplay of attitudes and values has, in Thomas and Znaniecki's sociology, consequence for the on-going process of social disorganization and reorganization. In their processual approach there are always individuals with attitudes unfit to the social values causing perpetual social change. Another perspective on the relation between individual and society was presented in Znaniecki's (1934) interest in positive deviance discussed in his book *Ludzie teraźniejsi a cywilizacja przyszłości* [*Contemporary People and the Civilization of the Future*]. According to this conception, some of the individuals not fitting into society – but in a positive and not negative way – are agents of societal reorganization.

1.3.7 Summary

This brief presentation of the classics' vision of the micro-macro link in sociological theory leads to three most important conclusions. Firstly, the micro-macro link, although not defined using this particular terms of micro and macro, was a problem of concern for the classics. They were working hard on understanding how the phenomena that can be noticed on the ground level (acts of individuals and their interactions) are related to larger entities such as society, class, or historical formation. Secondly, for most of the classics, the key sociological pairing was the individual-society, and the key concern was understanding how the individual was connected to society – even if the concept of society was refuted, as in the case of Simmel and Weber. Thirdly, it is possible to find in the works of the classics seeds of all current approaches to dealing with the micro-macro problem in sociological theory. The problem obviously needed to be defined by the use of the micro and macro terminology, which was not known for the classics. The micro-macro framing of levels of analysis migrated to the field of sociology from economics, in which it was coined in the 1930s.

1.4 The 1980s and the debate about the micro-macro link

In the 1980s, after 50 years of theoretical extremism and divides between the macro- and micro-oriented sociologists, a vivid debate about the possible links between the camps took place. As Alexander and Giesen (1987: 3) phrased it, the conflict over reduction – either micro to macro, or macro to micro – was replaced by the search for a linkage between the two. In the 1980s, both American Sociological Association[4] and International Sociological Association[5] organized meetings focusing on micro, macro, and possible bridges between them. There were also several published books and articles dealing with the problem and even publications reviewing the debate. In this section I will briefly describe the theoretical developments of that period (although some of them have earlier beginnings[6]). I will

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4 American Sociological Association, together with German Sociological Association, organized in 1984 a conference in Giessen. The presentations from this conference were published in the collected volume *Micro-Macro Link* edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, Richard Münch and Neil J. Smelser (1987).

5 International Sociological Association during its congress in Mexico, in 1982, organized the symposium the aftermath was a two-volume collection edited by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Horst J. Helle (Eisenstadt, Helle 1985; Helle, Eisenstadt 1985).

6 The European antecedents of Coleman's approach to the micro-macro problem were recently discussed by Werner Raub and Thomas Voss (2017). Other attempts to tackle

also show that the debate successively moved to the focus on the agency-structure problem, which is now at the center of theoretical attention in sociology. As some would argue, macro-extremists such as Talcott Parsons, Ralf Dahrendorf, and Peter Blau, and – on the other side – micro-extremists such as Herbert Blumer, George Homans, and Harold Garfinkel, dominated the sociological theory for half of the century before the 1980s, and their inability to come to terms and link micro and macro was the reason for the theoretical crisis of sociology.

According to a comprehensive summary of the debate by George Ritzer (1990: 348), there were three approaches to tackle the issue of the micro-macro in sociological theory: (1) Attempts to integrate micro and macro theories; (2) attempts to develop a theory that deals in an integrated manner with micro and macro phenomena; and (3) attempts to do both at the same time. Another possible perspective to understand the debate is to look at the starting point that was taken in these attempts. Some authors departed from micro, some from macro, and some tried to avoid taking either of the ends of the continuum as a starting point. To order this section I will refer to the latter – quite simple – typology.

1.4.1 The micro-end perspective

The powerful theoretical attack on the micro-macro issue had strong footing in the economic tradition. The rational choice theory, applied in sociology to explain macro-phenomena using micro-level assumptions on how actors make their decisions, was well-developed by earlier explorations in the field of economics. For example, Mancur Olson (1965) showed that individual interests do not simply translate into the interests of groups or organizations, but they require institutionalized coercion, which works as a mediating mechanism. Another important inspiration came from the work of Thomas Schelling (1969), who modeled how the decisions of individuals may produce the structural effects of segregation.

As one of the important authors of the rational choice camp, Michael Hechter (1983: 9), pointed out, the assumptions about wealth-maximization might be unrealistic and not useful to explain the behaviors of individuals, but they are actually very useful in explaining the aggregated level of macro-social process due to the virtue of canceling the idiosyncratic preferences of individuals. Thus, Hechter (1987) employed rational-choice theory to explain group solidarity. It was done,

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the micro-macro problem are usually embedded in theoretical traditions, which before the 1980s were present in the mainstream sociology in their macro- or micro-extremist form.

in a way, to counter the established sociological tradition, in which norms of solidarity were used rather in order to explain behaviors of individuals. Hechter aimed at showing that this solidarity is a product of interests of individuals.

James Coleman was another prominent member of the camp of sociologists employing assumptions on the rationality of the individual actor in order to tackle the problems of the macro-level. As he phrased it, "a central intellectual problem in the discipline [of social science theory] is the movement from the individual level, where observations are made, to the systemic level, where the problem of interest lies. This has been called 'micro-to-macro problem,' and it is a problem that is pervasive in the social sciences generally" (Coleman 1987: 154). As this shows, for Coleman micro was equal to the individual but macro was on the level of the system and not the society. The system is something broader (but it could also be something on much smaller scale) than society. For example, in Coleman's analyses capitalism was treated as a system but also panic was a system level phenomenon, because it was a system of behaviors. Coleman, in order to explain causal relations involving micro- and macro-levels, was using a diagram, often referred to as "Coleman's boat" or "Coleman's bathtub" (Raub, Voss 2017).

Figure 1.2 Coleman's diagram
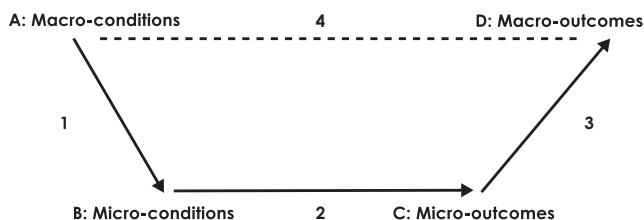
The line of thinking assuming the rationality of individuals was eventually the base for Coleman's (1990) opus magnum *Foundations of Social Theory*, which was planned as a comprehensive theory of all social processes, similar in its ambitions to Talcott Parsons' (1936) *Theory of Social Action*. I will focus on the Coleman's (1987: 156–157) solution to the micro-macro problem by looking at his critique of Ted Gurr's (1970) explanation of revolutions by relative deprivation. Coleman placed improved social conditions in his bathtub-diagram as macro-conditions which when deteriorating caused frustration (as micro-conditions). The frustration of individuals was causing their aggression (micro-outcomes), which – according to Ted Gurr – was supposed to produce an aggregated effect

of revolution (macro-outcome). Coleman (1987: 157) ridiculed this causal explanation by saying that it supposed "a simple aggregation of individual aggression somehow to magically produce a social product (that is, revolution)." What Coleman pointed to as missing in this mechanism was social organization or, in cases of other failed micro-macro causal explanations, the lack of institution. The properly identified institution is therefore a mediating mechanism allowing the transition from individual to systemic level – a simple aggregation of individual behavior was not enough for him. According to Coleman, a good example of institution as a mechanism explaining the transition from the individual to systemic level was the political institution of electoral system, which may differently translate voters' preferences into victory in the elections.

It is also worth highlighting that Coleman's understanding of the micro and macro notions was analytical in a way that he placed on the micro-level all entities and processes that are directly observable. On the macro-level, he saw "hidden" important entities and processes which exist but are not directly observable. Here, the pairing of micro and macro has also its methodological dimension.

Raymond Boudon (1979) saw sociology as a science close to economics – because it applied individualistic methodology – and close to history – because it was interested in banal matter and individual facts. Yet, what – according to him – made sociology different from economics was its attempt to develop a general theory of action. The difference between sociology and history lied in the use of individual facts to search for general structures. In Boudon's approach to the micro-macro link (to a great extent overlapping with the interest in the agency-structure dilemma), the point of departure was an individual actor and rationality of his or her choices. Boudon (1998), however, highlighted the limitations of the rational choice approach – especially in Coleman's formulation. Boudon was also reinterpreting Durkheim's work not as holism but relational realism. In his friendly understanding, the scientific program of Durkheim (also applied by Boudon) was to study the complex influence of the structure of interaction systems on actions and emotions of actors participating in these systems. This shows a feedbacking mechanism between actions of individuals (micro-level) and systems of interactions (macro-level). In this line of interpretation, anomie or division of labor are not simply societal-level mysterious forces, but unintended effects of aggregation of individual actions (Boudon 1979; 1982). Thus, in Boudon's linking of micro and macro sociology, the center of analysis was an individual actor, whose actions were possible to be explained by relation to the structure of interaction system.

An entirely different attempt to link micro with macro from the micro-end was taken by scholars from the interactionist school of thought. Karin Knorr-Cetina

(1981), in the introduction to the volume on integration of micro- and macro-sociologies (Knorr-Cetina, Cicourel 1981), stated that the micro-macro debate was dominated by the methodological dichotomy of methodological individualism versus methodological collectivism (holism). According to her, the solution to the problem was the methodological situationism embedded in the theoretical tradition derived from Simmel and Mead. Knorr-Cetina's understanding of the micro-macro division was quite simple. In her view, macro-sociology was the study of society, social institutions, or socio-cultural change on an aggregated level, while micro-sociology was interested in self, routines, conversations, and situations (Knorr-Cetina 1981: 1). The momentum to the development of micro-level theories was given by the cognitive turn, thanks to which social order is not understood as a normative and given order, but as order constructed by active and knowing subjects. The process of constructing the order manifests itself through every-day encounters, interactions, or routines of individuals. To study this phenomenon, according to Knorr-Cetina (1981: 8), the most suitable is methodological situationism, in which the interaction in social situation is treated as the relevant unit of analysis. In comparison to methodological individualism (so important for other micro-end attempts to micro-macro dilemma), methodological situationism is assumed not to be reductionist. This line of micro-sociological analysis takes into account that participants of situations make references to institutional arrangements of macro-scale which cannot be reduced to the level of interactions (Knorr-Cetina 1981: 12). In this way, methodological situationism is seen as a "third way" and a possible solution to the micro-macro dilemma translated by Knorr-Cetina as methodological individualism versus methodological collectivism dichotomy: "methodological situationism promoted in micro-sociological research challenges methodological individualism for the simplifying assumption that the locus of social action is the individual human being, and it challenges methodological collectivism for the equally simplifying and presumably related assumption that interview responses, or data in the form of reports and organizational records, constitute direct, valid sources of macroscopic inferences" (Knorr-Cetina 1981: 15). Going further, Knorr-Cetina states that there are three possible ways of reconstructing the macro-sociology from the micro-perspective. The first one is to treat macro-phenomena as aggregations and repetitions of micro-episodes (Knorr-Cetina 1981: 25) and, according to her, it is the approach of Randall Collins (see Collins 1981b). The second way is to treat macro-phenomena as unintended consequences emerging from the micro-events (Knorr-Cetina 1981: 27). Knorr-Cetina believes that Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration is an example of that approach. It is also possible to include here Boudon's (1982)

earlier-discussed conception of perverse effects as another example of this line of reasoning. What needs to be underlined, is that these two approaches treat the micro- and macro-levels not just analytically but also substantially. If macro is an aggregation of many micros or an unintended consequence of many micros, then the differentiation is of empirical character. Yet, Knorr-Cetina (1981: 30) favors the "third way" of reconstructing the macro-sociology from the micro-perspective, which she calls "the representation hypothesis." According to this perspective, "macro appears no longer as *particular layers* of social reality *on top* of micro-episodes composed of their interrelations (macro-sociologies), their aggregation (aggregation hypothesis), or their unforeseen effects (hypothesis of unintended consequences). Rather, it is seen to reside *within* these micro-episodes where it results from the *structuring practices* of agents" (Knorr-Cetina 1981: 34). Thus, according to this perspective, only micro-level entities such as individuals or encounters are substantial. Macro-level entities are representations constructed by actors involved in micro-level which have a different ontological status, yet they are often reified, treated as real, and having real consequences. Thus, only because a small group of people interacting together in a room is treated as the government of the state, their actions may be represented as acts of the state and have consequences for many other similar scale meetings.

Randall Collins was another author who took part in the 1980s debate on the micro-macro problem in sociological theory. He too represented the micro-end perspective with his approach of radical micro-sociology (Collins 1981a). According to this approach, only the translation of macro-concepts into aggregates of micro-events makes them fully empirical (Collins 1981a: 984). There are only three pure macro-variables which cannot be reduced to micro-events: time, space, and number (Collins 1981b: 98). All other variables of an alleged macro-level are reducible to micro-reality: "structural variables often turn out to be sheer numbers of people in various kinds of micro situations" (Collins 1981b: 99). Thus, according to Collins, only the reality of interactions between individuals is empirically researchable – and this is the only kind of social reality. The variables or concepts of the macro-level are of different ontological status – they are not real per se, although participants of interactions make references to these macro-concepts.

Building on the propositions presented in his work *Conflict Sociology* (Collins 1975), Collins listed four main types of macro-references made in social situations: individual micro-histories, situational macro-views, pure macro-variables, and analysts' macro-comparisons (Collins 1981b). The individual micro-histories are implicit macro-references – in many micro-situations the

participants refer to some broader segments of time or space, which are external to a given situation. The pure macro-variables of time, space, and number are abstract, yet they allow to construct temporal, numerical, or spatial aggregations of micro-experiences. This kind of aggregations is constitutive, according to Collins (1981b: 99), for the macro-level of analysis. The fourth type of macro-reference is different from the first three types: analysts' macro-comparisons refer to the frames of situations, while the first three types are within these frames (Collins 1981b: 101). Humans have the analytical ability to compare various situations, and by virtue of this ability they are also able to create macro-concepts. Sociology is a special case of this ability: sociologists produce macro-concepts by comparing micro-situations, even though some of them seem to believe that they discover some hidden variables, and not simply produce them in concrete micro-situations of doing the actual analysis.

Randall Collins' approach to the micro-macro issue is one of the most advanced products of the interactionist tradition represented by authors such as Herbert Blumer, George Homans, Erving Goffman, Emmanuel Schlegoff, or Harald Garfinkel. This stream of theorizing about micro and macro did not have such a powerful legitimizing ally in economics as the rational choice approach. Yet, the interactionist tradition is still influential for the micro-macro debate because it was an important inspiration for authors attempting to develop the dialectical conception of linking micro with macro. But before I will turn to the scholars who wanted to link micro with macro from the middle, I will briefly discuss the theoretical positions of authors who attempted at tackling the dilemma from the macro-end: Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, and Jeffrey Alexander.

1.4.2 The macro-end perspective

Jürgen Habermas, a social philosopher influential for the sociological imagination of the late 20th century, started with the materialist inspiration of Karl Marx in order to integrate the system theory with action theory. For Habermas (1975), the micro-level is the level of action, while the macro-level is the level of the system. The lifeword is the level, where "participants in communication come to an understanding with one another about something" (Habermas 1984: 337). Communication is the requirement of action, as emphasized in the title of Habermas' (1984) opus magnum *The Theory of Communicative Action*. What is important is that the two levels of Habermas' theory are not only analytically constructed: the difference between them is of existential character (Ritzer 1990: 354). The lifeword and the system are different modes of organization of action. In the lifeword, social actors communicate with each other by referring to what

is common for them thanks to everyday experience. The system is more abstract as it develops because of the growing complexity of institutions of power and expert systems. Habermas noticed that the system is colonizing the lifeword. The lifeword and the system are organized around different principles of social integration: the lifeword is organized around communicative understanding, while the system is organized around markets and institutions of power. The system developed in an evolutionary way – which is a Marxist inspiration – because of the changes in the organization of production but, contrary to the Marx's thesis that the base determines the superstructure, the lifeword has its own dynamics (Habermas 1975). Of course, lifeword in Habermas' theory is not equal to the superstructure. In some interpretations, it may be treated as a conceptualization of the micro-level, while the system is considered to be a conceptualization of the macro-level (Knorr-Cetina 1981; Layder 2006; Ritzer 1990). Nevertheless, the most important concern of Habermas is the paring of agency and structure. And when tackling his enormous work from this perspective, both the lifeword and the system may be treated as structures for action, but organized around different principles of coordination: either communicative understandings or abstracted institutional mediations.

Niklas Luhmann is another figure listed among theorists who tackled the micro-macro problem. Being mostly interested in autopoietic systems, this author was also looking at the problem from the macro-end. Luhmann (1987) argued that the distinction between interaction and society as systems is of an empirical character, while the distinction between them as levels of analysis is of a logical character. The use of levels helps, according to Luhmann, in excluding self-references and, as a result, putting aside the tautologies and paradoxes. In that sense, Luhmann found the distinction between micro and macro useful for reducing complexity in the description of objects. Microprocesses, in Luhmann's theory, are existential needs to reduce complexity (Alexander, Giesen 1987: 34). Yet, the crucial distinction for Luhmann was the one between systems of society (which could be somehow equalized with the macro-level) and interaction (which could be somehow equalized with the micro-level). Thus, societies encompass all operations that have qualities of communication, while interactions – as systems – take into account also the fact that some communications are from outside the system. For interactions, persons are devices used in defining the system boundaries (Luhmann 1987: 114).

Jeffrey Alexander was one of the leaders of the 1980s debate on the micro-macro link and he represented the view from the macro-end. Alexander became known as the theorist of the social system and scholar attempting to revive

the tradition of Talcott Parsons. In his interpretation, Parsons' approach to the micro-macro problem was a synthetic formulation comparable to Max Weber's contribution to sociological theory. It is an obvious exaggeration and many authors who tried to tackle the micro-macro issue from the micro-perspective (i.e. Hechter 1983) either adopted the integrative approach (Ritzer 1990) or simply treated Parsons as a macro-extremist or macro-chauvinist, who was "explaining social reality in terms of actions that become institutionalized to meet fundamental system needs" (Turner 2010c: 3). Yet, according to Alexander and Giesen (1987: 22–24), Parsons managed to link micro and macro thanks to the notions of internationalization and social role. In my opinion, this of course is a link between micro and macro, yet through this link the conditions from the macro-level are simply transmitted into the micro-level phenomena, i.e. actions of individuals are explained with the fact that they internalized broader norms. Keeping in mind that micro- and macro-levels are analytical categories, it is not possible to solve such disputes.

Alexander's perspective on the micro-macro problem starts from the macro-end because he first looks at systems as action collective environments. Regardless of all the stipulations, micro is for Alexander a level of action, whereas macro is the level of the system. In his view, the problem of the micro-macro divide was a consequence of the lack of holistic sociological theory. Previous to him, macro-theorists were trying to build theories only about one particular system and one particular action mode. Therefore, authors dealing with system of economy were assuming the action as strategic, cultural theorists for whom culture was a systemic environment assumed action as typification, and social movement theorists assumed an inventive mode of action (Alexander 1987: 31). According to Alexander, these are just some variables, which require integration into one larger theory.

Alexander attempted at building a theory bridging the micro- and macro-levels, and he stated that action (the micro-level) and collective environment (the macro-level) are mutually producing themselves: "The collective environments of action simultaneously inspire and confine it. If I have conceptualized action correctly, these environments will be seen as its products; if I can conceptualize the environments correctly, action will be seen as their result" (Alexander 1987: 303). This statement resembles Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration, according to which actions reproduce structure, while structure influences actions. To some extent, the approach of Alexander is a bit more sophisticated, and it could be interpreted as a kind of analogy to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle: if theory starts to be built from the conceptualization of action, then the collective environments will be inevitably seen as products of action, while if the

theorizing begins with a description of systems or environments then actions will be seen as their consequences. The only way out of this quibble – although not pointed by Alexander – would be to start building the theory not from the micro or macro end. Yet is it possible? George Ritzer (1990) claimed that this is what Bourdieu, Giddens, and he himself at least attempted to do by starting to apply the dialectical approach and building the theory from the middle of the micro-macro continuum.

1.4.3 The dialectical perspective

There will be much more space devoted to the thought of Pierre Bourdieu in Chapter 2, in which I discuss his theory of field. Here, however, I am only going to briefly discuss how his concept of habitus is regarded as a solution for linking micro with macro. Micro, for Bourdieu, is an individual with his or her will, while macro is a structure of positions. In this sense, the macro could be the whole society but also a field, which in the next chapter I will be discussing as a social space on the meso-level of analysis.[7] The distinction between micro and macro is for Bourdieu (1981: 305) similar to distinctions between events and long *durée* or the great man and collective forces.

One important caveat is that, according to Bourdieu himself, the theoretical tools he uses are understandable only in relations between them and only in the context of the whole theoretical system they constitute (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 96). Yet, I am not subscribing myself to the chapel of Bourdiean zealots, and – like other interpreters – I allow myself to take only a part of his theory to present here. Bourdieu is often said to be trying to reconcile his two main theoretical inspirations – existentialism and structuralism. In this sense, it might be said that Bourdieu was concerned mostly with the subjectivism-objectivism dualism, but in the most prominent interpretations, this allowed him to contribute to solving the agency-structure dichotomy (O'Donnell 2010b; Ritzer 2010). Again, it is justified to discuss his work in the context of micro- and macro-levels of analysis, because Bourdieu was very much interested in individuals' biographies (existentialist influence), shaped by and opposed to societal forces (structurationist influence). Bourdieu focused on notions of social practice and habitus as theoretical tools serving the objective of getting rid of what he believed to be, the false dichotomy of subjective and objective.

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7   It should not be forgotten that these distinctions are of an analytical level, so from one perspective one level of analysis might be meso, while from the other it might be macro.

Habitus is defined[8] as a "socially constituted system of structured and structuring dispositions acquired in practice and constantly aimed at practical functions" (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 121). Habitus, as an attribute of an individual, is a product of structures, but it also shapes the practices of an individual, thus feed-backing the structures – the dispositions are both structured and structuring: "there would be no game without belief in the game and without the wills, intentions and aspirations which actuate the agents; these impulses, produced by the game, depend on the agents' positions in the game" (Bourdieu 1981: 308). The structure of the game produces aspirations of individuals, who then "really" love something or "really" desire to achieve something. By these acts aiming at fulfilling their desires and aspirations, individuals contribute to the reproduction of the structure of the game which, in turn, influences them. The habitus is, therefore, neither free will, nor simply the determined product of external societal forces.

Critics of Bourdieu claim that he was not able to get out from structural determinism. In his view, biography is an illusion shaped by social forces (Bourdieu 1998). Habitus often seems to be fixed by social structures and then to disable its bearer from the possibility of changing the position in a given field. On the other hand, habitus is a dynamic structure which changes with time and new situations faced by individuals. Bourdieu's conception of habitus – at least in my opinion – did not provide a solution to the micro-macro issue, and the notion of habitus to a great extent resembles internalized norms in the functional theory. Nevertheless, Bourdieu to a large degree inspired the debate on agency and structure, as well as the micro-macro link, by pointing to the need of dialectical, not dichotomous, understanding of agency-structure and micro-macro. Next, I will present Giddens' theory of structuration which has two main similarities with the theory of Bourdieu: focus on the reproduction of structures by action, and focus on social practices.

Antony Giddens (1984) created an eclectic sociological theory of structuration explained in his key work *Constitution of Society*. Giddens' interpreters agree that his main theoretical objective was to resolve the agency-structure problem in sociological theory. Yet, since – as the guiding frame of this chapter assumes – the agency-structure pairing has important overlaps with the micro-macro pairing, the structuration theory brings strong insights into the micro-macro issue. Giddens is an influential theorist, and his conceptions cover the most important

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8   It is important to remember that Bourdieu was against explicit definitions of concepts, which for him was a positivists fallacy in sociology.

subjects of the current sociological inquiries, which makes it simply impossible to discuss all his thoughts in this one chapter. Giddens inspirations are very diverse. He seriously discussed Marxism, he was critical but knowledgeable about structural functionalism, he revisited Durkheim's methodology and clashed it with interpretive ones (Giddens 1976). Nevertheless, Giddens' most important influence was his teacher, Norbert Elias. The novelty in the approach of Giddens – although the influence of Elias here is quite visible – lies in the rejection of the discussion about the agency-structure, either from the action or from the structure (or order, or system) perspectives. All theories built on strong assumptions about the system-level influence on individuals end up quite weak when dealing with individuals reflexivity. At the same time, approaches focused on individuals or situations have serious problems in taking broader social structures into account. Giddens (1984) starts with an assumption that action is in a dialectical relation with structure, and that it is impossible to simply claim that structure determines action, or that action determines structure. Agency and structure are co-creating each other, so the individual is confronted with social structures, systems, and institutions which limit his or her choices. Yet, every action of the individual reproduces the structure and has a potential for its slight transformation. Giddens (1984) avoided starting either from the micro- or the macro-end by putting in the center of analysis social practices. They are not just experiences of individuals (micro-end) or social totality (macro-end): social practices are recursive activities continuously recreated by actors. In this sense, they are expanding from a single actor but also from a single situation, which was the key focus for micro-oriented authors such as Knorr-Cetina, Cicourel, or Collins. At the micro-level, Giddens is interested in individuals who are capable of agency, if they are able to make a difference in the world. At the macro-level, Giddens (1984: 17) talks about social systems, which are "reproduced relations between actors or collectives organized as regular social practices." Structure, in Giddens' view, is understood as rules and resources which allow practices to exist in different places and moments of time; structure binds together actors and systems. The structure is not external to individuals, because it exists only through their actions,[9] thus enabling practices and linking together agentic individuals with social systems. This takes place through the process of structuration, which is an everyday reproduction of structure by action. Social structure is, therefore, both the medium and the outcome of an action. It allows individuals to act, but it also

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9   It may be seen this way from the perspective of an analyst, but social actors treat social constructions as external and real (Berger, Luckmann 1967).

constrains their actions. Individuals by actions on the micro-level co-create social systems (macro-level entities), which are usually unintended consequences of individuals' actions. These unintended consequences of previous actions become conditions for future actions. In this line of theorizing, Giddens is actually not that far from Boudon (1982) or Coleman (1990), who also recognized the aggregation of unintended consequences as mechanism binding micro with macro (see Mica 2015). The main concern for Giddens is the relation between agency and structure. The pairing of micro-macro is for him only a background, but the strong focus on the dialectics between agency and structure also helps to understand the micro-macro relation in dialectical terms.

George Ritzer did not only summarize the discussion about the micro-macro link (see Ritzer 1990; 2010), but also developed his own theory linking micro and macro. First presented in his book *Toward an Integrated Sociological Paradigm* (Ritzer 1981), the theory was repeated and slightly upgraded in many of his later writings, especially in the numerous editions of his handbooks of sociological theory (see Ritzer 2010). According to Ritzer's so-called integrated sociological paradigm, the micro- and macro-level are in dialectical relation, and it is not possible to understand one without its relation to the other. Ritzer (1995) exemplified this dialectic with the idea of personal troubles being always in relation to public issues.[10] Troubles of many individuals may translate into the issues of public concern and, conversely, the concerns of the public policy may have an impact on the personal experiences of individuals. In Ritzer's integrated sociological paradigm, the dimension (Ritzer always highlights that micro-macro is rather a continuum and not a dichotomy) is crosscut with the subjective-objective continuum.[11] Thanks to this maneuver, Ritzer (2010: 503) developed four major levels of analysis: I. Macro-objective (i.e. society, law, bureaucracy, architecture, technology, language); II. Macro-subjective (i.e. culture, norms, and values); III. Micro-objective (i.e. patterns of behavior, action, and interaction); and IV. Micro-subjective (i.e. perceptions, beliefs, various facets of the social construction of reality). The difference between the objective and the subjective in Ritzer's approach actually equals the difference between the

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10 Another dichotomy of personal troubles and public issues was initially formulated by Charles W. Mills (1959).

11 To treat micro-macro as a continuum is quite persuasive, but to treat the subjective-objective as continuum is highly controversial from the ontological point of view. From a deeper reading of Ritzer's works, it seems that he simply does not use the terminology consequently and does not pay attention whether the subjective-objective is a dichotomy or continuum.

material and the mental. Dialectical relations, according to Ritzer (2010: 503), occur between all four levels of analysis, so in their graphical representation there are six arrows symbolizing all possible connections. Ritzer's approach to the micro-macro issue is not particularly innovative: he only states that the dialectical relation between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis needs to be taken into consideration, and sees this magical formula as a solution of the entire problem. Also, his adding of the subjective-objective dimension does not bring much novelty to the debate. Nevertheless, it is necessary to credit Ritzer for his great work in reviewing the debate on micro-macro and clarifying the most important statements of its participants.

1.5 Linking micro and macro via meso

In this section I will briefly discuss two other approaches to the micro-macro link which are strongly rooted in the 1980s debate but, at the same time, they depart from it. I will summarize the conceptions of Anselm Strauss, David R. Maines, Jonathan H. Turner and Derek Layder.

1.5.1 Is there a meso in between micro and macro?

Having established that micro and macro are ends of a continuum, and that they are of analytical – not substantial – character, it is possible to start to speculate about what is in between them. In this section, I present some of the authors who used the term "meso," and I attempt to evaluate whether these uses had any application for the debate on the micro-macro pairing.

Jerald Hage (1980), in his work on the sociology of organizations, distinguished three levels: micro, meso, and macro. On the micro-level, he placed social positions and groups, while on the macro-level, multi-organization and task environment. The focus of his interest – organization – was placed on the meso-level,[12] because it was a set of social positions and groups (micro-level entities) operating (quite often as a part of a multi-organization) in some kind of a task environment, supplying it with input and receiving its output. What is interesting in this categorization, which with its functionalist position is now rather outdated, is that Hage's phenomena from three levels are, on one hand, irreducible, and that – on the other hand – it is not possible to understand organizational processes without taking into account the processes from micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis. In this approach, micro, meso, and macro are not only

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12 Also O'Donnell (2010b) saw organization as located on the meso-level of analysis.

treated as analytical categories, but they are also labels for categories of entities of various size and dynamics.

The search for the mesostructure (Maines 1982) and negotiated orders (Strauss 1978) was another attempt from the micro-end to find a solution for the micro-macro dilemma. Anselm Strauss, a disciple of Herbert Blumer and co-founder of grounded theory, started with the empirical assumption that social actors are continuously involved in negotiations, yet the negotiations cannot be understood only in the context of given interaction. The theoretical aim is not to reconstruct the macro-concepts from the micro-perspective but to look for the context which allows to understand interactions of individuals and the influence of macro-structures. The key notion of this approach is the one of social order. Strauss did not have an ambition to reduce macro-structures to aggregations or unintended consequences of micro-events. For him it was important that macro-structures are treated by actors as given, so they are elements of social reality. Yet, actors never experience the structural context as such – it is always mediated by the negotiations context (Strauss 1978: 237), which should be treated as a meso-structure and the proper level of analysis (Maines 1982). David R. Maines (1982: 278) claimed that this is the most adequate level of analysis which should replace the antiquated divide between micro and macro. Strauss attempted at reconciling not only microscopic interactions and macroscopic structural problems, but also the tension between cooperation and conflict. According to him, all negotiations consist of elements of actual or potential conflict and cooperation (Strauss 1978: 250), and therefore social orders are always at the same time negotiated but also coerced (Strauss 1978: 262). Although the notion of negotiated order was originally developed with the aim to understand the interactions between individuals in the context of the organization of a psychiatric hospital (Strauss et al. 1963), it was later applied to study other kind of negotiations, i.e. diplomatic negotiations. Maines (1982: 275) defined the negotiated orders "as forms of labor, [which] contain dialectical activity in which the human subject constitutes and in turn is constituted by a social object." Thus, the mesostructure is a context which exceeds the given situation of negotiations, but it is closer to social actors than the overall structural context. In this sense, the notion of mesostructure resembles the notion of social field, which I am going to discuss in Chapter 2.

George Ritzer (1990: 358) commented in his summary of the 1980s debate on the micro-macro dilemma that meso-level perspectives might not be sufficient to explain the marco-level and micro-level phenomena. According to him, authors calling for meso-level analyses still needed to demonstrate that they are capable of providing a satisfactory integration of sociological theory. The well-developed

48

approaches to the micro-macro dilemma which matured after the 1980's debate will be presented in the next two chapters. What I would like to add here as a comment is that the development of the meso-perspective could also achieve its own dynamics. This means that the meso-level might be treated not only as a direction of integrating micro with macro, but as a level of analysis valuable and sufficient by itself. It is an attractive level of analysis for authors who are not interested in the micro-realm of individuals or interactions but also do not have the ambitions of explaining macro-structures or macro-processes.

1.5.2 Turner: corporate and categoric units

In the recent years, Turner (2010a; 2010b; 2010c) has built a grand sociological theory which, according to him, "is close to doing what *no other* sciences has done: explain all levels of its operative universe theoretically" (Turner 2016: 146). As he explains, the levels of social realm are embedded in each other, and thus the macro-level through the meso-level constrains the micro-level encounters and emotions released during these encounters. It is important to remember that Turner declares himself as neither a "macro chauvinist" or "micro chauvinist," but he simply focuses on top-down relations between the levels – according to him, general sociological theory needs to deliver top-down and bottom-up explanations of relations between the levels of analysis (Turner 2016: 123).[13] Turner lists the following macro realms: inter-societal systems, societies, institutional domains, and stratification systems. On the meso-level, there are corporate units and categorical units. Eventually, on the micro realm there are encounters of individuals.

Thus, in each society (but also across societies, in the world of global relations) there are two macro realms: institutional domains and stratification system. The most important institutional domains are: kinship, economy, polity, law, religion,

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13 In this respect, Turner's theoretical strategy is similar to the one deployed by Ralf Dahrendorf (1959), who believed that society is Janus-headed, with one face of conflict better explained by coercion theory, and the other face better explained by integration theory. Dahrendorf focused on conflict and developed the coercion theory of society, yet he admitted it is only a part of the Janus-head. Jonathan H. Turner similarly admits that in order to understand social phenomena we need to have top-down and bottom-up theories, but he focuses on developing the top-down approach. The full and detailed presentation of Turner's (2010a; 2010b; 2010c) grand theory integrating micro-, meso-, and macro-levels is presented in his monumental three volume work entitled *Theoretical Principles of Sociology*. Its first volume focuses on macrodynamics, the second one on microdynamics, and third on mesodynamics.

49

education, science, medicine, sport, and arts – each having its distinctive symbolic media. Stratification systems are "built up from unequal distribution of valued resources that are distributed unequally by the divisions of labor in corporate units within institutional domains" (Turner 2016: 130).

Corporate units – from the most interesting in this section meso-level of social reality – are groups, organizations, and communities, and they reveal the division of labor. The second kind of units of the meso-level are categoric units "composed by members defined by traits or characteristics" (Turner 2016: 125): gender, ethnicity, age, religion etc. All encounters (the micro realm) occur on the ground of some corporate unit – i.e. two individuals interact in their workplace, which is an organization, and most often deploy expectations and valuations based on category membership.

In Turner's theory, meso-level realms are unequal. Corporate units are quite concrete and sometimes of a relatively small size (social groups, organizations, or local communities), while categorical units might be quite abstract and broad (for example, ethnicity). Yet, corporate units may also be of an enormous size – like international corporations – whereas categorical units may also be very small in size, like small in numbers ethnic or legal categories. Turner perceives them as meso-level realms, because they are directly constraining that which, according to his theorization, is on the micro-level: encounters between individuals, who take into account the categories that the partners they encounter – always in the frame of some corporate unit – belong to. Turner's approach is, probably, the last attempt at building a grand theory in sociology: his overwhelming work *Theoretical Principles of Sociology* contains three volumes and more than 1,200 pages (Turner 2010a; 2010b; 2010c). Its trick in linking micro and macro lies in the assumption that categoric and corporate units are on the meso-level. Keeping in mind that this differentiation is only of an analytical character, Turner's solution may be criticized as shuffling with the placing of units on various levels of analysis.

1.5.3 Layder: social domains

Derek Layder (2006), in his book *Understanding Social Theory*, which was first published in 1994, describes the debate on micro-macro as one of the most important attempts to understand sociological theories. His comments and interpretations of other scholars' stances on the micro-macro dilemma were cited by me earlier in this chapter. Here, I am going to briefly discuss Layder's own original conception of social domains. Although Layder did not use the term "meso," I include him in the category of theorists that construct additional levels between

50

micro and macro in order to link them, which is why I present his conception in this section. Layder (2006) proposes to differentiate four domains of sociological analysis. He rejects both thinking in dualist terms (such as micro-macro, individual-society, or agency-structure) and attempts to integrate these dual oppositions. According to him, social reality consists of four various domains: psychobiography, situated activity, social settings, and contextual resources. This distinction spans from the more intimate to the more impersonal and distant aspects of social reality. The domains stretch across time and space, and are connected through social relations of power. The domain of psychobiography is built on the unique experiences of a person obtained in the course of his or her life trajectory. The next domain listed by Layder is the domain of situated activity framing episodes, situations, and social interactions. Layder (2006: 279) defines situated activity as "a subtle and complex amalgam of the powers, emotions and mutual influences of multiple individuals that unfolds in the real time of the encounter." This domain, according to Layder, is crucial (but not exclusive) for production of meaning. The third domain is the domain of social settings, which pertain to the environment for situated activity. Layder (2006: 280) as examples of social settings lists formal organizations, as well as informal networks which, according to him, are "local aggregations of reproduced social relations, positions and practices." The fourth domain is the domain of contextual resources which have two aspects: material and cultural. According to Layder (2006: 281), the cultural aspect of contextual resources has some similarity to the concept of cultural system in Talcott Parsons' (1936) theory, although it is less strictly coupled and includes various sorts of cultural codes. Layder's attempt at providing a new theoretical solution to the problem of three main dualisms in sociology (individual-society, agency-structure, and micro-macro) did not attract much attention of other scholars. His book is rather praised for being a well-done analysis of other theorists' work than for being an original contribution to the discussion. In my opinion, the problem in Layder's theoretical proposal lies in the fact that he did not provide any useful meso-level or mechanism linking micro and macro. As a matter of fact, his proliferation of levels of analysis (into the four domains) only made things more complicated.

1.6 Concluding remarks

The aim of this chapter has been to present the classical and the most influential approaches to the problem of the micro- and macro-levels of analysis in sociological theory. I have compared the micro-macro pairing with other important for sociological theory pairings, such as individual-society and agency-structure.

I have also discussed the inspiration coming from the field of economics to distinguish these two levels of analysis. The distinction between micro and macro (as well as the meso or more levels, if they are introduced) is a distinction of an analytical character, although many theorists saw it as something empirical – sometimes because they built on different theoretical assumptions, sometimes because they confused micro-macro with the two other pairings (individual-society and agency-structure).

I have presented the stances of classical sociologists (Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, Mead, and Znaniecki), which might be interpreted as their views on micro and macro. Although they did not use the micro-macro terminology, they can be seen as antecedents of all current approaches to the issue. I have also presented, what I called, the 1980s debate on the micro-macro link. The actual debate began before the 1980s and was continued also in the later years, nevertheless, the 1980s were a time of particular focus on solving the problem of reconciling the micro-macro dichotomy in sociological theory. The debate concerned also the agency-structure pairing, which is still a crucial problem for sociological theory.

In the last section of the chapter, I have discussed attempts to link micro with macro, not through some kind of mechanism or by reduction, but by establishing a level (or levels) of analysis between them, referred to by some theorists as the meso-level. In this section I have presented theoretical achievements which were accomplished mostly during the 1980s debate, but also a later theory of Jonathan H. Turner (2010c). In my opinion, however, the ideas of Turner are a product of this debate and might be recognized, next to Ritzer's (2010) work, as a kind of its summary.

The reason why I have not discussed network theorists, who have already been involved in the debates on micro-macro in the discussed period, is that I do this in a separate chapter devoted to social networks in the latter part of my work (Chapter 3). It is the same in the case of social field theory – initiated by works of Pierre Bourdieu already in the 1970s and by the institutional sociology of organizations in the 1980s – which I discuss in Chapter 2. Both social network theory and social field theory were already mentioned in the 1980s debate, but they were far from its mainstream. I devote to these two approaches separate chapters, because I believe they represent the main change that took place in sociological theory since the 1980s debate: social networks and social field are now key concepts of sociological mainstream theory, and this is where it is now necessary to look for hints on how to understand the connections between the micro- and macro-level social processes.

In the summary of this chapter, there is one more thing that needs to be mentioned about the relations between the micro-macro pairing and the individual-society and agency-structure pairings in sociological theory: it is the dynamics of the development of sociological theorizing. The classics were preoccupied with the individual-society pairing. They wanted to understand how these two realities influence each other. Later, after economists with their division to micro-economics and macro-economics influenced the way sociologists started to categorize levels of their analysis, the center of the debate was on the micro-macro dichotomy. The 1980s were the peak of the interest in micro and macro, but already at this time many theorists focused on tackling the agency-structure pairing. I disagree with Ritzer (2010), who claimed that American sociologists were mostly interested in the micro-macro pairing while the European sociologists focused on the agency-structure pairing. Both American and European sociologists were equally active in dealing with the micro-macro issue, as well as the agency-structure issue. Similarly, as it is possible to interpret classical thought on the individual-society pairing in terms of the micro-macro pairing, it is now possible to interpret the still "hot" sociological debate on agency-structure in terms of the micro-macro pairing. The interest in the individual-society pairing would now seem outdated, which is a sign of development in the theory. I claim that shifts in focus on various pairings are a good base for a valuable periodization of the development of sociological theory: first, the theory was interested in individual-society as two realities; then, it was mostly concerned with micro-macro as two levels of analysis; now, the central issue is agency-structure. There is still a quite large theoretical production on the micro-macro link, but I believe this divide has already been reconciled. The approaches to linking micro with macro (sometimes using meso-level of analysis) are in the mainstream of the theory, and both micro-chauvinists and macro-chauvinists (to use Turner's terminology) are on its margins.

The key objective of the present book is to understand the problem of the sociological vacuum and for this reason, it is still necessary to present and summarize discussions on levels of analysis. I believe that the proper understanding of relations between various (micro, macro and maybe meso) levels of analysis will help in a deeper discussion of the empirical findings, which are often interpreted with reference to the sociological vacuum conception.

2 Social fields: the meso-level of analysis

2.1 Introduction

The field theory is praised to be the one of the most important theoretical contributions made in sociology in the past 40 years (Kluttz, Fligstein 2016: 202).[14] The social field is a meso-level social order, which means that this unit of analysis is not on a macro-level where the forces behind social processes operate independently of social actors, and it is not on a micro-level, because it does not help to understand preferences and motivations of given single actors. Since the field is a social order, it provides stability for actors (participants of a given field). Yet, it is also an arena of social conflict and rivalization over resources – there is an ongoing game (according to the rules governing a given field) over the stakes defined for a given field. The field is a relation space, where actors orient to each other and, more or less, share the same understanding of what is going on in a given field – even though important conflicts occurring in fields concern defining the legitimate understandings of what is going on and of field boundaries (who is a member and who is not) (Kluttz, Fligstein 2016; Wooten, Hoffman 2008).

The concept of field is believed to be crucial for understanding social action that always occurs in a somehow defined social arena in which actors take each other into account (Kluttz, Fligstein 2016: 186). Without the institutional context provided by social field, it is impossible to understand action. Earlier social theories were focusing either on the micro-context of action, such as situation

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14 It is ironic that often when authors are close to finalizing their work, someone else publishes a much better and more comprehensive piece on the same topic. This is also the case of this chapter, which I seriously reworked after reading Daniel N. Kluttz and Neil Fligstein's (2016) summary and discussion of the field theory in sociology for the *Handbook of Contemporary Sociological Theory* (Abrutyn 2016). Their work focuses on the social field as a tool for analysis at the meso-level. I believe, however, that I am able to add something from my perspective on the field theory, which was omitted by Kluttz and Fligstein. Firstly, their treatment of the notion of organizational field, as it is used in recent new institutional theory of organization, has its limitations – they focus mostly on the classical understanding of the notion, as it was introduced by Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell (1983). Yet, there is a vivid discussion and conceptual development in this theory, and organizational scholars now have very much reoriented their understanding of field processes (Wooten, Hoffman 2008). Secondly, Kluttz and Fligstein (2016) advertise strategic action fields theory of Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam (2012) as solving shortcomings of other perspectives in field theory. Although I agree that Fligstein and McAdam added much content to our understanding of social fields, I provide here a critical approach to the strategic action fields theory.

54

or interaction, or macro-drivers behind the action of individuals, such as shared norms, attitudes, or identities. Yet, action always occurs in a specific institutional setting defined by wider social space. To quote John Levi Martin's (2011: 309) interpretation of the famous experiment conducted by Milgram (1974), people under research were not driven in their action by the norm they had shared: "don't torture the innocent." Additionally, they were not simply carrying out orders (like in behavioral schema of stimulus-reaction), but conforming to the cultural frame of acting according to the authority of a scientist. Thus, one may understand their actions only in the context of a social arena defined by the field of science in modern society.

Fields are game-like arenas (Martin 2011; Kluttz, Fligstein 2016), which means that field participants share some kind of understanding on what the rules and stakes of the game are and who plays it. Thus, in relation to the famous Douglass C. North's (1990: 3) definition of institutions as "rules of the game in a society or, more formally, […] the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction," it might be said that the field is a space were the game is played by the constellations of the players.

Authors who were studying the archeology of the field concept, like John Levi Martin (2011), derive its origins from the 19th century physics interested in electromagnetism and mechanics of fluids. In social sciences, first similar conceptions were developed in German Gestalt theory in psychology. According to W. Richard Scott (2014: 202), other important conceptual ancestors of the field concept are "niche space," used by Chicago school of urban ecology, or "social world," used in symbolic interactionism. Conventionally, it is Kurt Lewin who is mentioned as the first author to coin the notion of a field in social theory. In Lewin's (1951) theory inspired by Gestalt psychology, the field is an important tool to understand the psychological environment of a person.

In this chapter, I focus on three approaches to the concept of field important for current sociology. My special focus is on the positioning of a field as a meso-level of analysis. First, I discuss the notion of field in the thought of Pierre Bourdieu. Then, I present the conception of an organizational field, developed in new institutional sociology. Finally, I turn to the theory of strategic action fields recently announced by Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam. After discussing the three approaches to the concept of field, I present concluding remarks.

2.2 Social fields and the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu

"Fields present themselves synchronically as structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position within these spaces and which

can be analysed independently of the characteristics of their occupants (which are partly determined by them)" (Bourdieu 1993: 72) – this is one of the broadly quoted definitions of fields made by Bourdieu. Yet, when discussing his approach to social fields, which influenced very much the way of thinking about meso-level social structures, it is important to keep in mind that Bourdieu was abstaining from formulating intentional definitions, as he believed that doing so was a characteristic of positivisms in social sciences. According to Bourdieu's way of sociological reasoning, notions should be understood in the empirical context, rather than clearly defined.

For Bourdieu, the field is an indispensable level of analysis to mediate between the larger social structures and individuals. He explained this issue in the following passage: "the sociology of art or literature that *directly* relates works of art to the producers' or clients' position in social space (their social class) without considering their position in the field of production (a 'reduction' which is, strictly, only valid for 'naïve' artists) sweeps aside everything that the work owes to the field and its history – that is to say, precisely that which makes it a work of art, or science, or philosophy" (Bourdieu 1993: 75). The quote shows that sociology which attempts to build explanations on the basis of correlations of variables positioning individuals in the society (like social class, or level of education) is, according to Bourdieu, mistaken. In his view, specific social roles (i.e. artist, scientist) and objects with their symbolic meaning (i.e. a piece of art, or a scientific discovery) are produced by social fields. Without this mediating (meso-level) structure and its stakes, games, logics, and power relations, analysts and interpreters of social reality are lost.

In order to function, a field requires stakes and people who are willing to play the game of a given field and have a formed habitus of perceiving the achievement of stakes of a field to be in their interest. These people (and sometimes broader collectives) are unequal in power. Some of them are challengers to the field's status quo, and some of them hold dominant positions, and it is in their interest to maintain their hegemony. Thus, the structure of a field is actually a structure of power relations of players engaged in field struggles. The power is manifested in a form of symbolic capital, specific to a given field. The so-called "triad" or "trio" (Emirbayer, Johnson 2008; Thomson 2012) of concepts, which enables Bourdieu to analyze social processes, is actually allowing to connect phenomena of a different analytical level: habitus is a characteristic of an individual; capital is a characteristic of an individual but it is visible, useful, and salient only when there are relations between at least two individuals. Finally, the field is a context, but also an overall structure, of relations between individuals. Society for Bourdieu is in fact

56

a constellation of relatively autonomous fields (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 17), which allows to say that in his theory they are on a meso-level: below the level of society, but above the level of an individual or the level of a relation. Yet, the field is not just a level of analysis, but it is the only proper level of analysis. Society is for him an empty notion, and an individual is meaningless without the field which provides meaning to the roles played by an individual. Thus, for Bourdieu the field is a true object of social sciences (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 107).

The metaphor of the game is one way to understand the social field, but another inspiration comes from natural sciences: it is the magnetic field in which forces influence positions and trajectories of particles. The use of the metaphor of a field of force, reveals that explaining the behavior of an individual (a particle) is impossible without the broader context of field forces. The interactions between individuals – clashes of particles – are not a sufficiently broad context to understand them. Martin (2011) explains this advancement in theory also using the analogy to natural sciences and showing that field theory allows to understand actions of individuals in other way than mechanist approaches allow. In mechanist approaches, actors need to interact with each other (particles need to collide) in order to act, while in field approaches the field force (relating to other actors, but not necessarily interacting with them) triggers movement. According to Bourdieu, the forces active in the field are the ones which define the capital specific for that field (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 101). Knowing what form of capital gives what kind of advantage over other members of a given field is an impulse towards actions, which – in consequence – affect other participants of the field. This is the reason why the magnetic field metaphor illustrates so well the relational character of field processes. There is no need for interaction because relating (sometimes imagined) constituted by comparisons of capitals impacts individuals.

The consequence of introducing the notion of social field to the theory is that it brings the attention to that which is "invisible." Thanks to the notion of the field, the analysis does not have to be limited to entities visible at first sight, such as individuals, groups, or interactions. The forces of the field cannot be always simply perceived but, according to Bourdieu, they are present there (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 96–97). These are the imagined relations and motivations constructed by the field structure that drive actions. Apparently, such line of theorizing creates the risk of bringing in metaphysics, yet the intention of Bourdieu was to analyze the forces obliging actors to act in a given way reflecting their position in the field.

The interplay of visibility and invisibility, or the mechanistic and electromagnetic metaphors, bring to the issue of the objectivism – subjectivism debate in sociological theory. According to one of the reconstructions of the concept of

social field, it is "the objective network or configuration of relations (again structuring and structured) to be found in any social space or particular context" (Grenfell 2012: 47). Bourdieu was attempting to break with the objective – subjective dualism. He was mostly influenced by structuralism (the objectivist inspiration) and existentialism (the subjectivist inspiration). The concept of field is said to be the objective (structuralist inspiration) side of Bourdieu's theory, while habitus is said to be the subjective side. Commentators stress that these two concepts cannot be separated. Yet, for many scholars inspired by Bourdieu, only the concept of field remained salient. This is especially the case of researchers studying collective actors, of whose habitus it is difficult to talk about.[15]

Bourdieu's concept of field has several shortcomings, some of which it shares with his general works: murkiness and lack of clarity covered with sophisticated, ornate, and sometimes even bizarre language. He was purposively using open concepts and claiming that the proper understanding of his concepts is possible only in the context of the whole theoretical system they constitute (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 96). Some of the problems regarding the conception of a field come from the fact that Bourdieu did not build a grand theory of a field, but he was rather using it to solve practical problems and pursue empirical operations (Thomson 2012: 79). Yet, it is important to remember that Bourdieu (1993: 72) claimed that there is a need for such general theory and that "general laws of fields" do exist. Most often, the critique of Bourdieu's understanding of the concept of field regards the following aspects: blurriness of borders; relations between fields; too many fields or focus on just one field; change in fields; architecture of fields; actors' focus on their own position; individuals as actors in fields.

The borders of a given field are rarely clearly visible. Although Bourdieu was convinced that fields are objective reality, he was pointing that one of the games which is played in all fields concerns defining the field's borders. At least for this reason it is never certain who is to be included in the field as its participant. Some of the more powerful actors might be claiming that other less powerful actors are outside of a given field. This exactly might the point of a boundary game in a given field: that outsiders are challenging to be recognized as members of a field. The problem is of a theoretical nature as Bourdieu stressed the contention of fields and their antagonistic character (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 103). It is also a very important practical problem for researchers, who need to decide which objects and

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15 Even Mustafa Emirbayer and Victoria Johnson (2008), who called for bringing the habitus concept into the organizational analysis, did not offer the idea of habitus on the collective level. They highlighted that the study of organizations will benefit from the study of their individual members' habitus.

subjects select for observation. Bourdieu's answer would be that proper research ought to be long-lasting, preferably with an ethnographic component, so eventually the researcher will "know for sure" what the exact borders of the field are.

Bourdieu underthorized relations between fields (Fligstein, McAdam 2012: 26). He often mentioned them by pointing that the field of education is crucial for other fields because it distributes symbolic capital, or that the field of power is the field of fields, and that all other fields are subordinated to it. Yet, Bourdieu did not provide too many hints on how relations between fields should be studied, and he did not theorize about these relations, confining himself to confirming that the question of inter-field relations is a difficult one (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 109). This seems to be a crucial omission in his conception. One of the hints he gave about relations between fields is to study the transfer of symbolic capital between fields (Bourdieu 1993: 73). In other approaches to the field theory (discussed below) the interdependence of fields is a very important and often addressed issue.

The problem of undertheorized relations between fields is, in my opinion, connected to the issue labeled by Patricia Thomson (2012: 77) as "the problem of too many fields." Bourdieu often treated any context of social interaction or power games as a field, which made it possible to have at some point together the broad field of power, specific field under study, and a collective actor in that field also analyzed as a field (i.e. a given university as a field in the field of science related to the field of power). This problem is connected to the tension between understanding a field as a real entity which objectively exists (Bourdieu supported this view), and understanding a field as a heuristic which helps in studying the context of action. The solution usually applied by Bourdieu was to focus on one field at a time. Yet, the decision on how to frame an object of study always has its consequences. I claim that the focus on one field, although useful for explaining some important aspects of its internal dynamics, in consequence diminishes the importance of inter-field effects. If the field is considered as a key meso-level of analysis mediating between level of an actor and a level of society, then it is necessary to keep in mind that society (whatever it means) is filled with many overlapping or related fields. By "overlapping," I mean a situation in which one actor partakes in two fields, and by "relating," I mean a situation in which occurrences in one field have consequences for the occurrences in the other.

Although Bourdieu focused his attention on struggles in fields as arenas of conflict (his omission of cooperation in fields will be discussed below), his approach is often criticized for an undertheorization of change in the fields. The problem seems to be paradoxical as fields studied by Bourdieu are usually boiling

with contention and some of the fields he studied were the emerging ones – for example, the field of literature (Bourdieu 1996). Yet, this contention and never-ending antagonism within a given field often leads to the reproduction of a field structure of positions. Changes in language and symbols are usually covering the lack of changes in relations of dominance. Therefore, the accusation of determinism is quite accurate. At the same time, the undertheorization of change in fields stems from the focus on intra-field processes, while – as I will demonstrate in the latter parts of the chapter on other approaches to field theory – many structural changes within fields are caused by their relations with other fields. This brings back to the problem discussed in the previous paragraph, and allows to say that the problems with grasping change in fields are, to a large extent, caused by the undertheorization of field relations in Bourdieu's conception.

As Fligstein and McAdam (2012: 24) noticed, Bourdieu "has little to say about the architecture of fields beyond the general view that they contain positions that are structured by the relative power of actors." Quite often the narration on fields in Bourdieu's conceptualization is limited to the story about the conflict between orthodoxies and heterodoxies, and the bi-polar oppositions in field structures (certainly the inspiration of structural theory). Yet, there are certainly more types of positions in the field than the dominating and dominated ones. Fields contain specific niches and actors of special status, who may not be equipped with much power but, for example, their uniqueness is indispensable for the field, or their structural position allows them to bridge different kind of actors. Finally, in many fields there are special actors to whom other actors mandate coordinative prerogatives. This idea is going to be developed in the latter section on the strategic action fields theory.

Therefore, Bourdieu is mostly interested in conflict within fields (the issue of conflict and cooperation is going to be developed in Section 2.5) and the incessantly struggling actors "are generally only responsible to themselves and motivated by a desire to advance their interests" (Fligstein, McAdam 2012: 25). Thus, there is no place for coordinated action in fields. Actors fight for making their position better and even if Bourdieu talks about orthodoxies fighting against heterodoxies, it is rather an invisible hand mechanism which creates the impression that these two groups of position holders coordinate their actions against each other. Fields are fields of individual, self-oriented particles.

Another shortcoming of Bourdieu's conception of social field is that it is tailored to study individual – and not collective – actors. Although Bourdieu was mentioning that collective actors are also members of fields (he referred to them as institutions), it is easy to see that his approach was not including collective

60

actors. In fact, any collective actor (an organization or social group, and especially a social movement) was nearly automatically treated by him as another social field. There is nothing wrong in this perspective, however, in Bourdieu's approach the notion of habitus is tangled with the notion of field, and habitus is strictly a disposition of a human individual. I cannot imagine a serious transposition of habitus from individual actors to collective actors. Bourdieu's fields are spaces connecting people and shaping their biographies, but they are not very helpful in explaining organizational processes.

2.3 Sociology of organizations in the search for the level of analysis

W. Richard Scott (2014: 106) distinguished six possible levels of institutional analysis of organizations. Starting from the one closest to the human individual these are: organizational subsystem, organization, organizational population, organizational field, societal level (society), and world system. Obviously, the level of organization was initially the most interesting for the study of organizations. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 1, for some sociologists, organization was a sufficient meso-level of analysis allowing to understand the relation between an individual and the whole society. Yet, for the sociology of organizations the important topic of studies are phenomena which occur not only inside a single organization but go beyond it, thus being located "somewhere between" organizations (Pawlak, Srokowski 2014). As for the old problem of sociology, another "obvious" level of analysis was the societal level, important for institutional studies of organizations because of the influence from the political institutionalism for which the study of nation-state institutions is crucial (March, Olsen 1989). Yet, this macro-level of analysis was not sufficient for understanding organizations. Society is "too far" from organizations as too far from them are other macro structures: sectoral or transnational ones.

Another quite "obvious" level of analysis was the level of population. If it is recognized that there exist organizations of certain types (i.e. schools, hospitals, car factories), it is possible that the study of populations of organizations of a given type will bring knowledge about these organizations as such. Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman (1977: 934) defined population as an aggregate of organizations that "must be alike in some respect, that is, they must have some unit character." They stressed that populations are "abstractions useful for theoretical purposes" (Hannan, Freeman 1977: 934). It is the researcher who for his or her analytical purposes defines population using the criterion of unit character. Trade unions, political parties, or newspaper companies are apparent examples of organizational populations, but the unit character might be also of a hidden

type, not perceived by members of organizations who are being researched. The work of Hannan and Freeman were inspired by population biology and ecology and aimed to build a model of analysis in order to better understand the competition and selection processes among organizations. Yet, what this approach lacks, is the good conceptualization of relations with organizations belonging to other species. Organizations do not only compete with ones similar to them, but they also relate to organizations which are very much different from them.

The concept of the organizational field allows to better understand the relations between different kinds of organizations – this seems to be the key to the success of this concept. The notion of organizational field was introduced by Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell in seminal paper "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields" (1983). The authors were trying to solve paradoxical puzzle: why organizations become increasingly similar as they try to change themselves? Common sense suggests that change should cause increasing dissimilarities and complexity among organizations. DiMaggio and Powell distinguished three mechanisms of institutional isomorphic change: coercive, mimetic, and normative. In order to grasp the processes resulting in organizational homogeneity there was a need to study organizations in a perspective allowing to see how they relate to each other. DiMaggio and Powell defined the organizational field as "those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products" (DiMaggio, Powell 1983: 148). As an advantage over other attempts to grasp the meso-level unit of analysis, the authors highlighted that field directs attention to the totality of relevant actors and not only competitors. The organizational field could be regarded as a tool to understand a given organization in the context of its environment, but it quickly became an insightful level of analysis by itself (Scott 2014: 223).

The three types of institutional isomorphism introduced by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) go hand in hand with three pillars of institutions – the conceptualization of institutions developed by Scott (2014). The coercive isomorphism reflects the regulative pillar by which institutions are manifested in rules and codes regulating actions; the mimetic isomorphism reflects the cognitive pillar by which institutions shape the way people perceive the world outside; and the normative isomorphism reflects the normative pillar connected with moral valuations of actions. It is important to remember that Scott's pillar distinction is an analytical one – it helps to understand the various modes by which social life is influenced by institutions. In a similar way, the three types of isomorphism are ideal types.

62

Here I intend to contribute to the development of a field theory by theorizing how different types of isomorphism connect organizations with entities from various levels of analysis: coercive isomorphism connects organizations with state and the macro-level; mimetic isomorphism connects organizations with other organizations and the meso-level; and normative isomorphism connects organizations with individuals and the micro-level.

Coercive isomorphism which stems from the actors' preoccupation with legitimacy (DiMaggio, Powell 1983: 150) is the mechanism by which powerful actors put pressure on organizations to achieve their conformity. In many fields, the powerful actors who are capable of setting or executing regulations are state agencies.[16] Clearly, in this branch of theorizing about social processes the state is not conceptualized as a single actor. State is rather described as a constellation of organizational actors: ministries, agencies, and other bodies which often compete for resources in a given field. Still, they are enabled with unique powers to coerce other organizations. I would, therefore, say that the focus on coercive isomorphism is a good way of exploring relations of organizations with the state or other huge, powerful, and complex organizations which operate on a macro-level. In this understanding, the macro-level equals societal level. Simultaneously, it helps to unpack the concept of state and other macro-actors, because the empirical studies of given fields show that the state with which actors interact or which is able to coerce them is not some kind of a far abstraction, but it manifests itself in concrete organizational units, i.e. taxation authority or immigration bureau.

The mimetic isomorphism, which is an effect of organizations' search for successful models in conditions of uncertainty (DiMaggio, Powell 1983: 151), connects organization with other organizations. It is a phenomenon occurring strictly on the meso-level of analysis. Modeling sometimes occurs when organizations interact and thus become in direct contact with each other. Yet, very often modeling requires some kind of mediation. Models which are to be mimicked are distant, and in order to follow them, organizations use simplified images of models. In the process of diffusion, a model is translated to the local

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16 Of course, one cannot limit coercive isomorphism to relations with a state. There are other kinds of powerful actors which are capable of exerting coercive pressures. On the market, these are large companies able to set standards to which smaller companies must conform. There are supra-state level actors capable of setting coercive pressures: European Union is a good example. There are also soft-law regulators which do not have state capacities of coercion but are still able to use the organizations' hunger for legitimacy in order to influence them: the examples here are creators of rankings, or all sorts of fair trade certifiers.

context after a travel of ideas (Czarniawska, Joerges 1996; Djelic 2008). In a way, boundaries of a field are defined by a range of a potential models to which uncertain organizations relate to. Thus, mimetism seems to be a phenomenon from the meso-level of analysis.

Normative isomorphism stems from the fact that members of professions are present in nearly all aspects of organizational life (DiMaggio, Powell 1983: 152). Furthermore, the salience of professions and professionals in the new institutional organization theory is perceived as growing. Scott (2008) announced that professionals are "lords of the dance" and that they are the most important agents of institutional change. Bromley and Meyer (2015) show that the global increase of organizations is strongly correlated with the growth of higher education and occupations – which are professions or aspire to be professions – that require diplomas. The authors particularly point to the fact that the occupation of a manager is becoming professionalized. Professionals are members of organizations whose important normative orientations are shaped by professions crosscutting various organizations and often various organizational fields. Professions are also a special kind of meso-level structures which could be analyzed as social fields. Thus, professionals as individuals put pressure from the inside of organizations to conform to their normative orientations which are shaped because of belonging to a profession. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) pointed to two most important factors contributing to forming normative pressure: professionals are, to a large extent, products of educational institutions which shape their norms; and professionals are usually members (sometimes obligatory) of professional associations and other kinds of networks. Normative isomorphism in this way connects organizations with other structures through individuals which, on the micro-level, in their everyday actions, bring in the norms shaped in other contexts.

The organizational field is a space where the state and general social pressures are present, but it also allows to understand actors. In the new institutional theory of organizations, the focus is on organizations as actors, but also other collective actors are recognized as field members, i.e. more loosely organized social movements or other social groups. Yet, organization is here a crucial unit of analysis. The assumption underlying the new institutional theory of organizations is that nearly all social process in the late modern world are happening in or through organizations, and organizations as a cultural form of collective action are globally expanding (Bromley, Meyer 2015).

The organizational field in this approach is a real entity. It is not just an analytical tool or a construct, but it exists, which allows to talk about the ontology of fields. They exist "to the extent that they are institutionally defined" (DiMaggio,

64

Powell 1983: 148). Thus, the ontological status of fields is similar to the status of institutions. Fields bind organizations but are clearly an institutional phenomenon. The new institutional theory of organizations is in its assumptions based on social constructivism of Berger and Luckmann (1967), so both fields and institutions exist as externalizations of people's cognition and actions. The field, in order to emerge, requires: an increased interaction between organizations; developed structures of domination and patterns of coalition; an overwhelming information load to be processed by organizations; a mutual awareness of organizations involved in "something" they share in common. In short, "one actor takes note of another and through this process of referencing one another, actors bring a field into existence" (Wooten, Hoffman 2008: 138). The field is a space of structuration process described by Anthony Giddens (1979).

As Wooten and Hoffman (2008) stressed, after the focus on isomorphic pressures resulting in relative homogeneity of organizations within the field, institutional scholars turned to study conflicts and other forms of field dynamics. The change on the field level became (before it was a change on the organization level triggered by the field level processes) a research subject of growing interest. To simplify, the causes of the change could be found in a field – the results of endogenous institutional processes; or the causes might be external to a field – like exogenous shocks destabilizing the relations between the actors in a field (Greenwood, Suddaby, Hinings 2002). Subsequently, another aspect of conflictual character of organizational fields started to be emphasized – namely, the aspect of power and dominance, so the situation of fields seemingly being settled and quite started to be explained with the work of maintenance done by powerful actors (Lounsbury, Glynn 2001). Consequently, more focus was set by new institutionalism on the heterogeneity within fields than on homogeneity. A growing body of research dealt with issues like conflicting institutional logics present in fields (Friedland, Alford 1991; Thornton, Ocasio, Lounsbury 2012), which resulted in production of hybrid organizations (Pache, Santos 2013) or the development of the ability called "institutional ambidexterity" (Jarzabkowski et al. 2013). My intention here is not to go deep in considerations of various understandings of organizational field concept in new institutionalism, but rather to show that there is an on-going theoretical discussion on the nature of fields, which is very thoroughly tested in research. New institutional conceptualization of fields (and a broader new institutional theory of organizations) is often presented as a study of isomorphism, conformity, and stability – yet it is an oversimplification usually caused by the sin of describing the new institutionalism only on the basis of its founding texts from the break of 1970s and 1980s. This sin of

oversimplifying and not noticing the newer developments in new institutional theory is also committed by proponents of the strategic action field theory (Fligstein, McAdam 2012; Kluttz, Fligstein 2016) described below, in Section 2.4.

The belief that fields exist as a real thing is in some way shared with Bourdieu's approach, although he underlines their objective ontological status. In the new institutional theory of organizations fields exist, but their ontological status is of an intersubjective nature. Yet, there are some researchers who would say that they use organizational fields rather as an analytical tool, and that they do not perceive fields as something real but rather a heuristic thanks to which it is easier to grasp social phenomena occurring on the meso-level. Thus, the field is then an analytical tool which helps to understand what is going on between actors constellating around a given issue which brings them more or less together (Hoffman 1999).

A good way to observe the transformations of new institutional theory of organizations is to check whether there are any definitional changes in W. Richard Scott's *Institutions and Organizations* (Scott 1995; 2014) book, which is upgraded every few years and summerizes the most recent developments in theory. In 1995, he defined the organizational field as "a community of organizations that partakes of a common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than actors outside the field" (Scott 1995: 56). Yet, in 2014 the definition was changed to "a collection of diverse, interdependent organizations that participate in a common meaning system" (Scott 2014: 106). The changes of definition are significant and are a good illustration of the changes in the new institutional theory of organizations in the last 20 years.

Firstly, Scott replaces "a community of organizations" with "a collection of diverse interdependent organizations." "Community" is a much stronger term denoting that a category called with this name has a kind of a common identity or "spirit." "Collection" simply means that in a field there are organizations, but there is nothing that binds them. "Community" was replaced by "collection," yet a description was added that these organizations are "interdependent," which means that they are in some kind of relations, but they do not create one "body." It was also stressed that the organizations in a field are "diverse," which reminds about the differences between the notion of a field and the previously discussed notion of population. It also highlights the heterogeneity of fields and possible divides present in the fields. The previous use of the term "community" was obscuring the divides and rather stressing what they had in common.

Secondly, Scott deleted the line "whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than actors outside the field" (Scott 1995: 56). The reason for this – according to my interpretation – is that new institutional scholars realized that the crucial relation in fields is not interaction but orientation to each other. Actors who orient themselves to each other do not have to enter exchanges, conflicts, or cooperations, but they are somehow aware of their existence. The newer definition includes nothing about more frequent interactions with other actors from the field because, according to a plethora of studies, interactions between actors from various fields are quite common. Although usually studies focus on a concrete field, the scholars' awareness of inter-field relations in the recent years has been growing.

What remained in Scott's definition is the "common meaning system," which means that although replacing "community" with "collection," the theorist highlights that a field includes some shared cultural elements. Even if the field is a sphere of a conflict, its participants more-or-less agree on what the stakes of this conflict are.

In the new institutional theory of organizations, the field is one of the most central and vital terms (Scott 2014: 219; Wooten, Hoffman 2008: 142). This approach explains organizations with external processes, not with what occurs inside organizations. Thus, space, arena, industry, population, or the field are levels of analysis which seems to be indispensable. The new institutional thinking about fields was, to some extent, inspired by Bourdieu's theory, but it developed footed in empirical studies of inter-organizational phenomena. As the new institutionalism in organizational theory has recently increased its interest in agency on expense on the interest in conformity, it also increased its interest in fields understood not only as spaces of isomorphism but as spaces bringing meaning for organizational action.

2.4 Towards an integration of the field theories: strategic action fields approach

Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam (2012) crafted together their integrated theory of fields under the label of strategic action field theory. Their goal was not only to develop the theoretical conceptualization of the meso-level but also to reintegrate sociology, which they perceived as too fragmented. In their approach they bring together the advancements of economic sociology and new institutionalism (Fligstein's field of expertise), as well as social movements (McAdam's field of expertise). According to them, a strategic action field is "a constructed meso-level social order in which actors (who can be individual or collective) are

attuned to and interact with one another on the basis of shared (which is not to say consensual) understandings about the purposes of the fields, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why), and the rules governing legitimate action in the field" (Fligstein, McAdam 2012: 9).

According to Fligstein and McAdam, the search for the meso-level of social order in many different sub-fields of fragmentized sociology has been visible at least since the 1990s. As the most important paradigms in which this search appeared, they enlisted various branches of new institutionalism, social movements literature, and network analysis. Still, the most influential inspiration for strategic action fields theory was Bourdieu's conception of social fields – discussed above – with critical elements borrowed also from Fligstein and McAdam. The first distinctive element of strategic action field theory is that a whole theory is constructed around the concept of a field – it is a theory of fields. For other approaches fields are very important concepts, but they are rather coined in order to be used to achieve some other theoretical goals such as understanding forces shaping trajectories of individuals (in case of Bourdieu) or understanding the environment of an organization (in case of new institutional theory of organizations). For both of these approaches, the fields are indispensable and central notions, yet they are not theories of fields – fields are helpful to theorize about habitus or institution.

Fligstein and McAdam accuse new institutionalism of understanding social fields as static arenas of reproduction of institutions. It is also a common critique of strategic action fields theory that it presents Bourdieu as a theorist of reproduction unable to explain change, which is not entirely true (Swartz 2014). Indeed, Fligstein and McAdam focus on change and stability as outcomes of strategic action, yet they exaggerate in diminishing the salience of focus on change in other theories. In brief, the strategic action field theory is an attempt to synthesize new institutionalism (presented as a very good theory of stability, but lacking theory of change and emergence) with social movements theory (as a very good theory of change, but lacking theory of durability).

The actors, according to the assumptions of Fligstein and McAdam, are strategic. The fields deliver a structure in which the actors are embedded, but the actors are not determined by this structure. The actors play an on-going game of making their position better. This continuous activity is called jockeying and makes other actors "to interpret them, consider their options, and act in response" (Fligstein, McAdam 2012: 12). Thus, jockeying eventually creates a huge internal pressure on fields to change, but it may also result in reproduction – Anthony Giddens and the theory of structuration is also pointed by Fligstein and McAdam as an important inspiration.

Unlike in the rational actor theory or the Marx-inspired critical approach of Bourdieu, in the strategic action fields theory, actors are not only driven by their interests but also by the urge to find meaning and identity. It lies at the micro-fundations of Fligstein and McAdam's theory that social activities also have an existential function for human beings. According to the authors, existential fear and uncertainty are elements of human nature, and it is also natural for humans to seek refuge from these fears by engaging in collectives. According to Max Weber (1978), the source of all social life is the ability of people to understand one another and, according to George H. Mead (1934), crucial social mechanisms provide people with a sense of self and the ability to take the role of the "other." So for the strategic action fields theory the issues of meaning, identity, and self are not only characteristics of individuals, but they enable collective action and cooperation. According to Fligstein and McAdam's approach, the *homo economicus* is a wrong model of a social actor as it treats the urge of belonging as something irrational and unexplainable, while it is one of the factors that social theory needs to treat seriously in order to understand phenomena on a collective level. As Fligstein and McAdam (2012: 43) claim, "any adequate theory of human strategic action must take this mix of instrumental and existential motives into account." The focus on existential function of the social, leads authors to the notion of "social skill" as something important for understanding the co-operative aspects of field processes.

Social skill is defined by the Fligstein and McAdam (2012: 46) as "the ability to induce cooperation by appealing to and helping to create shared meanings and collective identities."[17] It enables actors to see their field from the perspective of other actors and thanks to that empathy it is a great tool for building coalitions of cooperation which are capable of transforming social fields. Yet, social skill is also indispensable for sustaining fields. Fligstein and McAdam highlight that the theory of social skill is in strong relation with the theory of social field. As they argue, it is capable of solving the tension between determinism (actors driven by their position in social structure) and overly agentic approach in which actors are capable of creating and re-creating society by their wish: both the skills and position influence the actors' ability to cooperate and compete. Social skill is a concept merging insights from the social movements theory (i.e. socially skilled actor is able to use opportunities and to frame situations) and from neoinstitutional theory of institutional entrepreneurs (Battilana, Leca, Boxenbaum 2009; DiMaggio 1988). However, in my opinion, this element of theory remains rather

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17 The notion was earlier introduced by Fligstein (2001) in his famous paper.

blurry and underdeveloped. Social skill seems to be another attempt to grasp what Weber (1978) called "charisma."

Another novelty in field theory brought by Fligstein and McAdam (2012: 77) is the concept of internal governance unit, which they define as "organizations or associations within the field whose sole job it is to ensure the routine stability and order to the strategic action field." Internal governance units are also usually dealing with relations between fields (i.e. associations of certain occupational categories represent them in relations with the state or other fields). Internal governance units may serve field members in relations with administration, information, regulation, enforcement, or certification. Yet, usually they are controlled, or at least very much influenced, by field incumbents and serve them as a tool of domination towards challengers.

Fligstein and McAdam (2012: 58) accuse former conceptualizations of social fields of field-centric bias and theorize about the embeddedness of strategic action fields, which are often connected in a manner similar to Russian dolls. The fields remain in different kinds of relations, which of course change over time: they might be unconnected, dependent, or interdependent. The factors shaping these links are as follows: resource dependence, mutual beneficial interactions, sharing of power, information flows, or legitimacy. State is also perceived by strategic action field theory as a field, and not as one unified actor. The authors also highlight that "formal organizations are often the central players in strategic action fields" (Fligstein, McAdam 2012: 64), but they do not limit membership in fields to organizations and show that it is possible to look at organizations also as fields (then the fields are nested in each other). This is the case of the state, whose agencies are present in virtually all social fields.

According to the strategic action field theory, an increasing focus should be put on inter-field relations, as recently it has been possible to observe three related macro-social processes: proliferation of fields, growth of higher education, and the development of professions. New fields usually require new professions (or occupational categories of ambition to become professions) and these are produced by higher education entities. The supply and demand for professionals are in feedback relation.[18]

To sum up, the strategic action fields theory is a synthesis of insights from the thought of Pierre Bourdieu, new institutional sociology of organizations, and social movement theory. It puts the concept of field in the center of theoretical attention, which allows to grasp meso-level social phenomena.

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18 Very similar observations have been made by Bromley and Meyer (2015).

It develops the understanding of relations between various fields, theorizes the relation between actor and field, and claims to contribute to better understanding of change in fields. The strategic action field theory attempts to solve the biases of the two main traditions of the notion of field uses: bias toward conflict (attributed to Bourdieu) and bias toward conformity (attributed to new institutionalism).

2.5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have presented the most influential approaches in current sociological theory to the field concept. In discussing Pierre Bourdieu's blurry – but inspiring – use of social field notion, the heterogeneous and vivid understanding of organizational field conception in new institutional studies of organizations, and the synthetizing theory of Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam I was focusing mostly on how the concept of field is useful in tying the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Indeed, I agree with Kluttz and Fligstein (2016: 202) that the field concept is the most important contribution to the sociological theory made in the recent decades. It is so because fields link actions of single actors (individual humans or collectives) and their interactions – the phenomena on the micro-level – with broader societal processes from the macro-level. Still, the field as a meso-level social order creates its own effects and constrains the conditions for social action. The fields are recreated in continuous processes of structuration by social actors who shape fields' boundaries in their daily practices and never-ending jockeying for a better position. But the relation of fields with actors is of a mutual character and it is the field which provides a social definition of an actor: it is impossible to be an artist without a field of art, or a scientist without a field of science, or it is impossible to run a hotel without and organizational field of hospitality services.

Social field may be a key concept in the studies focused on different phenomena – as in the case of Bourdieu's interest in power and habitus, or neoinstitutionalism's interest in institutions and organizations – or the center of sociological theory, as in the case of strategic action fields theory. It brings attention to that which is in between – not only in between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis, but also in between actors.

For a long time, many sociologists understood their discipline simply as a study of society. It is the case of Polish sociology preoccupied with explaining Polish society to itself as a whole (Bucholc 2016) and dealing with macro-processes such as transformation after the communist regime (Pawlak 2013). More attention to the field level brings a better understanding of action and

actors. As scholars working with the notion of field proved, understanding social action only with the knowledge on social categories and macro-processes is always fallacious. Yet, the program of explaining a given society could be saved for national sociologies, thanks to the field theory. A synthesis of case studies of various social fields present in a given country is, in my opinion, a better strategy for drawing a picture of this country's society than the attempts to provide a grand-sociology of this society from the macro-perspective. Many macro-processes are visible in various fields, yet they occur in their own specific ways, and this meso-perspective may provide a better understanding of what the transformation from the communist regime or Europeanization actually are.

The growing knowledge on various fields, acquired thanks to empirical studies conducted either on the field level or using the concept of the field to understand phenomena from other levels of analysis, allows to build hypotheses (or research questions) for future studies of other fields. I would restrain myself from talking about laws of fields, but theorizing about results of various studies allows researchers to ask questions about what is likely to be at stake in a field which has previously been not studied. In this sense, it is possible to talk about a theory of fields because it provides research questions for studies of phenomena – even those which are empirically very distant from the ones already described in the theoretical language of fields.

Finally, social fields are to some extent invisible. Although many social actors are very aware of their relevant social environment, the theory of fields is quite abstract in comparison to many theoretical tools of sociology. It is quite far from the common sense or folk wisdom about society. It appeared quite late in the history of sociological thought. Without this theoretical tool, sociological understanding of what takes place in between the micro-level and the macro-level was obscured. Thus, I claim that the social field theory is one of the best avenues for searching for what could fill the sociological vacuum.

3 Social networks: tying micro and macro

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present and discuss another paradigm of social sciences which delivers promising insights on the micro-macro link: social network analysis (SNA). During the 1980s debate on the micro-macro problem, this approach was not recognized as one of the solutions, although the early work of Ronald S. Burt (1982) was mentioned as one of the attempts of integrating micro and macro sociologies (Ritzer 1990). SNA in the 1980s was already increasing

its influence in social sciences and its most important statements were already formulated, yet it was still not a part of the sociological mainstream. The 1980s discussion was still a debate between scholars interested either in systems or in individuals. Currently, SNA, which is the manifestation of relationist sociology, thrives at the mainstream of sociology. There are probably many reasons for which the metaphor of a network started occupying the minds of people and social theorists. The key reason is, most probably, the expansion of the internet. Theorizing in relational terms is important for the concept of social field discussed in Chapter 2. The SNA is another manifestation of theory grounded in relational assumptions: it focuses more on relations than on substances (Emirbayer 1997). By this virtue, social networks – structures tying individuals with each other – bring a new perspective on the micro-macro problem.

Theorists who were leading the 1980s debate on the micro-macro problem were categorizing the network scholars (such as Harrison White or Ronald Burt) as representatives of macro theories of social structure. I am convinced this was a mistake, and much of this chapter is an argument showing that the SNA is a promising voice in the micro-macro debate, because its interest in social structure starts from the micro-level of relations between actors. Using its quite simple building blocks, SNA contributed to the development of concepts such as "social capital" or "embeddedness." They are both promising avenues of thinking about the linkage of the micro- and macro-levels. In this chapter I am not going to focus on the notion of social capital: it has also other antecedents than network theories and it is going to be discussed thoroughly in Chapter 7. In this chapter I am leading the narrative to the conclusion that the conception of social embeddedness is a way of linking micro with macro.

The order of this chapter is the following. I start with discussing four network approaches competing with SNA: network exchange theory, Castells' theory of network society, actor-network theory, and the new science of networks. I present them briefly, with a special focus on their potential for solving the micro-macro problem. Then, I present the development of the SNA and its central assumptions and notions. On this basis, I am able to discuss how theorizing in terms of networks is useful for conceptualizing problems of agency-structure, individual-society and – most importantly – the problem of micro-macro. In the concluding remarks of this chapter, I claim that the conception of embeddedness is an interesting way of linking micro with macro and that SNA is a perspective which allows to notice the significance of the seemingly invisible or unimportant structures which have a great impact on social processes.

3.2 From fishermen to World Wide Web: a brief review of network approaches in social sciences

There is no single paradigm of studying networks in social sciences. For this reason, although this chapter is mostly focusing on SNA, in this section I will discuss also other network approaches, such as: network exchange theory, the Manuel Castells' theory of network society, actor-network theory, and new science of networks (Pietrowicz 2016).

3.2.1 Network exchange theory

The network exchange theory is an approach which has its origins in micro-economy and behavioral psychology, although it was informed also by sociological theories of exchange and anthropology (Molm 2000). In the context of the micro-macro debate it is not a relevant approach because it concentrates on how the structure of network influences the transactions between actors. Most of the studies in this perspective take into account individual actors, although collective actors are also studied – and in this case it is perceived as an analysis on the macro-level (Molm 2000: 261). Thus, although it is not a theory of exchange between two actors, because it adds social networks as a crucial context for exchanges (Emerson 1972), it is still micro-social theory. The most important topics of study of network exchange theory are power relations and dependency in exchanges. In contrast to the SNA, the network exchange theory focuses on networks of negatively connected relations in which actors are linked because they compete over something (Molm 2000: 270). To sum up, it is a theory of micro-structures' influence on relations between actors. It does not have the ambitions to say something on the macro-level processes, so it does not provide conceptual tools for understanding the relation between micro and macro, however, it provides evidence, well supported in experimental studies, for the importance of network context in exchanges between actors. It is a relational approach according to which structure (consisting of relations) has a primacy over actors. Yet, it needs to be stipulated that attaching a different meaning to macro and perceiving any social structure as a macro-level phenomenon would make the network exchange theory a theory linking micro and macro as it links together individuals and structures. To illustrate, the network exchange theory was recognized by Jonathan H. Turner (2010c: 8) as an example of a theory bridging micro- and macro-levels of analysis, because it focuses on the forms of exchange – not on the actors – involved in exchange. Yet, exchanges are examples of encounters traditionally qualified by the scholars to the micro-level of analysis.

3.2.2 Manuel Castells' theory of network society

The theory of network society is an attempt to explain and understand contemporary world which was developed by Manuel Castells, most famous for his trilogy on the information age (Castells 1996; 1997; 1998). The network is a key notion used by the author, who received enormous attention in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the 21st century. His eclectic and essayistic books praising new technologies of communication made Castells an extremely popular public intellectual, and brought the notion of network into the mainstream of sociology (Ritzer 2010). Much of this success is – in my opinion – connected with the demand of that time for a grand theory of possible changes of social life caused by the introduction of the internet. Yet, network is used by Castells as a buzz-word: he sees networks everywhere, but does not analyze them with the methodological discipline specific for other network approaches. If every social structure is a network, it becomes a dubitable notion with no explanatory power (Urry 2003: 11). Networks together with other buzz-words and catchy concepts, such as globalization, social movements, the search for identity, or internet, create altogether a very persuasive read about the contemporary world. Nevertheless, it is very hard to look for solutions to the key theoretical problems of sociology in the work of Castells. Certainly, the concept of a network allows to understand how people are connected in global world. Castells provides some descriptions of condensation of relations in important nodes of global network, such as financial cities of global metropolises. However, a synthesis of his works allows only to say that individuals are somehow connected globally through the networks of communication.

3.2.3 Actor-network theory

Actor-network theory is a perspective developed mostly by French authors interested in science and technology studies. The best known of them is Bruno Latour, but the theory's foundational works were written also by Michel Callon and others. The theory received much attention because it was recognized as a novel, and even revolutionary, paradigm in social sciences. Network is a key notion in the approach, which is why it is worth to mention actor-network theory in this chapter. What is different, and novel, in this approach is that networks are composed of elements of various ontological status – people, animals, technological objects etc. – and therefore this perspective, at least at the declarative level, goes beyond the study of humans and includes non-humans as well. This makes actor-network theory different from other network approaches, because the latter usually study networks of homogenous nodes, or at least nodes which are individual humans or collectives of humans (groups, organizations etc.). Here the network may consist,

as in the famous paper by Callon (1986), of fishermen of St. Brieuc, scientific colleagues, and scallops of St. Brieuc. In fact, focusing on networks consisting only of social actors has been described by Latour (1993) as a never fulfilled project of modernity in which people are obsessed with making divides between social and natural objects. The other important element of actor-network theory is that it treats networks as actual actors. In other approaches, networks are constructed by the relations between actors. In actor-network theory agency is only achieved by associating various heterogeneous elements in a network, which then becomes capable of agency. The associating is achieved through acts of translation, which transform the objects. Actor-network theory is a strictly relational approach and since it rejects essentialism, there is no room in it for dispositional or systemic explanations. Some would say that in actor-network theory there is no room for any explanations at all (including the relational ones) because it is focused only on description. The most fundamental critique of this approach, which is still very inspiring and mind opening, is that despite the declarations that actor-network theory focuses on what is material, it is simply dealing with human narrations on translating, associating, and disassociating of various elements. Still, as a perspective in discourse analysis it is a quite powerful research approach, as demonstrated by its application to organization studies (Czarniawska, Joerges 1996).

For the sake of this chapter, I will focus more deeply only on one article written by Michel Callon and Bruno Latour (1981), in which they directly address the relations between micro- and macro-actors. It is an interesting work, because it was published before actor-network theory received a huge attention and popularity. Callon and Latour claim that the construction of macro-actors requires power and material objects connected in networks with humans. According to them, assumptions that some actors are on the micro-level and others are on the macro-level are by sociologists too often taken for granted. According to Hobbes' paradox, "no actor is bigger than another except by means of a transaction (a translation) which must be examined" (Callon, Latour 1981: 280–281). The translation connects different objects and subjects into networks which might be considered of micro or macro size. Thus, the size of the actors depends on the kind of elements the network consists of. If the network consists of a person calling himself a prince, a palace, an army, and administrative staff of scribes, then altogether they might be translated into a macro-actor of state. Without material objects like palace and tools like armor, this network would be most probably considered as a micro-level. What is more, according to Callon and Latour, macro-actors are not more complicated than micro-actors, because they consist of black boxes, simplifications enabling them to act as macro-actors. The size of

the actors and the existence of Leviathan-like actors is therefore a consequence of networks associating and dissociating, and the study of these associations and dissociations is, according to Callon and Latour (1981: 300), a definitional task of sociology. Yet, sociologists contribute to structuring of macro-actors – as Callon and Latour perversely attacked the mainstream sociological method in which certain macro-structures are projected and then the confirmation of their existence is sought in answers of respondents. The link between micro and macro, which is not expressed by the authors directly, is the ability to associate elements, which make something of micro-level and entities of macro-level. Thus, the key message of Callon and Latour's (1981) paper is that sociologists help in constructing macro-structures.

If Callon and Latour had known the thesis on the sociological vacuum,[19] their interpretation in line with their definition of sociology would have been as follows: Stefan Nowak managed to create associations between individual humans, certain imagined groupings, and elements of physical reality. But at the same time, Nowak managed to dissociate certain subjects. Polish society is then simultaneously associated (as a nation being a federation of primary groups) and dissociated (as not consisting of intermediary group bonds). This parallel association and dissociation in interpretations of the sociologists using Nowak's thesis started a life of its own: the vacuum is sometimes described as agentic, as capable of influencing other objects, stopping or facilitating other social processes. This excursion into the actor-network theory way of speculating is an interesting exercise because it puts the attention to the tool-kit of the sociological creation of objects: the vacuum is constructed out of the lack of something and out of the relation of this lack of something to surrounding objects and subjects.

Actor-network theory does not solve the problems of sociology – it claims that they are irrelevant, and sometimes also ridicules them. The problem of the micro-macro link is – as Callon and Latour (1981) argue in their paper – relevant only for conventional sociologists, who seem to be ridiculous in their attempts to solve the tension between micro and macro (or solve other tensions, as the one between agency and structure). Remaining at my conventional position, I still feel enriched with the perspective brought by the actor-network theory, which obliges us to remember how we, together with subjects/objects of our studies, associate new networks capable of action.

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19   I love to fantasize about such encounters and I am pretty sure that Bruno Latour would have been more than thrilled by the idea to use the hard science term "vacuum" to describe social structures.

3.2.4 New science of networks

In the recent years, simultaneously with the huge expansion of the internet, there has been a growing interest and popularity of studies of large networks labeled as the new science of networks. The leading authors of this approach locate it in mathematics, in the tradition of graph theory started in 18th century by Leonhard Euler (Newman, Barabási, Watts 2006). The expansion of this approach to the field of social human behavior research is a result of the development of electronic devices and databases tracking the behaviors of humans using these devices. It allows scientists trained in computational analysis techniques to study the relations and behaviors of people, which are of network character. The key here are the data and analytical techniques which allow to analyze networks of human individuals in the same way as any other networks of nodes which are not human: it does not make any difference if the studied nodes are humans using mobile phones, interconnected routers, molecules linked by biochemical reactions, or nerve cells connected by axons (Barabási 2002: 16). Especially the creation of the so-called "big data" – "data sets so large and complex that they become awkward to work with using standard statistical software" (Snijders, Matzat, Reips 2012: 1) –allowed researchers coming from the fields of applied mathematics or hard sciences to study social phenomena which, mostly due to the nature of internet, leave electronic traces. From the point of view of sociological tradition, this approach has very limited assumptions about nodes: it is simply not interested in human actors' rationality or emotionality, and treats them as any other nodes. Nevertheless, the outcomes of such studies are very powerful and tell a lot about social reality. Some even predict that analysts of big data will contribute to a change in the paradigm of humanism by proving that humans are reducible to algorithms (Harari 2016).

Duncan Watts and Steven Strogatz (1998) proved that large networks are clustered, but it is enough to have a small number of random connections between them in order to reduce the distances between the nodes. This model of network is often used as a model of global society: people are connected densely with their neighbors, but there are some nodes that connect also distant fragments of the network. According to Barabási (2002), it was a mathematical formalization of Mark Granovetter's (1973) conception of the strength of week ties.

The studies of the emerging world wide web allowed scholars trained in mathematics to realize that networks are not randomly constructed (as it was assumed for long time) but are ordered, and hubs – nodes with large number of links – are crucial for their structure (Barabási 2002). Ironically, what was known for social studies of elites since Vilfredo Pareto (1897) required mathematicians turn to

78

computational analysis of large networks. The presence of hubs (nodes of high degree) allows communication in large networks and makes the connection between distant nodes much shorter. Put differently – it makes the world smaller.

Another important contribution of the new science of networks is a modeling of dynamic networks. Traditional network approaches are usually interested either in small-scale networks or in static networks. In contrast, in the new science of networks, scholars taking their inspiration from various branches of physics are capable of modeling the evolution of networks. Applying various assumptions about the fitness of nodes, or the mechanics of acquiring new nodes, they are able to explain the way in which networks with powerful hubs emerge.

In this line of research, the network – which is usually large (large in a sense that it cannot be comprehended without large computational forces) – is the macro-level of analysis. The nodes and edges between the nodes are the micro-level phenomena. The macro-level effects, which are surprisingly similar in networks created by humans and other kinds of networks – i.e. the fact that so many networks follow the power law and are scale-free networks (Barabási, Bonabeau 2003)[20] – are aggregations of large number behaviors of nodes. The transformation from the micro-level to the macro-level is fascinating, but it is not theorized. According to Chris Snijders, Uwe Matzat, and Ulf-Dietrich Reips (2012), still only conventional social sciences are capable of explaining the micro-level of network node and tie-formation, which would be a micro-foundation for big data network analysis.

In his popular manifesto of the new science of networks approach entitled *Linked*, Laszlo Barabási (2002) made some statements, which allow to interpret his view on the micro and macro issue. As he states in the opening pages of the book: "The construction and structure of graphs or networks is the key to understanding the complex world around us. Small changes in the topology, affecting only a few of the nodes or links, can open up hidden doors, allowing new possibilities to emerge" (Barabási 2002: 12). This means that there is a primacy of structure over the action or individual node. The new science of networks is a study of the complexity of a structure – nodes are relevant only if they play an important role in connecting the structure. Nodes' characteristics, such as fitness, are measurable and applicable in mathematical models, but this approach assumes it only in order to understand the structure.

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20 Power law in case of networks means that the degree distribution in a given network is highly unequal, as in Pareto distribution. Some minority of nodes have a large number of connections (high degree), while the majority of nodes have a small number of connections (low degree).

Networks can be found everywhere, as a form of structure and organization of society. They are real, and other human heuristics, thanks to which it becomes possible to understand the surrounding reality, are just discursive tools. For example, in case of economic behaviors, Barabási goes as far as to refute the notion of market, and states: "Companies and corporations were seen as interacting not with each other but rather with 'the market,' a mythical entity that mediates all economic interactions. In reality, the market is nothing but a directed network. Companies, firms, corporations, financial institutions, governments, and all potential economic players are the nodes" (Barabási 2002: 208). From the perspective of the micro-macro debate, the problem remains. Although nodes and individual edges (relations) are treated as micro-level units of analysis, and the whole network is treated as a macro-level of analysis, ironically, there is still a problem with linking the two. Macro effects and conditions for single nodes emerge from massive aggregation of behaviors of the nodes and the topology of their connections. Yet, this phenomenon is not very much theorized.

The mechanism of assembling the web actually reminds of the classic invisible hand explanation of Adam Smith (1975; Mica 2015). The invisible hand, however, is substituted by the absent spider: "In the absence of a spider, there is no meticulous design behind these networks either. Real networks are self-organized. They offer a vivid example of how the independent actions of millions of nodes links lead to spectacular emergent behavior" (Barabási 2002: 221).

The new science of networks is still new. It provided some powerful explanations of large networks dynamics. It also provides analytical tools useful for the more conventional SNA. The new science of networks will be probably rapidly developing in the nearest future, so it is possible that it will have to face theoretical problems such as linking micro with macro or solving the agency paradox – at least in its applications to the networks of humans.

3.2.5 Brief history of SNA

Last but not least, I am going to briefly present the history of the SNA, the approach that is the most interesting for the topic of this book. Conventionally, the representatives of SNA paradigm refer to Georg Simmel as their classic inspiration. The history of SNA could be also derived from the work of Jacob Moreno (1934) who applied the tool of sociogram in his study on intra-group preferences, attempting to label psychological geography. Early network applications were also performed by social anthropologists such as John A. Barnes (1954), who is credited as the first to use a term "network" in his paper on social classes in a small Norwegian commune of Bremnes. Yet, the real momentum for the SNA

came in the 1960s and the studies of Stanley Milgram and Harrison White, both employed at that time in the Department of Social Relations at Harvard University and working on social networks phenomena. Although Harrison White has a strong recognition among sociologists and social network analyst and is credited for triggering the so-called Harvard Revolution, Milgram's experiment on small world phenomena received a much wider attention.

Stanley Milgram (1967) in his famous experiment asked participants to send letters, using chains of their personal contacts – from Omaha, Nebraska (a provincial town indeed) to Boston, Massachusetts. One hundred sixty people taking part in the experiment sent 160 letters, out of which only 44 reached their addressees. The chains varied from two to ten intermediary acquaintances, but the median length of the chain was five persons. This finding was reminded and later popularized with a dictum that each person is separated from any other person in the world by six degrees. The experiment is not only a trivia to amuse people at parties: it has important consequences for the network understanding of social structure and inspired more mathematically driven analyses. Assuming that each person maintains relations with approximately 150 other persons – the so-called Dunbar's number (2010) – and that half of these relations are not redundant, at the fifth step it should be possible to reach more than two billion people (75 raised to the fifth power). Of course, the condition is that those people are not separated.

The seminal study of Nancy H. Lee (1969) about pregnant women searching for abortionists in times when abortion was penalized in the US, brought problems of agency and trust into studies of networks. Connection to the network eventually leading to the abortionist was enabling action – in this sense, networks constrain and allow agency. In case of the search for an abortionist, trust encapsulated in network was of a key role, because only the trusted ties were opening the possibility of acting.

I believe, however, that a real "game changer" for the SNA was the article published by Mark Granovetter (1973) entitled "Strength of Weak Ties," which is an important inspiration for this book. It is the most often cited sociological paper up-to-date. It transformed thinking about social cohesion, labor market, and overall structure of human relations. On the empirical level, the study of Granovetter explores the role of personal connections in the search for a job. It was already known from some earlier studies (i.e. Reynolds 1951) that personal contacts are the most often used mode of getting a job. What Granovetter (1973: 1361) was able to prove was that the majority of jobs were found through weak ties (meaning relations perceived as not emotionally intense, characterized

by a small amount of time spent together and limited reciprocal services). This finding seems counterintuitive, because many people think that the information about jobs is passed through strong relations. Yet, this is in fact impossible due to structural reasons: networks of strong ties are usually closed – a good friend of John is usually a friend of John's other good friends. Thus, an information spreading through the network of good friends with strong ties usually cannot travel far; traveling through the network of weak ties, the same information can travel to very distant social circles.

The more general contribution brought by the conception of the strength of weak ties into sociological thinking concerns social cohesion. People, and many sociologists as well, tend to think that strong attachments are important for social cohesion. The consequences of the strength of weak ties conception inform us that for social mobilization and cohesion the weak ties are crucial. The community connected only by strong ties might be too fragmented to trigger a collective action. On a more general theoretical level, Granovetter's reasoning challenges the thinking that large phenomena have large causes. On the contrary – important consequences are products of seemingly unimportant weak ties. Next to the studies of Milgram (1967) on the phenomenon of the small world, the strength of weak ties conception provided first network explanations of the network-like construction of societies, which later inspired also analysts of complex networks discussed in the previous section.

Harrison White's works are recognized as having an important impact on SNA. His influence started already in 1960s with the so-called Harvard Revolution, while some of his seminal papers were published in 1970s, and his opus magnum *Identity and Control* (White 2008) was released in the 2000s (Azarian 2003). From the concepts formatting the thinking about network patterns of social structure White had introduced, I am going to discuss structural equivalence, blockmodelling, and cat-domains.

Fracois Lorrain together with Harrison White (1971) introduced the notion of structural equivalence, which describes network nodes which have the same type of ties to other nodes. Thanks to structural equivalence, it is possible to discuss social roles abstracted from the characteristics of concrete persons and base their definitions on their relations with other roles, and not just their attributes. Lorrain and White (1971) called this approach "categorical-functional" because it allows to discover functions played by roles in networks and categories of actors. Categories and functions are defined by the position in the structure of relations, not by the common attribute or functional role for the system.

Blockmodelling is an analytical procedure in which researchers aggregate existent actors in blocks. Nodes grouped in one block have a similar pattern of ties connecting them inside of the block and with actors outside the block. Actors are set into blocks, which represent one position, linked (or not linked) by bonds (the aggregated patterns of ties between positions) into various blocks. Blocks are "sets of persons structurally equivalent with respect to other such sets across several types of relation" (White, Boorman, Breiger 1976: 772). Although initially the blockmodelling was applied to very small samples of data on network relations between individual actors, the idea of aggregating structurally equivalent actors into blocks to grasp the image of the social structure behind the relations of individuals is generalizable for larger networks. By the virtue of blockmodelling and structural equivalence, it is possible to perceive the structure, which is not always apparent from the data gathered on the micro-level. Even simple aggregations – like those in the tradition of survey studies of opinions and attitudes – do not allow to track the intermediations of structures as blocks based on the equivalence. Blocks might (but, of course, also might not) be a structural base for collective action and forming identities. The crucial issue for the problem of this book is that blockmodelling allows to grasp patterns that are not always perceived by social actors themselves.

In his monumental book *Identity and Control*, White (2008) synthesized his previous works and aimed at explaining how social formations emerge. In this book much attention is put to the middle-range orders and the way they are created by context (White 2008: 335). Among levels analyzed by White there are netdoms and realms. In this book, White also turned from his strong conviction that the structure has primacy over the individual. Although he highlighted that the "overall context or structure directly constrains and shapes action," he also admitted that "it is individual identities that generate the unpredictability at the core of history" (White 2008: 364). Clearly, White was very much concerned with the problem of agency-structure and eventually his claims could be categorized as similar to those of Giddens (1984) and other authors underlining the co-constitution of agency and structure. This is how the statement that "corporate actors shape and are shaped by events" (White 2008: 366) could be interpreted.

The works of White had a big influence on other authors in the field of SNA, however, his writings are less known outside this field. It is most probably due to the hermetic language and intensive use of mathematized formulations of his arguments. The most important inference from White's work is the need for including the position in the net of relations into the analysis of social role and potential for action. Another important conclusion is that a structure can be

better understood when the lack of relations between certain positions, and not the presence of relations are being looked at. This allows to turn to the conception of structural holes.

Ronald S. Burt (1992) in his conception of structural holes explored another paradox of the network structure. In his perspective, the structural hole argument was an expansion of the strength of weak ties argument in the sense that the weakness of the tie was rather a correlate, and not a cause, of their connecting character (Burt 1992: 27). Quite often the ties that connect two networks are weak, which might lead to thinking that they are important because of their low strength; yet, they are important because they are bridging two components of a network. Structural hole is "a relationship of nonredundancy between two contacts" (Burt 1992: 18). Thus, the actor who is capable of connecting through structural holes has an advantage over other actors. This inference is important and, at the same time, paradoxical because it is against common sense reasoning according to which it is important to have many connections. Yet, what is really advantageous is having connections which are crucial for the overall structure of the network – especially the ones no other actors have. Burt (1992: 8) highlights that his relationist sociology "escapes the debilitating social science practice of using player attributes for explanation." The competitiveness of an actor is not so much a function of his or her attributes, but of a function of position in the structure of relations with other actors. Burt was interested in competitiveness of entrepreneurs and that is why he was showing that for entrepreneurs having some special skills is not as important as having a structural ability to connect through structural holes. Yet, from this line of theorizing develops a perspective that any virtue or vice of an actor is rather an effect of her position in the network than of her individual attributes. This is why SNA focuses on relations and network influence on individuals. Individuals create relations and thus build networks, but their position in the networks shapes actors' qualities.

Another development in the SNA was the conception of social resources, which are defined as "the wealth, status, power as well as social ties of those persons who are directly or indirectly linked to the individual" (Lin, Ensel, Vaughn 1981: 395). According to Nan Lin and his colleagues, social resources encompass two constitutive elements: social relations and resources which are accessible through these relations. In this sense, social resources are not simply possessed by individuals – they are accessed by them. The conception of social resources later transformed into the network theory of social capital (Lin 2001). I am not going to pay much attention to the theory of social capital in this chapter, because it is going to be discussed in details in Chapter 7. Here, I just want to

mention that the most vivid approaches to social capital are built thanks to SNA's focus on accessing resources and services through social ties.

The internet, which is a network itself, was not only a trigger for the development of the new science of networks presented in the previous section, but also gave a new momentum for SNA. Again, the empirical research brought counterintuitive findings. The most important one was that on-line connections are a new medium for enhancing the already existing ties (Hampton, Wellman 2003; Quan-Haase, Wellman 2004). The internet, despite being a revolutionary technology, did not revolutionize the structure of social relations. Only a small share of people use the internet to create new ties – it is rather a tool of maintaining the ties that had already been created off-line (Chambers 2013; Ellison et al. 2011). The internet undoubtedly provides a lot of research material for the analysis of social networks. It has also raised the social awareness of the network character of society. Thanks to internet, and social media especially, the elements of network approaches entered the mainstream language. Currently this is how people and companies talk and perceive their place in society.

3.2.6 SNA – basic concepts and assumptions

If the SNA is a theory, what are its main concepts, assumptions, and research questions? Apparently, a key concept is a network, which from the formal perspective is a "collection of nodes […] and the linkages […] among them" (Giuffre 2013: 214). But the fact that a network is a social network adds some more qualities to it. In a social network, nodes are humans or collectives of humans (organizations or groups), and for that reason a given network receives additional qualities and becomes "a set of relations, associated meanings, and expectations that connect actors" (Castilla, Lan, Rissing 2013: 1000; cfr. Portes 1998; Burt 2005; Small 2009). This way of thinking about the social network is already connecting it with network conceptions of social capital, which will be discussed in more details in Chapter 7. Networks allow to transfer resources and they also provide signals to audiences (Castilla, Lan, Rissing 2013: 1001). Resources include information, learning, influence, and support, but networks are also built thanks to the exchange of physical commodities. Thanks to signals transmitted through networks, actors and broader audiences may draw inferences about abilities, legitimacy, status, and relationship meaning (Castilla, Lan, Rissing 2013: 1004–1005).

Network consists of two elements: nodes and edges. SNA differs from the new science of networks because it is only interested in nodes who are social actors. Thus, nodes are either human individuals or collectives, like groups or organizations

(Giuffre 2013: 213). Edges are the ties, linkages, or relations connecting the nodes. This element opens possibility for researchers to be creative. While nodes are in a self-explanatory way either individuals or recognized social constructions, ties are operationalized in various ways. A tie may mean that two actors interact with each other or that they know each other personally, which required at least one interaction during which they were introduced to each other. Relations may have a so-called natural character, just like family ties – in this case there might be no interaction between the actors, or they might even not know each other. Crossley (2016: 172) defines a social tie as "a sedimented interaction history embellished by the anticipated likelihood of future interaction." Ties, similarly to interactions, are not directly observable. Thus, quite often when researchers have knowledge that nodes participate in the same social setting, i.e. they are members of the same club or directorate, they assume that there is a relation between them. The relation represented as a tie may have various strengths (Granovetter 1973) measured in various ways (Marsden, Campbell 1984). They may have physical manifestations, like in case of exchanges or interactions, but they may also have important conscious or emotional components, like in case of ties of friendship.

The research on networks is inevitable for social sciences, because networks are one of the five principal ways by which people gain access to resources: market exchanges, institutional distributions, community exchanges, coercive appropriations, and self-provisioning (Wellman 1999). This distinction is of an analytical character, and social networks are in fact engaged in all modes of gaining access to resources – in case of market exchanges, it is persuasively presented in the conception of embeddedness, which will be discussed below.

Concluding this section, it needs to be reiterated that networks are metaphors thanks to which it is possible to grasp patterns of relations between actors. The relations and the regularities of these patterns are at the center of the focus of SNA. The relations between individuals – not the attributes of individuals – are key to understanding social processes (Giuffre 2013: 2–3). The dominating approach among network scholars is the structuralist approach – namely, the conviction that social structure is a causal factor for the actions and attributes of individuals. Yet, it can be noticed that there is a growing insight into the mutual co-creation of network structures and individuals. Networks are created by individuals but then, in turn, networks shape individuals. As I have demonstrated, the agency-structure problem is at the center of attention of network scholars. In the next section I will discuss how the SNA is useful for tackling the micro-macro problem in sociological theory.

3.3 How nodes are tied into society: from micro to macro

In this section I will depart from the focus on SNA and discuss how the inferences drawn from this approach can be useful in linking micro and macro. I see two ways in which SNA contributes to the micro-macro debate. The first is the debate on the embeddedness of social action in social relations; the second is the social network theory of social capital. In this chapter, I am focusing on the conception of embeddedness. I will pay much attention to the theory of social capital as a possible mediation between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis in Chapter 7.

Nick Crossley (2016), in his recent summary of relational sociology and SNA, placed this paradigm in the middle between holism (excluding actors and agency) and individualism (excluding structure). According to him, the focus on relations and their structured patterns – networks – allows solving the holism-individualism divide, because "structure is not 'above' or 'behind' actors, from this perspective, however. It lies between them" (Crossley 2016: 182). Actors in a relational account are created by relations in which they participate – it does not make sense to analyze them in separation, even if actors are more directly observable. Crossley (2016) also rejected thinking about the micro-macro divide. He preferred to think about it as a continuum between micro and macro and placing a given phenomenon somewhere in this continuum is mostly a matter of scale. He argued that events of a large scale often start as interactions between small groups of individuals (i.e. a cabinet taking an important political decision), which later affects masses of other actors, because of the mobilization of large-scale networks. Another argument regards large-scale social divisions, such as social classes, which "manifest in patterns of connection (and lack of connection) within a population" (Crossley 2016: 181). They are possible to be tracked by search of structural equivalents (Lorrain, White 1971). The structurally equivalent positions in small (micro-scale) networks in the scale of the whole population (macro-scale) are components of social stratification.

In the "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology," Mustafa Emirbayer (1997) stated that the crucial dualism of sociological theory is not agency-structure or individual-society, but substantialism-relationism. Yet, he considered how the relational perspective is useful for tackling the research problems on the macro-, meso-, and micro-level. He called to reconceptualize these levels of inquiry. On the macro-level, relational perspective is useful in the reconceptualization of the concept of society as "an autonomous, internally organized, self-sustaining 'system'" (Emirbayer 1997: 294). On the meso-level, the reconceptualization should be based on locating regularities, recurrent mechanisms, patterns, and

sequences of relations in what he calls "occasions" (Emirbayer 1997: 296). On the micro-level, relational approach should reconceptualize the individual as not unproblematic and preconstituted, but as constructed in relations with other individuals. Both Crossley and Emirbayer point to the embeddedness of actors in relations as a key to understanding social processes and structures.

Mark Granovetter (1985) in his essay "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness" took up the issues of agency and structure, and the micro- and macro-levels of analysis by applying the network perspective. It is a very general work regarding the relations of economics and sociology with a theoretical impact on all social sciences. Granovetter applied polemical strategy by refuting the famous work by Olivier Williamson (1975) on markets and hierarchies.[21] In order to achieve his theoretical goal, Granovetter critically applied the concept of "embeddedness" coined by Karl Polanyi (1944) and Denis Wrong's (1961) theory of undesrocialized and oversocialized conceptions of man in social sciences.

The simplest explanation of the embeddedness argument is as follows: "the behavior and institutions to be analyzed are so constrained by ongoing social relations that to construe them as independent is a grievous misunderstanding" (Granovetter 1985: 482). Every action – in his essay Granovetter focuses on economic action but his inferences are generalizable for every kind of social action – is driven not only by the actor's rational decisions (undersocialized conception of actor in classical economics) or his or her internalized general morality and norms (oversocialized conception of actor in functionalist sociology). According to Granovetter, paradoxically both conceptions of an actor are atomistic. In case of the undersocialized account applied in economics, in which the actor takes up rational decisions, and where the social position of actor is not theorized or recognized as frictional, it is quite obvious. In case of the oversocialized account, the behavioral patterns of the actor are internalized. The source of the norms driving actions is in the generalized morality, so "ongoing social relations thus have only peripheral effects on behavior" (Granovetter 1985: 485). In both accounts, social actors are atomized from their immediate social context, which has a network character of patterns of relations with other actors.

In his embeddedness argument, Granovetter claims that actors situated in social networks do not act mechanically according to their profiles of preferences (classical account) or internalized norms (functionalist account): they are influenced

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21 Olivier Williamson for his work on markets and hierarchies, and transaction costs received in 2009 the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences.

by the experience of past relations, concrete present relations, and expectations about future relations. The conditions for taking decisions by actors are continuously reconstructed because of the participation in relations and obligations to other actors. Referring to the discussion in Chapter 1, it is apparent that Granovetter is pointing to all three pairings crucial of sociological theory. Network of social relations is for him mediating in the individual-society pairing. Position in the structure of relations constrains and enables the agency of actors – that is, the perspective on the agency-structure pairing. Last, but not least, Granovetter shows that the analysis of networks is crucial in understanding how broad macro-structural circumstances are linked with proximate causes (as he calls micro-level phenomena). Thus, the embeddedness in a network of relations seems to be the link tying individuals with society. Without taking the networks of relations into account, both undersocialized and oversocialized perspectives analyze the atomized model of society, similar to the Hobbesian state of nature.

Granovetter analyzed the role of trust and conditions for malfeasance in economic relations. He saw trust as an effect of relations with concrete actors, not as an effect of generalized morality. Networks, in his approach, at the same time might be blocking the possibility of malfeasance and enabling it – both building confidence and breaking confidence requires mobilization of other social actors. Thus, Granovetter pointed to the salience of trust for interactions without exaggerating its role, which occurred in the 1990s after the publication of works by Putnam (1993).[22] As Granovetter (1985: 492) phrased it, "both enormous trust and enormous malfeasance, then, may follow from personal relations." It is a good summary of the embeddedness argument, according to which all kinds of action are enabled and constrained by the context of social relations (structured in networks). Contrary to Williamson's (1975) argument, there are other social structures enabling economic action than markets and hierarchies (organizations or firms) – these are networks connecting people both within the organizations and between the organizations.

Granovetter's (1985) statements on the embeddedness of action had two major interlinked sources: first, his theoretical perspective on getting a job; second, network conceptions of social structure. In his earlier work on getting a job, Granovetter (1995: 3)[23] presented the research question – "How the information that facilitates mobility is secured and disseminated?" – as a potential link

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22 The problem of trust and its incorporation into various conceptions of social capital will be discussed in Chapter 7.

23 In this book I refer to the second, extended edition of Granovetter's PhD thesis *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*, which was first published in 1974.

to integrate the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. As macro-level analyses, Granovetter pointed the works on social and labor mobility in economics and sociology, and as micro-level analyses he pointed to studies on the motives of individuals wishing to change their jobs. Granovetter (1995: 4) proposed that the study of ties connecting employees with employers and transmitting the information is the link between simple aggregation of demand (there is work to be done) and supply (people will be employed to do this work).

Another way of seeing what is on the micro- and macro-level proposed by Granovetter (1995) was to equalize micro with nearby causes and macro with distant causes. Although the micro-level in his work is understood clearly as actions of individuals and their relations with other individuals (level of ego-network), the macro-level is blurred, as it consists of both distant and large-scale objects. In this sense, weak ties are important because they are capable of linking with distant social settings (they are capable of making the world small). Granovetter (1995: 100) was also interested in how rational choices of individuals regarding their employment (micro-level) may lead to institutionalizing social inequality on the macro-level.

The in-depth study presenting the network conception of social structure and its connection with agency, which influenced the conception of embeddedness, was the work by Ronald S. Burt (1982) entitled *Toward a Structural Theory of Action: Network Models of Social Structure, Perception, and Action*.[24] Burt assumed as key for the analysis of action, the analysis of how actors evaluate the action's utility before performing it. The approaches to the evaluation of actions' utility are consequential for the microanalytical models of action and define ideal types of actors (Burt 1982: 331). In the atomistic perspective, typical for classical and neoclassical economics,[25] it is assumed that "alternative actions are evaluated independently by separate actors so that evaluations are made without reference to other actors" (Burt 1982: 331). Thus, in this model, the actor has exogenous interests. In the normative perspective, typical for the functionalist sociology,

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24 The work of Burt (1982) was categorized by Ritzer (1990) as an example of an attempt to integrate theory from the macro theoretical end. In my opinion, a careful reading of Burt's (1982) book shows that his approach was conducted without prior commitment to the micro or macro end. Early attempts to categorize network analysis by authors interested mostly in general theory were placing it together with other macro theories of social structure. It is not quite right, because the social network analysis is a different approach to social structure, departing from the micro-level of nodes and edges.

25 The same approach was also typical for the rational choice theory in sociology, which in the 1980s was attempting to solve the micro-macro dilemma in theory – see Chapter 1.

it is assumed that actors evaluate their actions interdependently but "as a function of socializing processes that integrate them within a system of actors" (Burt 1982: 332). This model assumes the endogenous interests of an actor. The interdependence is created during socialization, so it is prior to the evaluation. In the assumptions made in this model, interdependence achieved by socialization sustains the social system. Both models lack the link between the micro-level of an actor and macro-level of a system. In the atomistic action model, the macro-level is just a consequence of aggregation of many actors' actions. In the normative model, actors are formed by the systemic level in the process of socialization and then only enact the once imprinted norms.

Burt (1982) proposed the model of action, in which evaluations are made in the interdependence with other actors founded on their position in social structure (of network relations). The interests here are not exogenous or endogenous, but of a structural character. The actor (in the structural theory of action) takes into consideration the information on the network relations of other actors, whereas the actor in the atomistic theory does not. The actors (in the structural theory of action) are interdependent (like in normative theory of action), but not because the common norms shared, but because of taking into account relations with other actors. These detailed considerations of Burt are the structural basis for the conception of embeddedness. The network is a bridge between the atom of social actor and the totality of a social system.

Another perspective on the role of networks in the critical discussion on the market-hierarchy approach of Williamson (1975) came from Walter W. Powell (1990), who attempted at merging organizational theory with network analysis. Powell was not interested in the micro-macro debate, but rather in the debate on the coordination of action. His argument was that Williamson's (1975) assumptions did not allow him to see other forms of coordinating action than market or hierarchy. Economics focuses on well-defined actors, such as physical or legal persons, and well-defined interactions, such as transactions. This framing of actors is sustained even in informal settings where actors are not legal persons and transactions are not framed by legal contracts. Under such assumptions, it is difficult to grasp long-lasting relations which exceed simple iteration of transactions, collective actors of vaguely defined boundaries, and exchange of resources which are not easily tangible or measured – for example, know-how. Markets and bureaucratic hierarchies are forms of coordination well suited for exchanges of well-defined resources or mass production of standardized goods. Powell (1990) noticed that this market-hierarchy continuum does not cover situations in which there is a need of quick exchanges (hierarchies and markets tend to select the

information and slower its exchange) or there is an exchange of resources based on tacit knowledge. Without taking into account the network forms of organization, it is not possible to understand many forms of economic activities. Powell was especially interested in economic action involving inventions and large volume of knowledge. Powell (1990: 308) highlighted that network patterns "tend to be invisible to most observers. Instead of long-term rates of reproduction most participants observe individual acts of ranking, favors, and contacts." This is a very consequential remark, because it shows that certain taken-for-granted frames do not allow to perceive social structures which are crucial for collective action. This taken-for-grantedness is both a problem of certain theories in social sciences (in economics and sociology as well) and a problem of perception in every-day life.

Assuming that social actors are either legal persons or physical persons misses the network context of emergence of actors. In case of new organizations, the formal founding is not the birth of an organization, but its creation (or emergence) is a process of crystallization on the base of networks of its future founders (Powell, Oberg 2017: 450). In this sense, it is possible to treat the network form as the early stage of collective action, which later – when individuals decide to take a form of organization to pursue a collective action – becomes formalized. Similar is the case of emergence of markets (as a forms of coordination of collective action) and social fields (Padgett, Powell 2012).[26] Yet, both networks and institutions have co-constitutive aspects: norms shape collaborations and then collaborations form as networks, and eventually transform into organizations spreading the norms of collective action (Powell, Oberg 2017: 458). Thus, networks are not only means of transmission of information, resources, or reputation, but they are also able to transform social settings (Padgett, Powell 2012: 9). Networks are analyzed thanks to micro-level data (on actors and their relations), and this allows to see the macro-level phenomena – which, for Powel and Oberg (2017) are institutions – because "individuals are deeply embedded in multiple networks through their connections to friends, collaborators and mentors. These webs of affiliations create various demands and expectations, and identities are forged out of these divergent expectations" (Powell, Oberg 2017: 460). In this sense, embeddedness and transformative capacities of networks are means of linking the micro-level with the macro-level.

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26 Padgett and Powell (2012), in their monumental book on the emergence of organizations and markets from earlier social networks, use the parallel of the chemical process of autocatalysis. The authors highlight that "in the short run, actors make relations, but in the long run, relations make actors" (Padgett, Powell 2012: 3).

Mario Luis Small (2009) coined the notion of "organizational embeddedness" in order to look at the relation between organizations and networks from the other end. He was particularly interested in how organizations influence the creation of social ties and quality of networks. The organizational embeddedness perspective suggests that a "person's social capital depends substantially on the institutional practices of the organizations in which the person routinely participates. If embedded in the right organizations, a person can acquire significant advantages, through the workings of these networks, which yield palpable effects on their well-being" (Small 2009: 177). The focus of Small (2009: 178) is less on the structure (of networks) and rather on the (organizational) context of creating ties. Personal ties are created not only thanks do everyday routines of organizations, but also because of the interconnections of organizations. The main interest of Small's research are social inequality and the circumstances under which social ties form. These problems are connected, because the inequality in access to social networks reproduces the more general inequalities. Thus, the organizational embeddedness perspective links the micro-level processes of tie formation and maintenance with macro-level structures of state policies and inter-organizational networks. Small (2009: 190–191) labels this perspective "a meso-level approach to social inequality, one that seeks regularities in how people interact, obtain information, trust others, respond to obligations, acquire supportive services, and secure everyday material goods – and probes the organizational mechanisms by which these actions can be tied to state authority, the collaboration between the public and private sectors, and the large organizational networks central to structural inequality." In organizations in which people participate routinely – Small studied kindergartens – actors nonpurposely form ties as by-products of interactions. This is more likely in organizational environments which influence them to interact frequently, with a focus on some activity and when they have a reason to cooperate rather than to compete (Small 2009: 15).

The attempt to merge relational sociology focused on embeddedness and social networks with institutional analysis was also made by more institutionally oriented scholars, such as Victor Nee and Paul Ingram (1998). In their view, institutions are macro-level phenomena and social networks are located closer to the micro-level. Because of the interdependence of networks and organizations, the networks finally influence the institutions, because "organizations in turn affect formal norms through political action, while their performance determines performance at the macro-level" (Nee, Ingram 1998: 32). Nee and Ingram's perspective brought attention as another attempt to integrate institutional analysis with SNA.

Knowing from Granovetter (1985) that economic action is embedded in networks of social relations, and from Small (2009) that networks are organizationally embedded, Steve McDonald coined the notion of "dual embeddedness" merging the two levels. The economic action unfolds in "networks of social relations that are themselves set in specific national, social and economic institutional arrangements" (McDonald, Benton, Warner 2012: 76). McDonald with his colleagues (2012) explored an interesting paradox: in the coordinated German labor market there are more jobs obtained through informal personal contacts[27] than in the loosely coordinated American labor market. Intuitively, on the loosely coordinated labor market there should be more informal matching and the coordinated labor market should be effecting in formal matching. Yet, there is convincing evidence that various organizational settings of coordinated German labor market (i.e. trade unions, work councils, occupational education establishments) produce possibilities of forming social ties, which are later helpful in informal job matching. In the US, the coordination is weaker, so people often need to use formal (coordinated) modes to get jobs (McDonald et al. 2012).

Figure 3.1 Dual embeddedness and beyond
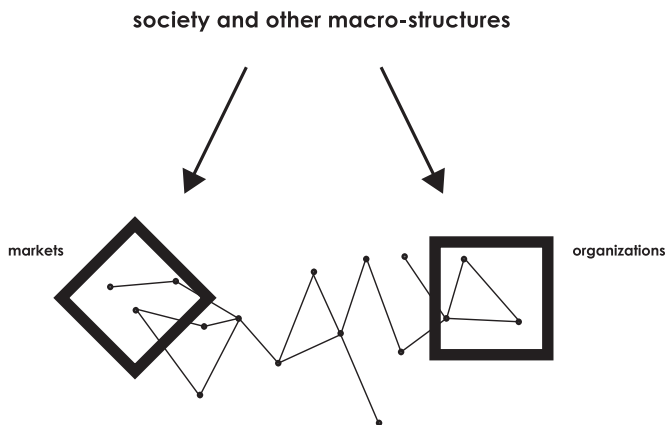
27 The authors carefully calculated as informal also the situations in which the employee was not searching for the job. According to their analysis, unsolicited job offers are more common in Germany, thanks to the organizational settings allowing routine exchanges of information through social networks (McDonald et al. 2012). This phenomenon is called the "invisible hand of social capital" and it is discussed in Chapter 7.

I am convinced that the conception of embeddedness is the most promising network approach to linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis. The embeddedness has then a double meaning (not only when the concept of dual embeddedness is considered): it draws attention to the fact that actions are embedded in social relations, but it also means that various levels of analysis are embedded in each other. It is impossible to understand the actions of an individual without considering the relations that form and constrain the individual. The relations have patterns of a network character, which are shaped by institutional and organizational settings. These settings are shaped by macro-powers of state and economy from the top-down approach, but from the bottom-up approach, organizations, markets, and fields emerge from the stabilization of networks of relations.

3.4 Concluding remarks

The aim of this chapter was to present the insights from the SNA to the debate on the micro-macro problem. I presented a variety of network approaches (namely, network exchange theory, Manuel Castells' theory of network society, actor-network theory, and new science of networks) and briefly discussed their contribution to the micro-macro debate. I focused on the SNA and I argued that it is not another form of structural extremism in its radical version, or an attempt to integrate the theory from the macro theoretical end in its "soft" version, as some commenters believe (see Ritzer 1990). Thinking in network terms currently dominates in the realm of social sciences. The social structure is currently perceived as a complex combination of networks, and not as a combination of groups, as sociologists tended to do for a very long time. Now, even if the notions of group, community, or society are used by sociologists, they cannot be fully described without mentioning their network component. There is also persuasive evidence and there are strong theoretical frames of the mutual co-constitution of networks and organizations, and markets.

After an overview of the most important insights from the SNA, such as the small world problem, issue of trust in network relations, the conception of the strength of weak ties, structural equivalence, structural holes, social resources, and the studies on internet, I presented the basic assumptions and notions of SNA. I needed this base to discuss how theorizing in network terms allows to integrate the micro-macro divide. Network scholars are very much preoccupied with the agency-structure pairing. The relationist thinking, which lays at the foundation of SNA, allows to tackle the great pairings of sociological theory differently than from the substantialist perspective. In this theoretical framework, actors (individual or collective) are always shaped by the structure of the relations in which they are

embedded, so the individual-society pairing is also considered. In case of micro-macro pairing, in my opinion, the most important contribution of SNA is brought by the two theories: the theory of embeddedness and the theory of social capital. The latter is going to be discussed separately in Chapter 7. The former was presented above with much attention to the way it relates to the micro-macro debate.

The discussion about the embeddedness – a concept coined by Polanyi (1944) and reinterpreted in network terms by Granovetter (1985) – is a good example of SNA's capability of bringing together various levels of analysis. Actions (and therefore actors) are embedded in social relations. Patterns of relations take a network form, but these networks are created in the context of organizations, markets, and social fields. The state and other large macro-level phenomena shape the conditions of network emergence. In this way, the notion of dual embeddedness is reached. Yet, the link is not unidirectional, because networks after tipping a certain point of equilibrium trigger the emergence of new organizations and markets (Padgett, Powell 2012). The conception of embeddedness and the debate about it teaches about the complex linkages between actors, relations, structures at various levels of analysis.

The power of SNA (recently made even stronger, thanks to the tools of the new science of networks) is based on relatively simple assumptions and terminology. Nodes, ties, and networks are elements which open the possibility of building quite complicated statements and models illustrating social processes. What is a key issue for the subject of this book is that relationist assumptions and tools of SNA bring attention to phenomena which are often unnoticed. A good and still inspiring example is the conception of the strength of weak ties. The role that weak ties have for the cohesion of communities, mobilization of resources, and transfer of information is unnoticeable both for the common sense and numerous sociological theories. Social relations are often difficult to be tracked empirically, but it does not mean that they do not have an impact on social processes. The role of actors capable of bridging the structural holes and not having any structural equivalence is not always easily perceivable from the participant's perspective and might be noticed only after the analysis of a larger network. The knowledge about the small world phenomenon informs how close (in the social sense) people are to each other and, at the same time, what the social barriers between people are. Weak ties linking individuals are often not treated as something important for them, but on the structural level they allow the exchanges of resources and information. Finally, SNA teaches that large and important events or processes do not always have large and important causes. Thanks to this knowledge, it is now recognized that looking always for some large causal forces might be misleading.

Part II: The sociological vacuum: the story of the spell cast on Polish sociologists

4 Polish sociology in the 1970s, Stefan Nowak, and the sociological vacuum thesis

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the thesis on the sociological vacuum and clearly present the assumptions behind it. The thesis on the sociological vacuum is treated in this book as a key to understanding the salience of conceptualizing the micro-macro link in sociology. Thus, this chapter may be treated as a background description introducing the actual narrative on the most important question of sociology in relation to the problem of the link between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. This chapter is also an introduction to the second part of the book. Making the concept of the sociological vacuum clear is a preliminary condition to examining how this concept was later applied in various research domains.

The chapter has the following arrangement. In order to understand the most often cited sociological statement on Polish society (Pawlak 2015), I present its founder professor Stefan Nowak and describe the social, as well as the theoretical, context in which the concept was launched. I briefly reconstruct the survey-positivist program dominating in Polish sociology of 1970s. After a presentation of the thesis itself, I discuss the possible interpretations of its theoretical and methodological validity.

4.2 Stefan Nowak

Stefan Nowak was born in 1924 and started his sociological studies at the University of Warsaw, right after the end of World War II, in 1946. His mentor was Stanisław Ossowski, trained philosopher, pioneer of humanistic sociology, respected for his integrity. Ossowski was a product of the Lviv-Warsaw school of philosophy, so his writings were elegant and disciplined in terms of language. Ossowski's work, although nowadays it is considered to be rather outdated, still impresses with the clarity of definitions of basic sociological concepts. For sociology, the Stalinist era in Poland (1948–1956) was a period of persecution, affecting also Ossowski, who was not allowed to teach students for a certain time. As I will demonstrate later, Nowak's conception of sociology was very much different

from the one of his supervisor, yet there were also similarities between them in the care for clarity and the use of well-defined notions (Sułek 2014).

The period of political thaw in 1956 resulted with the reintroduction of sociological studies to the University of Warsaw and brought the great possibility of launching contacts with American sociology in the framework of Fulbright scholarships (Sułek 2011: 96–141). Stefan Nowak travelled to the USA, where at Columbia University he met Paul Lazarsfeld and became acquainted with the newly developing techniques of survey research. For this reason, in the hagiographical narrations of Stefan Nowak, authors describe him as "the one who brought the survey sociology from USA to Poland" or "the master of Polish survey sociology." The first time that Nowak applied the newly acquired methodological knowledge was in the study on students of Warsaw conducted in 1963. The research on the worldviews and values of students of Warsaw developed into a kind of Nowak's life-time project. Nowak surveyed the students, experimenting with the usage of quantitative research techniques.

Poland under the communist rule was a very difficult place for conducting sociological surveys, which one has to have in mind when evaluating Nowak's work. Empirical research in Poland was at that time uncommon, and the survey technique was something that Polish sociologists were still learning to use. The situation of taking part in a questionnaire interview was awkward for respondents, who often perceived interviewers as potential informers of the communist secret service, thus making it impossible to ask direct questions regarding, for example, opinions on the authorities. The surveys were conducted rarely and every piece of empirical material was analyzed for quite a long time. It is also important to mention the lack of the now obvious analytical tools such as statistical applications for personal computers.[28] For this reason, running simple two-variable correlation required serious effort.

Stefan Nowak made an impact on sociology in Poland mainly with his strong statements on sociological methodology. He published a collection of American methodological articles (Nowak 1965) and handbook of methodology (Nowak 1970), which served Polish students of sociology at least for 30 years. Nowak also became a head of the Unit of Methodology of Sociological Research at the Institute of Sociology where he gathered a team of young – and strongly influenced by him – researchers. Apparently, Nowak was a charismatic leader of the

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28 Since 1973, Polish quantitative sociologists have been analyzing data in computational centers "Świerk" and "Cyfronet," which were equipped with CDC Cyber-72 mainframe computers. The data was input on punch cards. I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this information.

circle he developed. In the years 1976–1983 he served as President of the Polish Sociological Association – professional organization of Polish sociologists, which under the communist rule managed to remain a forum of open debates and democratic procedures.

Nowak was a positivist – more a student of Lazarsfeld than Ossowski. He called for the development of deductive theory, operationalization of concepts in research procedures, hypotheses testing and creating conceptions which would enable making predictions. He looked at society through the lenses of indicators, but preferred indicators of the social consciousness obtained by surveys rather than indicators of behaviors, possibly obtained by observation (Grabowska, Sułek 1992; Sułek 1998).

After his death, just after the fall of communism in 1989, Nowak became "sanctified" by some of his disciples. The main auditorium of his former Institute became named after him, and so was the prize in methodology of social sciences awarded by the same institute. Nowak's disciples edited a volume devoted to his life and his works (Sułek 1992), followed by a collection of his shorter works and essays (Nowak 2009).

4.3 Survey sociology: measurement of attitudes, values, and society as an aggregate of individuals

As I have already mentioned, Nowak was the leader of the survey sociology movement in Poland. In this section, I aim to reconstruct the program of sociology, in which Nowak was engaged, and discuss its understanding of sociology, key concepts, research methods, and key topics under research. The scientific program of Nowak's sociology has been recently discussed in detail by Jakub Motrenko (2017).

Nowak did not formulate any particular definition of sociology, but it is quite clear that he understood it as a science on social collectives (see Nowak 1985: 38–39). Understanding sociology as a science of society is, in fact, a striking feature of most works in the framework of the main paradigm of sociology in Poland of 1970s. The main subject studied by sociology was the society and collectives which sum up to this society – not social reality, not social institutions, not social action, and not sociability. Society was also understood literally as a synonym of the population of a given country. Thus, the main objective of sociology as an academic activity was to study the society of a given country: Polish sociologist were supposed to deliver the knowledge about Polish society. This sociology was heavily positivist, so social science was supposed to be objective and universal, but its laws might have had historical limitations. A society was

limited by its territory, and sociology was interested in researching its current condition.

If "society" became equated with "population," how were sociology and demography different in this approach? The difference lay in the interest in phenomena related to social consciousness. The phenomena researched by sociologists were attitudes and values, i.e. attributes located in human minds. What was then the difference between sociology and psychology? Making one step back, it is important to remember that sociology was designed as a study of society, but the society was understood as a simple aggregate of individuals. Thus, when talking about values of Polish society, Nowak was simply describing the frequencies with which values where shared by individuals.

This understanding of society was integrated into survey methodology. Sociologists had a research tool (questionnaire interview) thanks to which they could gather data regarding the individuals' states of consciousness and then, through a basic statistical aggregation, give statements on the society. In order to aggregate the results about individuals, tools needed to be standardized. An interview is a technique based on communication, so the obtained information about the individual needed to be mediated through the language. Respondents were expected to be able to express their values and attitudes. Thus, the respondents described their states of minds in a standardized manner, which was then aggregated to the level of society. The individual was on the micro-level, society was on the macro-level, and the mediation was… a sociologist who was aggregating the individual into the social.

The concept of the structure of the society as an arrangement of relations between social groups was developed by Ossowski (1968). Contrary to the sociology of social structure developed by Wesołowski (1966) and Słomczyński (1972), Nowak perceived society as the largest social group including smaller social groups. It is accurate to label this approach to social structure, after Brubaker (2004: 7), as an example of groupism: group as a category of practice is also treated as a category of an analysis. In Nowak's paradigm, the groups were perceived again through the lenses of consciousness: a group was constituted by a sense of belonging.

This picture of society in Nowak's sociology is static. First, it is because Nowak analyzes the states of consciousness. Secondly, it is because the groups are perceived not as potential actors but as objects to which individuals relate in their consciousness. Finally, it is because the society is treated as the larger possible group or simple aggregational category. Dynamics is possible to be observed only as changes in time of frequencies of individual states of consciousness. It is

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possible to say what society thinks, what it perceives as appropriate, in what it believes, and even what it desires. On the language level, society as an aggregate often became personified. But in this social ontology it is really hard to describe how various entities act. Action in this paradigm is perceived as somehow conditioned by attitudes and values.

In Nowak's paradigm, institutions were understood along the common-sense definition as offices or workplaces. There was nearly no place for relations between individuals. Researchers were often evaluating the individuals' perceptions of their relations with certain objects: institutions, territories or social groups. A notion of bond was predominantly understood as relation between an individual and a social group (Malikowski 1979).

The subjects of study were predominantly attitudes and values, sometimes organized in broader arrangements as ideologies, which made it a dispositional sociology – focusing on the dispositions of individuals. The research questions seen as interesting in the survey-positivist paradigm concerned identifying socio-demographic variables which conditioned values and attitudes. Another studied topic were the changes of the values of attitudes in time – understood as changes in frequencies of pointing to survey items indicating given values and attitudes – and their intergenerational transmission. Values and attitudes were supposed to be preconditions of action but, as mentioned earlier, social action was not the subject of studies.[29]

The social context in which Nowak and his disciples conducted research cannot be forgotten. The late 1970s in Poland were a period of economic crisis and disappointment with the rule of Edward Gierek. The possibilities of conducting empirical sociological studies were very limited and researchers could not easily refine their arguments or empirically test new statements. In this scientific and social context, the thesis on the sociological vacuum was coined.

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29 The lack of the theory of action seems to be the crucial reason for the later problems with explaining the emergence of the Solidarność social movement. This sociological paradigm was attuned to research "static" societies. The sociology focused on values has significant problems with explaining actions. John Levi Martin (2011: 309) illustrates it with interpretation of Milgram's (1974) experiment. If the values were to drive action, the value "don't torture the innocent" would stop the majority of people, who took part in Milgram's experiment from inducing electric shocks. Yet, put simply, action is driven by the recognition of expectations how to act in a certain institutional context.

4.4 Thesis on Poland's sociological vacuum

During the 5th Congress of Polish Sociologists in 1977, Nowak suggested that the "worrying void in our society" should become a subject of sociological study from dynamic perspectives (Nowak 1979c). In the next years, the idea matured and became one of the main points of Nowak's presentation given in 1979, during a session of the "Poland 2000" committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The text of his presentation was published twice – first as an essay "Przekonania i odczucia współczesnych" [Beliefs and Feelings of Contemporary People] (Nowak 1979a), and then in the leading Polish sociological journal *Studia Socjologiczne* under the title "System wartości społeczeństwa polskiego" [The Value System of Polish Society] (Nowak 1979b). As the latter is the most commonly quoted version, I will mainly use this reference for the purposes of this study. Its English translation was published in "The Polish Sociological Bulletin" (Nowak 1980), and in the year following the eruption of the Solidarność social movement, due to increased interest in Poland, Nowak reiterated his arguments in *Scientific American* in the article "Values and Attitudes of Polish People" (Nowak 1981). Nowak stated: "From the point of view of people's identification and their emotional involvement there exists a kind of sociological vacuum between the level of primary groups and that of the national community. If we wished to draw a gigantic 'sociogram' based on people's bonds and identifications, the social structure of our society perceived in those terms would appear as a 'federation' of primary groups, families and circles of friends united in a national community, with rather insignificant other types of bonds between those two levels" (Nowak 1979b: 160; original translation in Nowak 1980: 9).

In the two earlier mentioned articles, Nowak used the term "próżnia socjologiczna" [sociological vacuum] (Nowak 1979a; 1979b); this term was repeated in the English translation published in "The Polish Sociological Bulletin" (Nowak 1980), but in the ulterior publication discussing the concept in English (Nowak 1981), he used the term "social vacuum." As I have stated earlier, for terminological unity with the Polish publications I analyze, I have decided to use the term "sociological vacuum" throughout this book.

Nowak saw the vacuum as a peculiarity of Polish society. In his view, "the 'objective' social structure, and even more, the institutional structure of the society [in Poland], is as complex as in many other industrialized countries" (Nowak 1979b: 160). However, the "subjective" social structure, based on individuals' identifications, was distinctive from other modern societies. Nowak considered this peculiarity to be problematic: Polish society was lacking something. He explained the absence of identifications with intermediary-level institutions by

positing the occurrence of alienation from these institutions. People were not forming social groups and were not thinking about themselves in terms of "we."

In his essay, Nowak also made other remarks about Polish society and the moral values shared by Poles. He distinguished between the world of people and the world of institutions and pointed out that the dispersion of values in this country was almost random – there were no class or generational differences. According to Nowak, religion played only the role of a private philosophy, and thus it was not really capable of coalescing social groups around its institutions.

Nowak perceived the sociological vacuum as a highly problematic phenomenon. According to him, it was connected with the alienation from institutions and a low level of societal integration. As he perceived social groups as the most important social structures, the society lacking middle-sized groups was debilitated from the possibility of many forms of collective action. The announcement of the existence of a sociological vacuum was highly dramatic in tone. One cannot forget that Nowak formulated the thesis in the period of late 1970s when Poland under Gierek's rule was in deep economic crisis.

The most known version of Nowak's statement is an essay, in which the author did not cite any particular empirical data. Yet, the article published in *Scientific American* (Nowak 1981), explains that empirical base for the thesis on the sociological vacuum was built on surveys conducted in two big Polish cities – Warsaw and Kielce – among high school pupils and their parents. In the next section, I will discuss the validity of Nowak's thesis.

4.5 The sociological vacuum: brilliant intuition or a methodological artifact?

Nowak attempted to test the hypotheses about the trans-generational transmission of values. To reach that aim, together with his team he conducted a survey research among youth studying in high schools (in Polish, "liceum ogólnokształcące" and "technikum") and their parents. In the sample, there were 686 pupils and their 1228 parents from Kielce,[30] and 1220 pupils and their 2004 parents from Warsaw (Grabowska 1989: 16). The study was conducted in 1972 and 1973. Among other questions, the respondents were asked: "With which of the following categories of people do you feel particularly strong bonds?"

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30 City in central Poland. During Nowak's survey it was inhabited by approximately 150,000 people.

(Nowak 1981: 52).[31] The respondents could choose 5 out of the 14 categories of people presented to them.

Table 4.1 Hierarchy of social ties

Categories of identification	Warsaw		Kielce	
	Parents	Youth	Parents	Youth
Family	97%	92%	94%	95%
Friends, close colleagues and close acquaintances	70%	78%	60%	79%
Colleagues from your school or workplace	48%	30%	46%	42%
The Polish nation	43%	40%	40%	35%
Acquaintances from your neighbourhood	36%	20%	34%	28%
People who are interested in the same things you are (Youth) People who have the same occupation (Parents)	27%	35%	28%	30%
People who think as you do	27%	35%	23%	51%
Mankind in general	17%	19%	17%	13%
People of your age group	15%	20%	15%	33%
People of the same religion	9%	9%	12%	10%
Members of the same political organization	9%	9%	10%	9%
People of the same economic position	8%	0%	9%	6%

Source: Nowak 1981: 52

Table 4.1 presents the results obtained by Nowak's research team.[32] What is striking, is the fact that the results were interpreted according to the rule of thumb. In the formulation of his thesis, Nowak highlighted that there is a vacuum between identifications with family and close friends on the micro-level, and the nation on the macro-level. Three categories of respondents (all respondents from Kielce

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31 The question in Polish was formulated as follows: "Jakich ludzi uważasz za bliskich sobie i czujesz się z nimi szczególnie związany?" (Szawiel 1989: 204). The direct translation into English should therefore be: "What kind of people do you consider as close and feel a particular connection to?"

32 Table 4.1 presents the results according to Nowak (1981: 52). In another presentation of the same results (Szawiel 1989: 205) there are differences in frequencies of some categories.

and parents from Warsaw) were more often pointing to their colleagues from school or colleagues from the workplace than to the Polish nation as a group that they identified with. Nowak claimed that institutions (such as schools or workplaces) are alienating and not creating the feeling of togetherness and the notion of "we" (1979b: 161). Yet, while, focusing on the identification with the Polish nation, Nowak ignored the identification with school friends and colleagues from work, which could be easily interpreted as identification with an organization. At least in the group of parents, the identifications with acquaintances from the neighborhood were just barely less frequent than identifications with the Polish nation. Again, in the statement about the sociological vacuum, local identifications (as identifying with neighbors could be easily interpreted) are also absent.

There is also a problem with the justification of the extrapolation of the results. The sample of students from high schools (schools leading to tertiary education) and their parents from one large city and one medium-sized town is not representative for the entire Poland, because it includes a disproportionate number of inhabitants of bigger cities and better educated people. For instance, the research conducted by Paweł Starosta (1995) in small Polish towns and villages in the early 1990s revealed a relatively strong and frequently expressed identifications with local communities.

Can it, therefore, be simply said that the thesis is an over-interpretation of empirical data? The answer of the disciples of Nowak would be that the thesis was not only grounded in this single empirical result, but it was also an effect of interpretation of other survey data (especially the ones about students of Warsaw), and – what is most important – that it was an outcome of the sociological intuition of Nowak (Grabowska, Sułek 1992: 25–26). In this line of interpretation, the data gathered among the youth and parents from Kielce and Warsaw was just an inspiration to form a thesis about the Polish society. The thesis then should be understood as not grounded in particular empirical research but in kind of a synthetic wisdom about Polish society. Nowak, according to this interpretation, thanks to his intuition, was able to grasp the atmosphere of the 1970s in communist Poland.

There is some irony in the "brilliant intuition" interpretation of Nowak's thesis. After all, he was a methodological positivist, who claimed that statements on the society needed to be grounded in empirical data and expressed in the language of operationalized notions. It is possible to assume that Nowak was right to ignore the identifications with colleagues from the workplace and school, as well as acquaintances from the neighborhood, because the category "colleagues from the workplace and school" was understood by Nowak's team as "narrow circle of

well and very well known persons" (Szawiel 1989: 206). According to this interpretation, this category was not considered as a middle-range category, but just as another small/primal group on the micro-level of potential identification. The acquaintances from the neighborhood could have been ignored as those pointed less often. Thus, there is a line of interpreting the thesis as valid on the ground of the assumptions and methods applied by survey-positivist paradigm. As the next step in tackling the empirical grounds for the sociological vacuum thesis, I will deal with the methodological assumptions behind it.

As I have already written in the section on Nowak's program of sociology, this approach belongs to groupist sociology seeing in social groups central social structures. In this approach, a group is constituted when its members feel the bond with the group. The group is a category of social consciousness, so if it is not noticed or recognized by respondents as important or meaningful, it does not have consequences for social processes. This line of thinking is not a simple effect of the questionnaire technique application. In survey research it is still possible to ask questions about simple behaviors and, after constructing indexes, to find something about variables which are not recognized by respondents. Yet, the subjects of Nowak's research were attitudes and values, and their direct expression by members of society.

This is another possible line of interpretation: the sociological vacuum thesis is an artifact of methodology applied. Behind this methodology there is a certain social ontology according to which social groups are the most important social structures. The survey methodology of research of attitudes and values does not allow to grasp social practices on the low level of consciousness, or social structures that might be crucial for the social processes but are not noticed, or are regarded as not important. In this line of critique, authors like Morawski (2010) and Rychard (2010) pointed that a workplace in communist Poland could not have been an object of people's positive identifications, yet it had been an important institution organizing social life. Similarly, Kamiński (1992) claimed that the institution organizing social life which was overlooked by Nowak was the Catholic Church, which needed to be considered not only as provider of services to spiritual needs but also an institutional platform for socializing. This institutional line of critique may be extended by other structures mentioned in Chapter 2. Similarly, the method applied by Nowak could not grasp ties and larger networks connecting people discussed in Chapter 3 and highlighted in Janine R. Wedel's (1992b) critique.

In the comparison of Poland's subjective social structure to the subjective social structures of other societies, it can be noticed that Nowak had in mind a

certain model of the way in which the society should be structured. According to this model, a "healthy" society should be characterized by vivid social groups of various ranges built on strong bonds. It is not clear why Nowak believed that the social organization of other societies looked in such a way. He pointed to the vacuum as a peculiarity of Polish society but without making an actual comparison to other societies. Wedel (1992b) noticed that this is an effect of a typical positivist way of thinking which assumes a certain model of society and tests whether the collected data fits this model. What is more, as pointed out by Starosta (1995), the concern with the lack of intermediary structures was not something new and typical for Poland, and was expressed for the first time in USA by William Kornhauser (1960) in his thesis on the loss of community.

As it can be seen, the thesis on the sociological vacuum is strongly embedded in the positivist survey approach to sociology represented by Nowak. The objective social structure of Poland was according to him the same as in other industrialized societies, yet the subjective social structure represented by the feeling of belonging to certain social groups was considered problematic. What needs to be highlighted is the simple truth that the vacuum in a subjective social structure is a problematic issue, if the theory assumes that subjective structures are of significance. The problem of the sociological vacuum is a consequence of certain theoretical and methodological assumptions. If these are recognized as irrelevant or wrong, the thesis loses its validity or might be considered as an artifact of a certain methodology.

The thesis of Nowak started its own life, when other authors began to apply it in their works. The detailed discussions on the four subject domains are present in the next chapters, however here I would like to make some general remarks on the way the thesis was used by other scholars. It is important to notice that the uses of Nowak's thesis were transforming the original thesis (Pawlak 2015; 2016). There are two types of transformations I have found in the review of literature citing the thesis: shift in meaning and selective application. In the first type of transformation, the thesis was not treated as a thesis on weak level of identifications with intermediary structures but as a thesis on the weakness of these structures. In extreme cases of shifting the meaning, the thesis was treated as saying that there are no structures on the intermediary level at all. I am convinced that shift in meaning is a misinterpretation of the sociological vacuum thesis. Nowak never claimed that the structures itself are weak or non- existent. He actually said that the objective social structure in Poland is similar to the ones in other industrialized societies (Nowak 1979b: 160), although he believed that intermediary level structures (like organizations) are alienating their participants.

Moreover, many authors citing Nowak's thesis not only shift its meaning but also apply it selectively by ignoring the identification with the Polish nation. In that way the thesis is treated as a thesis on atomization, which is also not consistent with Nowak's intentions. The element of identifying with the nation was important for the thesis, and Nowak treated it as a sign of rejecting the alienating, authoritarian state.

4.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have described the context in which the thesis on the sociological vacuum was developed by Stefan Nowak. I analyzed the assumptions of his survey-positivist sociology, its social ontology and, consequences of use of its techniques. After a presentation of the thesis, I discussed the possible interpretations of its status. I claim that the thesis on Poland's sociological vacuum may be considered in the following four ways: (1) as a valid empirical statement grounded in survey-positivist paradigm of sociology; (2) as an invalid statement deduced by the rule of thumb from the empirical results that could be interpreted in an opposite way; (3) as brilliant intuition, relatively loosely grounded in empirical data but providing important message about Polish society; (4) as an artifact of the used method.

The sociology of Nowak, and the sociological vacuum thesis in particular, are good examples of the key tension between local engagement and international academic excellence, which – according to Marta Bucholc (2016) – has been troubling sociologists in Poland. Nowak imported to Poland survey methodology which at the times was considered as sophisticated, and pursued a positivistic, universally valid program of sociology as a science. Yet, his methodology handbooks are now out of fashion, and due to the technological development of computational capabilities of quantitative data analysis his empirical works are also outdated. Ironically, the only aspect of his work which is still not disputed and continues to be seen by some as current is the thesis of dubious methodological status and clearly local validity. Still, the thesis is very often repeated with a shifted meaning and an omitted national component.

The thesis on the sociological vacuum has consequences for the understanding of the relations between the micro- and macro-levels of society. In the sociology of Nowak, the micro-level consists of individuals and small groups based on face-to-face contacts. The macro-level includes the largest groups covering the society, which in Nowak's reasoning equals nation. The problem signaled by the thesis is the lack of something in the middle: the lack of meso-structures capable to link individuals and primary groups with the society. The test for the thesis

on the sociological vacuum and the whole survey-positivist paradigm came in August 1980 when the workers of the shipyard in Gdańsk initiated large-scale mass protests and called into life the Solidarność movement. The question of Solidarność's relevance to the problem of the micro-macro link in sociology is the subject of the next chapter.

5 Solidarność: how atomized individuals mobilized as a social movement?

5.1 Introduction

There were several episodes of social unrest in the history of the communist rule in Poland that took place in 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1976. Yet, the protests of summer 1980 and the following emergence of the social movement institutionalized in the form of the trade union Solidarność were the longest, engaged the largest number of people, and had the strongest political implications. The scale of these implications continues to be discussed to this day. In some narratives, Solidarność plays the key role in dismantling the communist system in Eastern Europe, but even in other – much more modest approaches – the movement and its formation is regarded as influencing political life in Poland even today.

The rise of Solidarność, or the period of Solidarność's "carnival"[33] in 1980 and 1981, is an extremely interesting period for Polish social sciences and historiography. The protests brought international focus on Poland, which also resulted in sociological interpretations of the phenomenon. The most often used frame is the one of social movements, but other interpretive frames have also been used. As Elżbieta Ciżewska (2010a) summarized, the other accounts are: Solidarność as a working-class protest; Solidarność as a revolution; religiosity of Solidarność; Solidarność as a national insurrection; Solidarność as a civil society; and political philosophy of Solidarność's republicanism. I will return to these accounts in the following sections of this chapter. This list of framings is apparently not a classification but rather a typology of themes found by scholars as central and then used by them to frame the events of 1980 and 1981 as meaningful. Some of the threads present in those different frames are accounted in others, but as less salient or in different configurations. It is especially the frame of civil society that continues to come back whenever scholars consider Solidarność's roots of civil society in Poland after 1989 (this topic is going to be discussed in detail in

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33 "Carnival" is the term used by the participants of the 1980–1981 Solidarność mobilization to describe the special and unusual atmosphere of this time.

Chapter 6). The social movement approach is, in my opinion, the most relevant to the issue of the sociological vacuum. The often rhetorically stated question which appeared in the sociology of Solidarność was: How is it possible that such a strong social movement emerged in a society suffering from a vacuum?

The chapter is organized as follows. First, I start with a brief reconstruction of the events of 1980 and 1981 when the Solidarność social movement was active in Poland. The next section discusses how scholars associated the sociological vacuum with Solidarność. In this section I discuss mainly two issues: how the mechanism of filling the vacuum by the social movement was perceived, and how the emergence of the social movement was perceived as the falsification of the thesis on the sociological vacuum. The following section presents insights from various works on Solidarność which are in coherence with theories providing robust solutions to the micro-macro problem. The chapter is concluded by the summary in which, I point to the fact that the thesis on the sociological vacuum was mostly used when authors were attempting to explain the phenomenon of Solidarność in a metaphysical way.

5.2 The outburst of Solidarność: the most interesting event in Polish social history

In this section I will concentrate on reconstructing the actual events that took place in 1980 and 1981. I find it important because the mythological and even metaphysical narratives about Solidarność are very much present in discourses on it. This includes also debates in social sciences. The following reconstruction is based mostly on the work of Antoni Dudek (2010).[34] On the 1st of July 1980 the communist government raised the prices of meat products in factory canteens. This triggered protests in factories located in various cities. The atmosphere in Poland this summer was hot. On August 14, workers of the shipyard in Gdańsk decided to go on strike to protest against dismissing one of their colleagues. Their postulates were not only of an economical character, but they also included building the statue of shipyarders murdered in protests that took place in December 1970. On the next day, other enterprises and public transportation

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34 I am conscious that it is impossible to describe only the facts and that every historical narration contains an interpretation of events, also formed by the genre used (White 1973). Yet, it is necessary to start from some description focusing on the events. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, many considerations on Solidarność and years 1980 and 1981 in Poland are either full of metaphysical pathos, or omit events recognizing the timeline as something obvious for the readers who have somehow witnessed them.

in Gdańsk agglomeration also went on strike. On the third day of the strike, the management of the shipyard decided to set a bargain with striking workers. The leaders of the strike decided to terminate the protest, but under the pressure of workers from other enterprises, already present in the shipyard, finally the protest was not ceased. According to Antoni Dudek (2010: 15), this was the first turning point in the formation of the mass movement. On the following night, a committee coordinating the protest action among various enterprises was created, leading to the announcement of the list of 21 postulates (many of them were of political and not economical character, including the postulate to create trade unions independent from communist party supervision). This meant that the protest became a coordinated action of workers from various establishments. In the following days, workers in other cities went on strike using the same practice of coordinating strikes in various enterprises and announcing similar postulates. On the August 20th, 64 intellectuals (mostly from Warsaw) issued an open letter to the government, in which they insisted on negotiating with workers. Following the announcement of the letter, the group of so-called "experts" came from Warsaw to support the workers in their negotiations. On August 31, deputy prime minister Jagielski and the leader of the strikers, Lech Wałęsa, signed an agreement accepting 21 postulates of the protesters. The Gdańsk agreement became a starting point for the negotiations in other protesting cities, but also for the creation of self-organized workers' structures, similar to those in Gdańsk, in cities in which there had previously been no strikes.

On September 17, the representatives of workers' commissions from 20 cities gathered in Gdańsk and made the decision to create a trade union (Gdańsk agreement of August 31 guaranteed the workers the right to establish a trade union) uniting the emerging organizations from the whole country, organized on the basis of regional branches.[35] Then, also in September, similar self-organized trade-unions were created also by farmers and university students. The growth of Solidarność's structures was impressive – in the middle of October 1980 there were already between two and three million members in 2,600 enterprises and 60 workers' commissions on the city level (Dudek 2010: 21; cfr. Włodek 1992: 122). The following period was the time of Solidarność's growth and consolidation as an actor capable of initiating coordinated actions, such as threatening the government to set a strike stopping enterprises all over the country on the same day.

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35 As Antoni Dudek (2010: 19–20) notes, this division was the idea of the protesters, who realized that their actions are more effective if they are coordinated on the level of cities and regions, and not on the level of industry sectors.

The leaders of Solidarność were negotiating with the communist government about implementation of their agreements.

According to Dudek (2010: 27), the peak of Solidarność's growth was the so-called "Bydgoszcz crisis" in March 1981, following the beating of the local trade union leaders calling for a formal registration of the farmers' union. The use of violence against Solidarność activists alerted the members of movement in the whole country, and the leaders became ready to organize a nationwide strike. Finally, the crisis situation was resolved without going on strike.

September and October 1981 were the period of the First National Congress of Solidarność, which was held in Gdańsk. For the sake of organizing the elections of delegates to the congress, the number of trade union members was counted: 9,476,584 were eligible to vote and 94% voted for delegates (Kaliski 2011: 18). Thanks to this count, Solidarność leaders were able to say that they represented an organization of 10 million members – the number which got well granted in the memory of the movement. During the congress, the leadership of the trade union was consolidated and Lech Wałęsa was elected as its president. Another outcome of the congress was the release of the document entitled "Samorządna Rzeczpospolita" [A Self-governing Republic], which was the program of the movement. During the congress "Posłanie do ludzi pracy Europy Wschodniej" [Message to Workers of Eastern Europe] was also announced, which angered the leaders of communist parties in other states of the Soviet Bloc. It needs to be remarked that during the congress, Red Army organized the largest war games since World War II (Dudek 2010: 29). More or less direct threats of this kind from the Soviet Union were present during the whole period of Solidarność's carnival.

On December 13, 1981, general Jaruzelski, who at the time was holding three key functions in the state – the first secretary of United Party of Polish Workers, the Prime Minister, and the Commander-in-chief of the Army – introduced martial law throughout the country. Approximately five thousand Solidarność leaders became "prisoners of war." Major enterprises went on strike in order to protest against the introduction of martial law and arrests of the movement's leaders. The strikes were brutally pacified and another thousands of protesters were arrested. Some of the leaders of Solidarność were not caught by the secret police and started underground activities. Yet, the martial law was an end of the open, mass-scale actions of the social movement. In this chapter I am focusing on sociological interpretations of period between summer 1980 and December 13, 1981, so the rest of the events of the late 1980s, which lead to Round Table Talks and the elections of June 4th of 1989 are not described here.

5.3 A movement fulfilling the vacuum? Solidarność as a problem for sociology of Polish society

Nowak's thesis is intrinsically bound with the history of the Solidarność movement for at least three reasons. First, as it was formulated shortly before the famous August 1980 strikes, it was almost automatically added to the descriptions of Polish society before this turning point. Secondly, some sociologists who observed, or even engaged, in the social movement needed to come to terms with the contradiction between the pessimistic bias of the thesis and the optimistic evaluation of the 1980 events in Poland. Thirdly, Nowak himself was engaged in commenting on the evolving situation from the theoretical angle he had only just launched. In his English-written paper, "Values and Attitudes of Polish Society" (Nowak 1981: 53), he stated that although he had not yet gathered empirical data, from his observation of everyday life he could infer that Solidarność was starting to fill in the vacuum.

I thoroughly analyzed the works, where Nowak's thesis was brought up in relation to Solidarność. Two main questions stand out: How was it possible for such a large and vibrant social movement to emerge in a society affected by a sociological vacuum? The second question is a closely related one: Does the emergence of Solidarność contradict, or at least limit, the applicability of Nowak's hypothesis? The former question is related to the often-repeated statement that Polish sociology was unable to predict the social anxiety of the times and the rise of Solidarność.

Sociologists had difficulties with answering the above questions. Sociology at this time in Poland was indeed unable to forecast the mass mobilization and emergence of the movement like Solidarność (Sułek 2011).[36] Even Nowak suggested that the application of regular survey methodology would be unable to explain the 1980 events: "There are important concepts that are not easily measured by batteries of indicators but that nonetheless are necessary for the proper understanding of some social situations. One cannot understand the events in Poland without reference to restored human dignity" (Nowak 1981: 53). When discussing this aspect, Marek Latoszek states that survey research on workers was mainly providing a "crippled" picture, and that the grasping of social processes was only possible thanks to biographical methods (1995). In a similar vein, Ireneusz Krzemiński (1992) pointed out that the survey methodology and the model of attitudes applied by Nowak were not capable of explaining the

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36 The theoretical assumptions and methodology of Polish mainstream sociology of the 1970s are discussed in previous Chapter 4.

phenomenon of Solidarność. According to Krzemiński, the sociological analysis of Solidarność needed also insights from more interpretative and more qualitative paradigms than the positivist survey sociology of Stefan Nowak.

5.3.1 What was the mechanism of Solidarność filling up the vacuum?

The vacuum itself is a term taken from the physics. As Jakub Motrenko (2017: 132–133) showed in his work on Stefan Nowak's school of sociology, the author often referred to other "mechanical" notions, such as "set of free particles," "gas mixture," "laws of psychosocial diffusion," "force of suction," "compressed spring," or "aggregated social energy." In following paragraphs, I discuss how not only physical but also metaphysical explanations were adopted in order to find the connections between Solidarność and the conception of the sociological vacuum.

Thus, the descriptions of the emergence of Solidarność that make use of the concept of the sociological vacuum are more rhetorical than explanatory in nature. The idea of Solidarność bursting from out of the vacuum (Wnuk-Lipiński 1994: 16), and similar accounts depicting how the social movement filled the social void, employ a metaphysical tone – the trade union is called a "treasure" (Matynia 2001), or frustration "is turning into action" (Amsterdamska 1987: 281).

These works were written post factum – not trying to interpret the events of the day as did Nowak (1981) in his paper for *Scientific American* – yet the authors were not explaining the mechanism of filling up the vacuum by Solidarność. Solidarność – somehow miraculously – emerged, and the vacuum became filled. These remarks are linked with open evaluations of social affairs of the times: Poland of the 1970s, doomed by the vacuum, was evaluated negatively, yet the Solidarność movement was evaluated very positively and with enthusiasm.

Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński (1982) coined the concepts of "dimorphism of values" and "social schizophrenia" as present in Poland. According to him, the sociological vacuum is one of the elements connected to these phenomena. Also in this work, Wnuk-Lipiński struggles to explain how in a society suffering from a vacuum, dimorphism of values, and schizophrenia it was possible for the social movement of Solidarność's strength to emerge. In connection to the ideas of Wnuk-Lipiński, Paweł Rojek (2009: 100–101) in his thorough review of the literature on Solidarność and Poland in the 1970s and 1980s claimed that the sociological vacuum was caused not by a social anomie, but by the dimorphism of values, and the fact that formal institutions were not responding to the needs of people. When the communist government allowed people to organize, the identities also emerged – this mechanism could be described by the physical metaphor of vacuum's "force of suction" (Nowak 1984: 428).

114

Writing his remarks also nearly during the time of the Solidarność protests, Józef Figa (1982: 129) referred to the thesis on the sociological vacuum saying that formal organizations were not the base for social identifications, but the vacuum was filled with informal social groups. These groups lead to the formation of political opposition, such as Komitet Obrony Robotników (KOR) [Workers' Defence Committee] and later Solidarność. Thus, Solidarność was built thanks to the existence of informal social structures.

There was also the question concerning the reasons of the sociological vacuum's existence. According to Janina Frentzel-Zagórska, who analyzed survey data on values, working in a very similar field as Stefan Nowak, the sociological vacuum was created by the communist regime which was controlling all forms of social organization and was responsible for instilling fear of being active in the public sphere. When Edward Gierek, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party in the years 1970–1980, loosened social control, the vacuum started to become filled, which resulted with the emergence of Solidarność (Frentzel-Zagórska 1985: 87–88).

In the debate about the condition of Polish society in the 1970s, Aleksander Matejko noted that the sociological vacuum was filled by the Catholic Church, the most powerful organization not controlled by the communist regime. Matejko (1986: 104) also pointed that the spontaneous development of Solidarność contributed to filling the vacuum, yet he did not explain the mechanism in which Solidarność managed to do so.

In her analysis of women's position in the Solidarność movement, Renata Siemieńska (1989) used the sociological vacuum as a frame to understand the barriers for articulating women's interests in the movement. In her view, women's strong identifications with the family was to blame. Yet, as Ewa Malinowska (2001) pointed out, the sociological vacuum provided not only the micro-level identification with the social role of a mother (family), but also the macro-level identification with the nation, which together matched the strongly embedded in Polish culture archetype of "Matka Polka."[37] In consequence, the Solidarność movement contributed to the future subjectitification of women's feminist identification.

Next to the Solidarność trade union, there was also Solidarność of Individual Farmers, organized in 1981. According to Krzysztof Gorlach (1990: 131), it was created as a manifestation of the class consciousness emerging from people of

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37 The direct translation of the expression describing this archetype embedded in Polish culture would be "Mother Pole." Yet, it is one of the expressions which do not have a reference in other languages. It has its roots in the culture of Polish romanticism and symbolizes the Polish patriotic mother (Szerszunowicz 2013).

this social category. The sociological vacuum became filled when peasants of individualistic values started to realize that they, as a group, had a common class interest, and that the Solidarność of Individual Farmers was the subject expressing those interests. For constituting of this subject, the national and religious symbols were very important.

The process of filling the vacuum was also analyzed by Michael D. Kennedy (1991), who stated that its beginning lay in the negative identification with the communist government, which was rejected by many Poles. This negative identity was transformed into a positive, common identification after pope John Paul II's visit in Poland in 1979. This identification built the ground for the Solidarność movement, which eventually filled the sociological vacuum (Kennedy 1991: 44). Kennedy's analysis is based on his reading of Polish authors writing on Solidarność. It is another expression of the very popular narrative on the emergence of Solidarność, in which the visit of John Paul II is the key moment in creating a collective actor of the Polish society. Very similar remarks were also repeated by Geneviève Zubrzycki (2006).

The concept of filling the vacuum is an often-expressed metaphor used in the descriptions of the rise of the Solidarność movement. The same concept, however, is also used in narratives which describe these events in metaphysical terms. Lech Mażewski (1995: 214) writes about the vacuum which was the cause of Solidarność's emergence, and became filled with Solidarność. The process was not described by Mażewski in details, and because of this it resembles quotations from the Old Testament. The metaphysical, or nearly biblical language used in descriptions of Solidarność might be treated as a sign of the special meaning of the 1980–1981 events for their analysts, who often could not find neutral language to express their relation to Solidarność. Polish authors (and also many foreign ones) were either engaged in the movement or at least supported it.

A similar rhetoric was used by Waldemar Kuczyński – one of the experts assisting protesters during the strike in Gdańsk shipyard in August 1980 – who in one of his essays, stated that the filling of the vacuum was an outcome of the need to widen the field of the expression, and since Solidarność was a tool of self-expression, it quickly mobilized ten million people (Kuczyński 1996: 13). This passage is of an enormously convincing power, yet mostly because of the applied rhetoric. Kuczyński does not explain how the need of expression became transformed into social mobilization, and how it enabled the emergence of a mass social movement.

Arista Cirtautas (1997: 162) stated that Polish society, living under the conditions of the sociological vacuum, became fragmented, which was a factor that inhibited the formation of opposition movements ready to resist the communist

government. The sociological vacuum became filled as a result of Karol Wojtyła's election as the pope, and the emergence of the opposition elites after the 1976, which together contributed to the emergence of Solidarność. Again, this description provides only a rhetorical explanation of the social process under consideration.

As Ryszard Kozioł (2004: 199) claimed, the leaders of the Solidarność movement were aware of the existence of the sociological vacuum, and had a similar intuition as Stefan Nowak about the condition of society in Poland. According to Kozioł, the leaders of Solidarność were intentionally steering the movement in order to fill the vacuum. The evidence for this claim is the interview with Bronisław Geremek (1981) conducted during the First National Congress of Solidarność in October 1981, in which he described the objective of the Solidarność program – "A Self-Governing Republic" – as filling a vacuum, which is dangerous for the Polish society.

The theme of Solidarność is often seen as convergent with a different topic Polish sociology has been stubbornly tackling since the second half of the 1980s: civil society. This term, however, was not originally used to describe Solidarność, whose program was in fact entitled "A Self-Governing Republic" (Załęski 2010). Later on, the sociological vacuum, Solidarność, and civil society often started to become linked in the narratives of historical events: The 1970s were a time of the sociological vacuum, Solidarność emerged in 1980, and subsequently, civil society started to develop in Poland.

Dorota Mokrosińska (2012), speaking from the perspective of political philosophy, stated that Polish society was returning to the state of nature and the sociological vacuum was one of the symptoms of this process. Solidarność emerged when people started to demand civil justice and, according to Mokrosińska, it was a political organization driven mostly by the will of reinstating this civil justice in Poland.

Research on Solidarność does not concern only the movement as such – there were also studies conducted on the way the movement is remembered. Susan C. Pearce (2009) reconstructed, after Elżbieta Matynia (2001), the narrative on Solidarność filling the sociological vacuum. In Pearce's view, the sociological vacuum is coming back and manifests itself by repressing the memory of Solidarność to the private sphere – the one built on family ties.

For authors focusing on the absence of certain expected elements at the intermediary level, the question of the way it was possible for Solidarność to appear in such conditions remains an open one. Still, taking the national-identity element into account (as in Mikołaj Cześnik's work) is quite helpful in explaining

the success of Solidarność, which was built around a strong, unifying national affection (Cześnik 2008a: 44).

5.3.2 Did Solidarność falsify the thesis on the sociological vacuum?

In the previous section I have presented how authors were struggling with the emergence of Solidarność in conditions of the sociological vacuum, which – according to the assumptions of this conception – were more repressive for larger scale social organizations than small, primary groups. Hence, some authors seem to pose the following question: If Solidarność indeed filled the sociological vacuum, but it is difficult to explain how it happened, could it be that Nowak's interpretation of this phenomenon might be inaccurate? In this section I move to the works which attempted to use the emergence of Solidarność as evidence of falsifying the thesis.

The authors discussed above pointed to the strong role of the Polish Catholic Church in filling the sociological vacuum (Cirtautas 1997; Gorlach 1990; Kennedy 1991; Matejko 1986). A similar statement was made also by Mirosława Grabowska (2004: 57), who stated that the sociological vacuum was filled by the Catholic Church, working together with Solidarność. The argument of the Catholic Church's salience for social life in Poland was used by Antoni Z. Kamiński (1992: 253), who claimed that the emergence of Solidarność would not have been possible if the sociological vacuum had actually existed. Kamiński believed that organized religion in Poland, and especially regular social participation in religious rituals, were responsible for building the ties of trust and community – an aspect neglected by Stefan Nowak, who claimed that religion answers only to the private needs of individuals. According to Kamiński, these ties eventually enabled other forms of participation in collective life. This line of reasoning suggests that omitting the role of the Catholic Church by Nowak was a flaw in his thesis. Solidarność was not built by direct usage of organizational strength of Catholic Church in Poland, yet religious symbolism and rituals – which, like common prayers, visible especially in the shipyard of Gdańsk, brought people together – were cultural tools habitually used by protesters. In this way, Solidarność revealed something that Stefan Nowak regarded as not important.

Witold Morawski (2010: 106) and Andrzej Rychard (2010: 449) pointed to the importance of workplaces, especially the large communist enterprises, which were not taken into account by Stefan Nowak. Enterprises in communist Poland were not just places of employment – they were institutions organizing many aspects of social life. Solidarność took an organizational form of a trade union and used the structures built in enterprises. The subsequent bringing of

118

enterprises together was key to the emergence of the Solidarność movement.[38] Thus, Solidarność's reliance on the organizational structures of workplaces can be seen as undermining Nowak's thesis on the sociological vacuum, in which their role was neglected.

There were also authors who noted that the case of Solidarność reveals the historical nature of Nowak's thesis. The point was made by two of his disciples, who claimed that the validity of the thesis was limited to Poland of the 1970s, and the actual intention of Nowak was to provoke a discussion, and not to deliver universal truths about Polish society (Grabowska, Sułek 1992: 25–26). Another interpretation in the discussion on the validity of the sociological vacuum thesis was given by Ireneusz Krzemiński (1992). Krzemiński, in order to "rescue" Nowak's general description of society, decided to modify the model of attitudes by adding the concepts of meta-attitudes and latent cultural patterns. This modification of Nowak's perspective, inspired by symbolic interactionism and psychoanalysis, was meant to enable an explanation of Solidarność. Yet, Krzemiński's reflections provided only general directions on how to encompass the phenomenon of a vacuum and Solidarność in one theoretical model. The line of Krzemiński's reasoning hints to look for structures which are not noticed or not recognized as important by actors themselves, but may be crucial for facilitating a collective action. The line of rescuing Nowak's hypothesis might be called, according to his positivist views on sociology, the operation of hypothesis specification. Grabowska and Sułek (1992) specified the hypothesis by limiting its historical scope, while Krzemiński (1992) specified it by including some additional variables to the model.

5.4 Towards sociological explanations of Solidarność: how are atoms linked into a society?

In this section, I point to the analyses of Solidarność, which took into consideration the objects of sociological inquiry I have highlighted in the first part of the

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38 It should not be forgotten that Stefan Nowak decided not to consider workplaces as salient objects of identification on the basis of the rule of thumb: In his research, 48% of respondents in Warsaw and 46% of respondents in Kielce pointed to their colleagues from the workplace as a category of identification. This identification was actually stronger than the one felt with Polish nation – 43% in Warsaw and 40% in Kielce, respectively (see Chapter 4). Thus, even according to Nowak's data and his way of thinking about society, there was "something" about the workplace that made it significant. Nevertheless, this data became interpreted as data on close and rather intimate relations.

book (see Chapters 2 and 3) as promising in linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis – namely organizational relations and social networks. I do not provide an exhausting review of the literature on Solidarność, as it would require an enormous effort: Solidarność is righteously a very developed field of studies of many Polish sociologists and historians. The objective of this section is not to describe all the possible avenues of studying the Solidarność movement, but to point to selected research where the structures linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis have been included.

A very comprehensive review of literature on Solidarność was presented by Elżbieta Ciżewska (2010a) in her study on the public philosophy of this social movement. According to Ciżewska, in literature there are seven ways in which Solidarność is analyzed: as a workers' upsurge; as a revolution; as a product of Polish religiousness; focusing on religious aspects of the movement; as a national uprising; as a civil society; as a social movement; and as a voice of republican political philosophy. These approaches of analyzing Solidarność are not mutually exclusive, and were combined by a number of authors in their studies.

David Ost (1990), in his study of Polish opposition and its use of anti-politics as a political tool, claimed that reconstruction of social ties beyond the control of the communist state was already an act of opposing this state. Ost (1990: 66) referred to the provocative statements made by Jacek Kuroń, who claimed that people who engaged in social activities became members of the opposition movement without actually knowing it. This brings up the issue of the connection between Solidarność and civil society, which in more details will be explored in Chapter 6. Here, I am more interested in investigating social structures which might have been helpful for the emergence of Solidarność, building on Kuroń's assumption that all forms of social activity, as building patterns of relations between people (be it some form of network or even organization), have the potential for opposing the authoritarian state.

In her reflections on how Polish sociologists had been interpreting Solidarność, Joanna Kurczewska (2006a: 283) noted that Solidarność was analyzed on three levels of aggregation: macro, meso, and micro. According to her, macro-level and micro-level approaches were the dominating ones. Kurczewska explained it with the predominant interest of Polish sociologists with macro-processes and the revitalization of micro-sociological studies of identities and discourses which started in the 1980s. Kurczewska pointed at an important gap in the research, although her proposal on the way of filling it is not fully satisfactory: Kurczewska's understood the meso in a quite straightforward way – as something larger than the level of interactions and identities of individuals, but something smaller

than the level of society. Then she proposed to focus more research on regions (important element of Solidarność's organizational structure) and local manifestations of civil society.[39]

The frame of social movement in the interpretation of Solidarność was set very early by Alain Touraine and his team who in 1981 conducted a research using methodology of sociological intervention (Touraine et at. 1983). The approach of Touraine was focusing on collective action and simultaneously rejecting the survey methodology, which he saw as suitable for analysis of individual behaviors, not collective actions (Touraine et al. 1983: 6). In sociological intervention, the research is done in cooperation of social movement members gathered in small groups. The researcher discusses with them the movement, and its goals and policy, which allows him or her to observe the group's dynamics. Yet, such an approach to the micro-macro link is undertheorized. Touraine's team took part in meetings of six groups of movement members placed relatively low in the organizational structure of the union.[40] The approximate size of the groups was ten members. Surely, the researchers were able to observe the dynamics of the small-size group discussion and they could understand the meaning attached by individuals to the collective action of movement, yet this was still an analysis of micro-level interactions which served to interpret a macro-level entity – a movement which, according to the interpretation of Touraine et al. (1983: 59–60), aimed at winning over the Polish nation.

Touraine and his French collaborators perceived Polish society as an integrated whole with short social distances: "Compared with pre-war Poland, Communist Poland is indeed a more socially and culturally integrated country, and the French observer is struck by the relatively small social distance between the major professional groups" (Touraine et al. 1983: 59). This remark is interesting as it contrasts with the lament of Stefan Nowak on the Polish society being a federation of primary groups. There are two reasons for this opposition in interpretations: space and time.

In regards to space, as I have written in the Chapter 4, Stefan Nowak made a comparison without an actual reference point: he compared the state of affairs in Poland with abstract – not specific – industrial societies. Touraine, however, compared Polish and French societies and observed (still, it is important to keep

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39 The call for more focus on regional and local aspects of Solidarność goes in hand with Kurczewska's research program of sociology of localness (Kurczewska 2006b).

40 It is worth mentioning that some of the research collaborators of Touraine were sociologists from the circle of Stefan Nowak.

in mind that it was just his speculation) more social integration and smaller social distances between occupational groups in Poland.

In regards to time, Nowak came to his conclusions in the 1970s, while Touraine visited Poland in 1981, in the period of Solidarność's carnival, which was the period when Nowak also claimed that the vacuum was being filled. The social atmosphere of 1981 (enthusiastic) and 1970s (full of resignation) was very different and guiding towards opposite interpretations of reality.

Adam Mielczarek (2011) claimed that Touraine's interpretation of Solidarność was not very useful. The main point of Mielczarek's critique was that the assumption about the movement's homogeneity was erroneous. According to him, the key to understanding Solidarność was its heterogeneous character, so it was more reasonable to use various theoretical frameworks on social movements as complementary rather than competitive approaches. According to Mielczarek's review of the literature, the success of Solidarność was built thanks to several factors: spontaneous mobilization of the people at the beginning of the movement, networks and resources of movement managers, the convenient organizational form of a trade union, and the cognitive framing "we versus them" ("we" meaning "the nation," and "them" – communist authorities). All interpretations which attribute the success of Solidarność only to one of those factors are wrong. As Mielczarek notices, this tendency to monocausal explanations is sometimes an outcome of the perspective applied by the researcher. If a researcher focuses on the regular members of the movement, then the bottom-up approach seems to be natural. If he or she focuses on the movement leaders, or on the organizational form, then the top-down approach seems to be natural. The bottom-up approach highlights elements like spontaneity, community, authenticism, or expression of self, while the top-down approach highlights the political aspects of the movement or its organizational aspects. Mielczarek opposes this division and calls for the integration of approaches in studies of Solidarność, claiming that various approaches might be better in interpreting different phases of movement (Mielczarek identifies the 1970s opposition as the beginning of the movement, and post 1981 underground Solidarność as its late phase), but none of them offers the full interpretation of the whole. Thus, there is a need for including resource mobilization theories, like the one focused on structures and patterns of relations, and the cognitive theories, more focused on symbols and identities. There is a need for combining the perspective which understands the movement participants' need for self-fulfillment with the perspective analyzing managers of the movement using networks, organizations, and cultural resources in order to achieve certain political objectives. Similarly to Mielczarek, Ciżewska (2010b)

122

claims that one theoretical approach to study Solidarność is not enough to understand the complexity of the movement. In her opinion, various aspects of the movement's formation require insights from traditional social movement studies, theories of new movements, the resource mobilization theory, and studies of collective emotions.

Roman Laba (1991), interested in Solidarność mostly as working-class protest, pointed to the organizational and communicational infrastructure used by workers to foster collective action. He stressed the conditions of informational black-out in which Solidarność was formed. Television, radio, as well as paper media were under the control of the state. The mass spread of information was possible only thanks to Radio Free Europe and BBC, and later through the weekly *Tygodnik Solidarność*. Although Solidarność at its grassroots was built as "a movement of the spoken word" (Laba 1991: 129), the spoken word needed its carriers. Thus, during strikes, usually the first thing that protestors would do after taking over factories was seizing control over public address systems, telexes, polygraphy devices, and information boards. In this way, the protestors were able to spread their own political propaganda, for example, using the public address systems to play recordings from important meetings and speeches recorded during other protests or communicate with other striking factories through the use of telexes. The use of communication networks designed for government enterprises was certainly not the only way of spreading information, and Laba mentions also networks created by the opposition groups from the 1970s and simple "word of mouth" strategies. However, in the context of organizations and networks, the possibility of using the equipment of nearly all enterprises in Poland in 1980 was a crucial enhancer of collective action. This aspect is also highlighted by Maryjane Osa (2003: 179) because in addition to the role networks play in democracies, in authoritarian regimes (in the pre-internet era) they substitute for media and help spread uncensored news.

Still, it must be remembered that Laba drew far reaching conclusions from his analysis of the 1980 protests. According to him, Solidarność had an endogenous working-class-generated character (Laba 1991: 182) and was created thanks to the structures of the state, which tried to build the working class. Here, social class is a notion from the macro-level, potentially helpful for explaining Solidarność. In my opinion, however, social class as a wide heuristic might be inspiring to understand Solidarność, but the actual power of Laba's analysis lies in inspecting organizations and networks used by workers: the infrastructure of large and complex industrial organizations interconnected by a dense network of communication channels.

123

Osa (2003) analyzed the networks in the opposition domain, in which nodes were the organizations and ties were representing the co-membership of individuals in the organizations. To create her database, she used different historical sources, ranging from secret police materials to memoirs. Osa's study was influenced by social movement scholars such as Doug McAdam (1982), who listed three key factors for the emergence of a movement (political opportunity, organizational networks, and cultural framing) or David Snow, who was mostly developing the conception of cultural framings in study of social movements (see Benford, Snow 2000). As a result, Osa's study merged the structural (network) and cultural (cognitive) approaches to the mobilization of social movement. What is very important, Osa stressed how both of these approaches link the micro and the macro-levels of analysis. In cases of the structural approach, personal ties allow the micromobilization and recruitment, while interorganizatonal (or intergroup ties) allow macrocoordination (Osa 2003: 15). Similarly, frames are also used to the analysis on the level of micromobilization, where the collective action frames serve protesters to articulate their ideas, and on the level of macrocoordination, where master frames open a possibility of connecting various organizations and interests into one movement (Osa 2003; see Benford, Snow 2000).

Social networks are a structural base for social movements for at least five reasons: they are channels of information circulation; they allow the distribution of material resources; they expand the risk to the whole network, so the individual risk is reduced; the previous three elements make the emergence of collective identity more likely; at some point of expansion social networks become substitute of public sphere (Osa 2003: 15–16). In the 1970s, due to the less oppressive policies of Gierek, new groups and organizations began to emerge. Yet, what is important here, is that they were all connected, and the older (created in 1950s) catholic organizations of official status were anchoring this network (Osa 2003: 157). The dynamics of the network expansion in the course of the 1970s measured by Osa (2003) is simultaneous with the increase of network's integration: the more new groups and organizations opposing the communist regime were emerging, the more they were connected to each other.

According to Osa's (2003) network approach, the attempts to create political opposition in communist Poland were failing because of the isolation of groups. KOR created in 1976 was the first organization of a more developed structure and – what is important from the social network analysis perspective – having its branches in several large Polish cities. Osa (2003: 135) highlighted that from the perspective of creating super inclusive networks, the ideological ambiguity

of KOR was a good strategic decision, as it allowed to connect to the biggest possible number of groups emerging in the country.

The visit of John Paul II in Poland in 1979 is often described as an important symbolic turning point for the development of political opposition because it allowed people to realize how many of them there were (some events of the visit were broadcasted live on Polish television, and huge open masses were organized). Yet, from the organizational point of view, the important factor is that the public events during John Paul II's visit were organized by church authorities and parish volunteers (including crowd control). This ability for collective action and coordination demonstrated by organizations related to the Catholic Church in Poland should also be taken into consideration when discussing the grounds for forming the Solidarność movement one year later.[41]

In Osa's (2003) network interpretation, following the foundation of Solidarność as a trade union, the movement played a role of the hub in a network connecting organizations and smaller groups and individuals of various interests. The networks created by the opposition in the 1970s were a structural base for Solidarność's huge network allowing social mobilization (Osa 2003: 181). The hub through inter-organizational ties connected the already existing networks and allowed a massive recruitment of a new members. The structure of the network linked the individuals with a massive, nationwide movement. The emergence of the hub was also enabled thanks to the cultural mechanisms such as master frames, inclusive for all members of the movement.

It can therefore be said that in 1980, the network and organizational structures, necessary for the emergence of a social movement were already present. Another important resource for the social movement – the people – were present as well, and the number of the members (of more and less central position) of opposition networks was growing exponentially throughout the entire 1970s, increasing their skills and developing ties between the groups. The summer of 1980 brought the third element needed by the social movement to emerge on a large scale, according to McAdam's (1982) conceptualization: political opportunity. The increase of the prices in July 1980 triggered the protests, but without

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41 The connection between pope's 1979 visit to Poland and the self-organization of catholic activists was also highlighted by Grzegorz Bakuniak and Krzysztof Nowak (1984). In the popular narrative about Solidarność, the 1979 visit is important mostly because of two reasons: its symbolic meaning and the massive participation of the people. Yet, a deeper sociological analysis has to point the fact that John Paul II's tour around Poland required an organization and coordination of many social actors.

the network and organizational infrastructure they would not have had a chance to reach such a large scale.

5.5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have presented the struggles of sociology with the Solidarność movement which, particularly among Polish sociologists, evoked the conflicting feelings of love and hate. They loved it, because many of them saw it as an opportunity for Poland to become a better country, and engaged in the movement, or at least supported it. Yet, they also hated it, because it exposed the weaknesses of their discipline. As Antoni Sułek (2011) remarked, sociology was unable to forecast the social movement's emergence. The thesis on the sociological vacuum is a good illustration of the atmosphere of despair and resignation present in the late 1970s. Yet, the fact that the quite fresh thesis on the sociological vacuum got confronted with a new social situation most probably contributed to its popularity – there was a need for debating about it.

I started the chapter with a brief reconstruction of the events of the Solidarność carnival in the years 1980 and 1981. Then, I moved to the discussion of works in which the concept of the sociological vacuum was a concept used in the context of Solidarność. Some authors attempted at reconstructing the mechanism according to which the sociological vacuum was supposed to become filled up. I also presented the works whose authors stated that the emergence of Solidarność was an evidence that the thesis on the sociological vacuum was false.

Rhetorical explanations were often used in works citing the sociological vacuum in the context of Solidarność because of the lack of a good theory linking micro and macro. They were explaining the phenomenon of Solidarność (and its relations with the sociological vacuum), yet they did so only on the surface and did not show any of the causal connections between events or elements of the social setting. This rhetoric often resorted to physical (mechanical) allegories, as in the works of Stefan Nowak himself, or were even pursuing metaphysical narratives on Solidarność.

I believe the use of metaphysical rhetoric (sometimes engaging pathos) was caused by the fact that for many scholars analyzing Solidarność was a living and very important experience. I am writing this not to ridicule the authors who experienced the emotions connected with protests and felt that they are taking part in something very important, and at the same time were deeply concerned with the possible reactions of evil authoritarian government and its Soviet allies. Actually, I do envy this kind of experience. At the same time, I can skeptically assume that such strong experience may have blurred the analytical lenses of

126

researchers, who lost distance from their object of study. For some of the younger researchers who did not have this experience, the powerful myth built by the Solidarność generation might be difficult to digest – and this myth became deeply built in Polish culture, in general, and in Polish sociological field, in particular.

Some speculations of authors hinting to what was a possible falsification of the sociological vacuum thesis – for instance, the role of Catholic Church, highlighted by Kamiński (1992), or the role workplaces, highlighted by Morawski (2010) and Rychard (2010) – find stronger confirmation in studies focused on network and organizational structures behind the social movement of Solidarność. These structures were not noticed by scholars studying Solidarność directly during the events and in the short time after the events. In case of networks, at this time there was simply a lack of this kind conceptual tools in Polish social sciences. In case of organizations – such as workplaces – the conviction about their alienating role was obscuring their potential as resources for social action. Yet, what can be seen from the studies on Solidarność is that the role of social networks created in the 1970s and the possibility of using inter-organizational communication channels (like telex systems used for the communication between large communist enterprises) were crucial resource for collective action. It is certainly hard to notice social ties. First, one needs a theoretical framework taking into account their importance and these frameworks were still not in the sociological mainstream of the 1980s. Secondly, one needs a research tool thanks to which ties can be registered. Thirdly, the ties' usefulness for collective action needs to be evaluated along some theoretical framework. All of this was not possible in the 1980s. It was also not possible later for scholars who in order to explain Solidarność were applying theories disregarding networks and organizational structures.

I have discussed the importance of networks and organizations allowing to mobilize resources for the social movement. The cultural master frames from the macro-level which helped in organizing large heterogeneous movement were also applied by the movement. Generally, I agree that only by virtue of the social structures analysis it would not be possible to explain the emergence of Solidarność. Yet, without taking into account the networks and inter-organizational relations any attempt at explaining Solidarność is unsuccessful.

I believe that studies on Solidarność still have a future. There are more open questions and not applied theoretical framings in the analysis of this truly most interesting moment in recent Polish social history. As I have demonstrated, elements of social networks, inter-organizational relations, and cultural frames were applied to the study of Solidarność. All of these three elements are combined in the theory of social fields (Fligstein, McAdam 2012) and the various conceptualizations of

field theories were presented in the Chapter 2. I am convinced that applying the field approach to the studies of Solidarność would contribute to the understanding of the social movement. For example, the opposition of the 1970s could be analyzed in terms of an emerging social field. The architecture of this field, the relations between various actors, their power in the field, valued resources, as well as the developed and institutionalized cognitive frames were all later used in the emergence of the Solidarność movement when the opportunity for larger scale collective action appeared. Later, the formation of the large-scale social movement changed the relations between the social actors within the opposition field.

Also, there is still a need for more network-oriented research. This kind of study is certainly difficult to conduct, because it is not an easy task to reconstruct social ties from the 1970s and 1980s, however, I am sure that more social network analysis of Solidarność would allow to understand it better. As it can be seen, there are still new avenues of research on Solidarność. The ones which focus on relational aspects of the movement and have good theorization of the micro-macro link are capable of providing a more elaborate answer to the question: how in an allegedly atomized society was it possible for a large-scale movement to emerge? This question, however, includes an important assumption which gives rise to yet another question requiring testing: was the Polish society in the 1970s really atomized?

6 Civil society: in search of the new actor of the social transformation

6.1 Introduction

The notion of the sociological vacuum appears not only in the context of discussions on the Solidarność social movement, but also the discussion of civil society in Poland. In this chapter my aim is to discuss the relations between civil society and the sociological vacuum. The second aim of the chapter is to show the theoretical conditions for the perspective on civil society, according to which it is in a deficient state and the sociological vacuum has something to do with its deficiency.

Civil society is a huge theoretical problem for philosophy and social sciences, and I feel overwhelmed when attempting to tackle it. Thus, I need to limit myself and from the three pillars of civil society – non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local authorities, and social movements – I focus only on NGOs. Such an approach is justified because in Chapter 5 devoted to Solidarność I have discussed the social movement perspective, and in Chapter 8 devoted to the quality of democracy I will also look at the local governments. In this chapter, however, I am

interested in the associational life and the third sector in Poland (the third sector in Poland consists also of other organizational forms than associations – mostly foundations).[42]

Civil society is an important topic for Polish sociology and the public debate in Poland, in general. In recent history of Poland, sociologists did not only study the civil society but were also engaged in building it. Polish Sociological Association is also considered as an actor of civil society (Wiśniewski, Pawlak 2013). The civil society as such was often considered as a needed actor of societal transformation. I prefer to talk about various organizations as actors taking part in the transformation – and later the Europeanization – of Poland than to treat the whole society as an actor. The sociological language in which civil society is called an actor is usually interested in macro-processes. The macro-actor of civil society is then interacting with other macro-actors such as the state or the whole society. This kind of sociology – in my opinion – is not very helpful in understanding social actions and social structures. Thus, in this chapter I will attempt to analyze the concept of civil society more thoroughly and determine the social structures that it is built from.

The order of this chapter is as follows: I start with brief conceptual considerations in which I try to place the notion of civil society in the space near other concepts such as nation or social capital. Then, I present how sociological studies of Polish society connected the civil society with the sociological vacuum. Following the analysis of works in which civil society is usually treated with enthusiasm, and the sociological vacuum is perceived as a threat to its expected development, I look at the dark side of associational life and discuss the literature focusing on the problems of conflict and negative consequences of associationalism. In the last section, before the concluding remarks, I show how sociologists search for civic life in Poland, and discuss their units of analysis and preferred research

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42 Some sociologists and activists of civil society say that there is also a fourth pillar of civil society that should be taken into account: the so-called fourth sector, or simply collective actions of low-level of institutionalization, which are somehow similar to the third sector but do not use formal organizations and quite often locate themselves in opposition towards non-governmental organizations believing that they are bureaucracies. This phenomenon was studied recently by Rafał Krenz, Stanisław Mocek, and Bohdan Skrzypczak (2015). I decided not to focus on this kind of activism in this chapter. I will present the traces of this kind of thinking about civil society when analyzing the work of Janine Wedel (1992a), or Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik (2014). I am convinced that they will also contribute to filling up the sociological vacuum by the virtue of interactions and social relations which are not visible for certain sociological methodologies.

strategies. The chapter finishes with concluding remarks, in which I claim that the civil society is neither in such a bad shape as it is suggested, nor that the civil society is such a good thing in itself, and claim that the sociological vacuum does not have much do with civil society.

6.2 Civil society: its rivals and kin

It is a common agreement among historians of ideas that civil society is a notion of ancient origins, that has already been used by Aristotle and Cicero. In the modern era, it was debated by John Locke (1689), Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1991), and Karl Marx (1970), who already understood this notion in very different ways. The first work regarded as an empirical study of civil society is de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1988), first published in French in the 1830s. Yet, the idea of civil society had its renaissance in the late 1970s, returning in a slightly modified form (Szacki 1997: 16). There are authors who claim that the civil society revival was rooted in movements of anti-totalitarian opposition in Eastern Europe and point to Solidarność as its direct source (Cohen, Arato 1992: 31; Pełczyński 1988). Regardless if this is an exaggerated opinion, discussing civil society just after discussing Solidarność seems a justified choice. Polish sociology often highlights the links between Solidarność and the subsequent emergence of third sector after 1989. Both of those grand research topics were often associated with the problem of the sociological vacuum. Another grand problem of Polish sociology – social capital – will be discussed in Chapter 7. This chapter therefore needs to start from a conceptual distinction between two notions: civil society and social capital. It is important because they often overlap, either due to the fact that empirically they are in a relation, or due to the conceptual chaos and usage of "civil society" and "social capital" as buzzwords.

I am not able to "solve" the civil society theoretical debate, yet in order to analytically separate it from the issue of social capital, I would say that the both concepts have different key-social structures as their base. In the case of civil society, the key structure is the social organization, and in case of social capital, it is a social network. This may sound very simplistic, but I found it to be the best way to show the differences between the two – sometimes regarded as very close – concepts. Civil society is about the self-organization of society. For social philosophers and political theorists, civil society is something either next to the state or opposite to the state. As Jerzy Szacki (1997: 21) noted about the authoritarian regimes, scholars tended to present civil society as a morally good alternative for the degenerate state. Yet, all the societal self-organization of a non-state or non-governmental character is a much broader set of phenomena than civil society. Ernest Gellner

(1991: 500) pointed that civil society is not a society of cousins, which means that organization based on ascribed (or constructed as ascribed) relations is not constitutive for civil society: family, clan, ethnic group, religion are bases for societal organization, but not for civil society. At least in its ideal model, civil society is built on free-choice associations of individual citizens. These associations might be interest-driven, yet there are to be distinguished from the associations made for profit. It is therefore possible to ask many empirical questions regarding civil society, always constructed in societies of various networks: How is it possible that the so-called "cousins" often create free-choice associations together? Why so many associations are church based? Why national ideology is a driving force of associationalism? Yet, I believe, after Szacki (1997) and Gellner (1991), that taking every sort of organizational base for collective action of a non-state character as a civil society is obscuring the picture. As I am going to discuss in Chapter 7, social capital is a phenomenon based on social networks and it also includes many primary relations, such as families.

Civil society may be considered on the two levels: the macro-level of the whole society, and the organizational level of associations. The macro-level considerations about civil society are typical for the social philosophy and political theory, but also for grand theory in sociology. The macro approach is also present in empirical studies on the so-called condition of civil society in a given society. In this strategy, macro indicators, such as the number of associations in given society or the participation rate in associations, are used to measure the condition of civil society. This is an archetypical case of dispositional sociology: the measurements on the level of individuals are aggregated on the level of society and used to explain social processes. These kinds of indexes are a very good strategy for comparing various societies, but from the point of view of relational sociology, they are very unreliable in constructing explanations. My point is that the only possible strategy of explaining (or understanding in a meaningful way) something about civil society requires taking into account its relational character, which on the level of general discourse requires analyzing how its ideologies are positing civil society towards state or other large communities (nations), but on the level of practices, it requires studying how concrete organizations relate to other organizations (of governmental character, ascribed character, for-profit character, or other organizations of civil society). Therefore, the strategy of studying civil society which I consider to be the most apt is studying given social fields in which around the issues of civic concern there are also active civic associations.

The civil society, especially in the context of Eastern Europe, for quite long time was idealized and presented as something morally good and contrasted to with

the state, which the anti-communist opposition in the Soviet block regarded as a corrupt tool of oppression. Alternative social structures built, for example, by Solidarność were perceived as an emanation of freedom and positive societal mobilization. The Polish way of thinking about civil society as opposed against the state, according to Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato (1992: 31), was the most dramatic. As I will demonstrate in the next section, many authors writing about the civil society in Poland were not only lamenting about its bad condition, but also contrasting it with the state as something morally valorized. This might be considered as something very typical for all sociologists: to perceive a self-organization and other so-called spontaneous forms of social life as positive in opposition to the state, government, and other large institutions formatting the modern societies.

Civil society is also a concept bridging the dichotomy of statal and private (Kulas 2010; Szacki 1997). Involvement in associational life is a departure from private activities, yet it is still not simply a public action, in the political sense. Many associations deal mostly with private concerns of their members (who, for example, love to play chess or breed homing pigeons), but provide them with a platform for sharing these concerns. Associations, which have strictly public goals, attempt to achieve them not in a strictly political way.

Before moving to a deeper analysis of how the sociological vacuum was employed in considerations on civil society, I need to make a short excursion to the macro-sociological problem of "competition" between civil society and nation. According to Szacki (1997) and Calhoun (1994), these two collectives are rivals. Civil society is built on blocks of associations – individuals are not members of civil society as such, they participate in it through the mediation of organizations, which they create by a free choice. Nation is, according to its nationalistic ideologies, something given, and to participate in a nation there is no need for any organizational mediation. Of course, on the level of practices of any nationalistic regimes (or at least regimes using elements of nationalistic ideologies), the mobilization to nation-participation is achieved through the use of organizations. Yet, these organizations, at least in plans, are of a mass-participation. From the point of view of nationalist ideologies, civil society is something suspicious. From the point of view of civil society enthusiasts, national mass society is a threat for liberty.[43]

This section did not have the ambition to present the whole theoretical discussion on the concept of civil society. Its goal was to present the theoretical

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43 The consequences that these two approaches to the polity have for the conditions of democracy will be discussed in the Chapter 8.

132

rivals and kin of civil society. Thanks to articulating the difference between civil society and social capital, on one hand, and civil society and nation, on the other hand, I can move forward and discuss the intriguing relations between civil society and the sociological vacuum.

6.3 Civil society in the vacuum

The issue of the sociological vacuum is recurrently coming back in discussions about the civil society in Poland. At the time I was working on this chapter, Polish public television engaged in defamation campaign against a number of prominent activists of civil organizations. Some of these activists are sociologists (also quoted in this chapter, like Zbigniew Pełczyński), which led the Polish Sociological Association to issue a statement of protest against the defamation of civil society activists. In the statement, the Board of Polish Sociological Association remarked that "civil engagement is in sociological circles regarded as one of the key challenges of Polish democracy, and the barrier for this engagement a phenomenon of 'sociological vacuum.'" I recall this event, because it shows how in the minds of Polish sociologists the sociological vacuum is strongly linked with civil society. This short excerpt from the statement is an apt summary of the sociological discourse on this relation in Poland: civil society is something crucial for society and democracy; civil society is not developed as it is expected; the barrier for its development is the sociological vacuum. From this short summary of a current view on the relations between the sociological vacuum and civil society, which was consecrated by the key sociological organization in Poland,[44] I can now turn to a deeper reconstruction of the way in which this relation was considered in social science discourse.

As I have already pointed out in an earlier-written article (Pawlak 2015), the issue of civil society is the topic that was most often made to converge with Nowak's thesis. The vast majority of publications linking civil society with the sociological vacuum have a strong ideological character: civil society is assumed to be valuable and its development should be supported. At the same time, the authors complain about the poor condition and underdevelopment of civic institutions – and the civil society, in general – in Poland explaining it with the sociological vacuum. Thus, these publications usually link two elements: a diagnosis that civil society is

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44 The Polish Sociological Association is a vivid organization and plays an important role for the integration of Polish sociologists. It organizes sociological summits and other conferences. It is also a publisher of the most influential Polish sociological journal "Polish Sociological Review."

underdeveloped in Poland (i.e. according to indicators of participation in formal associations) and disappointment with this state of affairs.

I will now briefly focus only on the titles of some works on civil society, consisting of keywords such as "barriers" (Bukowski, Gadowska, Polak 2008; Dzwończyk 2003), "blockades" (Szczegóła 2003), "non-movement" (Nowak, Nowosielski 2005), and "factors limiting the development" (Dzwończyk 2005). Some other titles also contain rhetorical questions: "What kind of democracy do we have?" (Mokrzycki 2000); "What kind of self-governing Poland? What kind of civil society?" (Rymsza 2014); "From the revolution of participation to…?" (Skrzypiec 2008).

These works on civil society presented several explanations converging civil society with the sociological vacuum. According to the first explanation, during communism, there was a shortage of associations (the accounts which shift the meaning of Nowak's thesis even point to their absence) and those who were present were controlled by an oppressive communist state to such an extent that the people refused to identify with them. According to the second explanation, the concept of connection between the communist regime and associations became so strong that even after the fall of communism Polish society still refused to identify with them. In addition to the sociological vacuum per se, a related statement by Nowak (1979a; 1979b) on the existence of two worlds – the world of the people and world of the institutions – is often mentioned in this context. Even when the gathered statistical data reveal an increase in the number of associations in Poland, the authors usually doubt that people really do engage and identify with them.

For many authors, building a civil society is a specific goal that needs to be reached. The civil society described as nearly non-existent or very fragile should be strengthened, and "the task of filling the sociological vacuum in the Third Republic [of Poland] was first of all taken up by the so-called third sector" (Dzwończyk 2008: 83). The physical term "vacuum" serves well to describe and highlight the absence of something needed and desirable. In these publications, the vacuum appears to be a characteristic feature distinguishing Polish society from "imagined" Western ones. An underdeveloped, imperfect, and weak civil society troubles the authors because it is a proof of Poland's incomplete modernization. These publications display a strong normative tendency. Pointing to the sociological vacuum allows the authors to express their worries in a more dramatical way.

I will now turn to three publications in which the sociological vacuum is a key concept for understanding the shape of civil society in Poland. I present them in

a chronological order, starting from Janine Wedel's (1992a) work on civil society in Poland of 1980s. Then, I turn to Mirosława Grabowska and Tadeusz Szawiel's (2001) book on building democracy in Poland, in which the sociological vacuum plays an important role and allows to understand the conditions of civil society. The last of the three publications is the work by Marek Nowak and Michał Nowosielski (2005) who connect the sociological vacuum with social non-movement.

The volume edited by Janine Wedel, *The Unplanned Society* (1992a), is a collection of anthropological studies of Polish society in the 1980s, authored by Polish scholars. The studies vary in approach and empirical focus, but they all have a unifying aim, which the author defined in the introduction to the book as confronting "a spell cast" by Stefan Nowak over Polish sociology, as she referred to the social vacuum thesis (1992b: 10). Although the American author was more than appreciative of the Polish scholar, she claimed that Nowak's thesis is a product of positivist methodology: "Models, rather than experience, are at work here: Nowak assumes axiomatically both the prior existence in Polish history of a classic civil society and such a society's ongoing survival in the West. […] But Nowak goes on to observe that civil society in the rigorous sense remained lacking a generation later, and so judges his society to be guilty of vacuousness" (Wedel 1992b: 10).

The research strategy applied in *The Unplanned Society* derives from the anthropological tradition: there are no hypotheses being tested, while the findings are expected to emerge from field research. Wedel claimed that, thanks to this strategy, she and her Polish colleagues were able to actually observe social structures located in the middle, between families and the nation, namely informal networks and social circles (Wedel 1992b: 12). According to Wedel, Nowak was unable to notice the importance of these structures because analyzing Polish society, he was looking for structures assumed to be typical for Western societies. Hence, although Wedel's edited work could be seen as an empirical falsification of Nowak's thesis, upon a closer look, it turns out to be the case of the earlier-discussed shift-in-meaning in which Wedel interpreted the sociological vacuum argument as regarding the lack of civil society, and not the lack of identification with middle-level groups.

The studies in the volume document the richness of informal social self-organization in Poland during the 1980s. Wedel's inductive methodological approach was essential in revealing this reality – this could not have been accomplished with Nowak's deductive approach alone. These groups could have been studied only via qualitative techniques. It is worth to mention here the remark made by Barbara Czarniawska, who stated that although Wedel rejected

model-testing, the people whom she was researching might have been similarly normatively model-guided. Hence, it is highly probable that the researched individuals were also ashamed of the lack of "proper Western" structures in Poland and were not too proud of their informal replacements that they had developed (Czarniawska 2000: 144).

Wedel's work was an attempt to fill the vacuum by applying a different methodology than Nowak. She was successful in showing the richness of various social life forms, which although recognized and described by Nowak (1981: 53) in his remarks about the atmosphere in Poland, could not have been detected with his tools. The methodological considerations by Wedel and Czarniawska show that the search of the sociological vacuum requires triangulation of research methods. It is impossible to insert all possible groups of identification in precategorized survey questions, so the research of the middle-level structures requires also a qualitative component. Wedel, thanks to shifting the meaning of Nowak's thesis, was able to explore the abundance of collective life forms in communist Poland.

Another interesting aspect of the deep conviction that the civil society in Poland is weak was pointed by Wedel (1998) in her book on Western aid for developing democracy in post-communist countries. American civil society organizations were willing to support the development of all sorts of civil organizations in Eastern Europe, and for some of its recipients this aid was a very important resource. Wedel claims that in order to receive more aid some of the Eastern European organizations pointed to all possible symptoms of weakness of civil societies in their countries, reasoning that it would result in receiving larger financial support. The sociological vacuum, according to Wedel, was yet another good argument to support the thesis on the civil society's weakness. The statement of Wedel may be interpreted in line with some conspiracy theories, but it is also possible that activists engaged in the so-called building of civil society were honest in their evaluation of how much they still had to do.

The sociological vacuum is an important context for the considerations of civil society as a crucial element of democracy in Mirosława Grabowska and Tadeusz Szawiel's (2001) book on building democracy in Poland. Although their work is analyzed in this chapter, it could actually be placed in any other part of this book because the authors build strong conceptual bridges between Solidarność, civil society, social capital, and democracy in Poland. Keeping all of this in mind, I will concentrate on the topic of civil society. Grabowska and Szawiel (2001: 129) understand civil society as an intermediary zone between a citizen and a state. Consequently, in an ideal typically totalitarian state this zone

136

would remain empty. Yet, the Polish communist state was quite far from the ideal type of totalitarian state as the number of existing associations and participation rates within those associations were quite high. The question remains whether such participation was voluntary. Grabowska and Szawiel (2001: 154) question the rationale of comparing simple statistical indicators of communist societies with those of the societies of the Western word. Their argument is that it is impossible to say whether the participation in such associations was spontaneous or architected by the communist authorities. Similarly, the participation might be only nominal, meaning that members of associations were official members and took part in some of the association's "obligatory" activities, but it was not a true, engaged participation. Due to these assumptions and lack of sociological data on the quality and meaning of participation in associations of communist Poland, Grabowska and Szawiel use the findings of Nowak[45] on the sociological vacuum as a proxy of the quality of this participation. Strong bonds with families and nation, and weak bonds with associations and other intermediary groups, according to Grabowska and Szawiel (2001: 149), support the conviction that participation in associations was not authentic and only nominal. Authors claim that this kind of participation had some positive effects regardless, and that it allowed members of associations to get accustomed to procedures of associational life such as democratic (at least theoretically) elections, writing minutes, constructing statues, and many others. This know-how of associational life was, according to Grabowska and Szawiel, a crucial capital for organizing the Solidarność movement.

Grabowska and Szawiel analyses of civil society and its role for the Polish democracy are very balanced: they do not dramatize their narration and they work with a realistic perspective on civil society (although they employed Putnam's perspective, they did so not without a number of caveats). My discussion with their arguments pertains to three aspects of their interpretation of the influence of the communist past on the civil society in post-1989 Poland: the role of the opposition which started to institutionalize after 1976, the use of the sociological vacuum as a proxy for authenticity of engagement in associations, and mentalist treatment of resentment as a factor influencing the civil society in Poland.

Grabowska and Szawiel focused very much on activities of the opposition and pointed to groups formed after 1976 identifying them as civil society. Although

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45 Mirosława Grabowska and Tadeusz Szawiel were Stefan Nowak's disciples, and they took part in Nowak's research in the 1970s working on data which were later the basis for the statement on the sociological vacuum (the details are discussed in Chapter 4).

the researchers provided much information on "politically neutral" participation in other associations and confirmed that they had some positive effect on developing the knowledge of associational life practices, they treated as civil society under communism only democratic opposition. Yet, their book was written in the sub-field of political sociology, so their perspective, although influenced by Putnam (1993), was for obvious reasons more focused on political activism.

The second problem is more important and regards the "authenticity" of associational participation. Building on the sociological vacuum argument, Grabowska and Szawiel claimed that participation in associations of communist Poland was numerous yet nominal, and the people who were involved in such groups were not truly engaged. In this manner, the troubling lack of something is still there. But is the participation in associations of Western societies also truly authentic? Are people never joining them because it is well perceived or in order to achieve personal gains? I am not trying to say that there is no difference between democracies and authoritarian societies, yet the distinction between them is not so simple. Another aspect of that problem is whether the research tool of Nowak's team was adequate for measuring the authenticity of participation. In Chapter 4 I enumerated doubts regarding the validity of their findings; here, I would like to say that they are a quite distant proxy of engagement in associational life. This engagement may take other forms than a declared attitude of feeling connected with members of association. Some of the practices might not be fully consciously recognized, yet they still play a role in social cohesion – i.e. even in communist Poland, the associations were most probably creating weak ties between their members.

The third issue regards Grabowska and Szawiel's (2001) considerations about the alleged resentment of Polish people. I find this part of their work on civil society as the most speculative. It lacks support in empirical data and brings into sociology the mentalist perspective. This dispositional mode of explanation was quite typical for Stefan Nowak's sociology, in which – as discussed in Chapter 4 – he aggregated attitudes of individuals (the psychological variable of dispositional character) and used them to understand the whole society. In a similar manner, the resentment of individuals was aggregated by Grabowska and Szawiel to the level of the whole society. Yet, the link between micro and macro is missing here and the considerations about the impact of resentment on the condition of civil society are not convincing.

An intriguing development of Nowak's thesis in relation to the problem of civil society was proposed in Marek Nowak and Michał Nowosielski's (2005) book chapter entitled "Od 'próżni socjologicznej' do 'społecznego bezruchu.' Uwarunkowania ewolucji społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w Polsce lat 80. i 90.

XX wieku" [From 'Sociological Vacuum; to 'Social Non-Movement.' The Conditioning of Civil Society Development in Poland in the 80's and 90's of the 20th Century]. As can be noticed in the title, the authors perceived a certain continuity between the vacuum and the state of social non-movement. The latter is said to be peculiar for Poland and Central-Eastern Europe, and it is contrasted with mature democracies, which the authors assume to be littered with social movements. The state of non-movement and weakness of civil society are treated by Nowak and Nowosielski as problematic – it is a characteristic feature of Polish society which renders it different from the Western ones. As with the work of Wedel (1992b), the meaning of the sociological vacuum was shifted and became interpreted as the lack of social representation between primary groups and the nation, as well as the structures of the state (Nowak, Nowosielski 2005: 272). Thus, the authors treated Stefan Nowak's thesis as pertaining to the lack of structures and not on the absence of identifications with these.

According to Nowak and Nowosielski, the social non-movement is a variant of the sociological vacuum, and the effect of the intended rejection of social self-organization, replaced with practices of action based on the low level of trust and assumed lack of stability (Nowak, Nowosielski 2005: 292). In their view, the sociological vacuum is something that objectively exists and continues to characterize Polish society even today. Nowak and Nowosielski's approach is an example of applying Stefan Nowak's thesis to the analysis of the condition of civil society in Poland. It explains the weakness of civil society and it links present research with investigations carried out during communist Poland. While such rhetorical maneuver increases the receptiveness of their argument, this is achieved via shift-in-meaning and employing an argument to explain phenomena which were initially not intended to be within its reach. In Nowak and Nowosielski's (2005) contribution, the sociological vacuum is used as a powerful metaphor.

To sum-up the section on the way in which the relations between the sociological vacuum and civil society are perceived by social scientists, I would like to highlight that although there are different perspectives on the strength of the sociological vacuum, there is a common agreement among the authors that it does, in some way, negatively influence the civil society in Poland. Wedel believes that formal organizations on the intermediary level are weak but, according to her, the vacuum is filled-up by informal networks. Grabowska and Szawiel, similarly to Nowak and Nowosielski, find the sociological vacuum a valid diagnosis and see it as a handicap for societal self-organization and especially associational life. Thus, in the next section I will attempt to answer the provocative question: is associational life indeed such a good thing?

6.4 For the common good? Associationalism: its advantages and disadvantages

What is striking in the studies of civil society conducted in Poland, and especially the ones discussed above, is that associationalism is assumed to be something unequivocally positive for society. There is also a hidden assumption, which seems to be taken for granted by researchers of civil society in Poland, that simple measurements, like the number of civic associations (or other types of organizations) or participation rate in these organizations, can reflect the quality of civic life. Even if these measurements are doubted to be valid indicators of civic engagement in Poland (this issue is going to be discussed in detail in the next section), various forms of participation are evaluated as something positive and generally serving the "common good." This section has been inspired by the book by Jason Kaufman (2002) *For the Common Good?,* in which the author questions the wide spread belief that the mass participation in American fraternities and other kinds of associations in the 19th and early 20th centuries was bringing mostly positive effects for the social life in the USA. Following Kaufman, by "associationalism" I understand a strong trend towards creating civic organizations and the general atmosphere of positive evaluation of their role in society.

Kaufman's (2002) book may be understood as a developed and empirically well informed discussion with laments of social scientists about the fall of civic engagement in the USA.[46] Kaufman (2002: 5) noticed that many authors in the USA assumed that participation in associational life is something inherently good, thus the central question of his book is: "Do people form associations because they aspire to community and cooperation or because they accept the challenges of intrasocial competition?" Although the so-called "Tocqueville Debate" has recently been dominated by the view that civic organizations are bringing positive effects to society, this view was not always dominant. For a very long time, social self-organization was perceived rather as a threat to the state, and associations were seen as potential conspiracy groups. This mode of thinking in

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46 Kaufman (2002: 210) positions his argument in opposition to authors such as Benjamin R. Barber, Amitai Etzioni, Seymour M. Lipset, Robert D. Putnam, and others. I refer to their work in other parts of this book (Barber and Lipset are discussed in Chapter 8, while Putnam is discussed in Chapter 7). Kaufman's (2002) work is here the main inspiration for expressing the possible disadvantages of associationalism, but similar arguments were also given by authors like Michael D. Foley and Bod Edwards (1996), who pointed to associations as promoting anti-democratic values, or Sher Berman (1997), who claimed that strong associational life of the Weimer Republic eventually helped in dismantling its democracy.

140

modern social sciences and political discourse has been long forgotten (or at least marginalized), and it is not my intention to promote it. However, following Kaufman, I argue not to take the positive outcomes of associatonalism for granted.

The organizational form which dominated the civic life of USA in the late 19th century was a specific kind of secret society: the fraternity. The reason behind its popularity was the simple reason that, according to the fiscal regulations, this kind of association was exempt from paying taxes for certain kinds of financial operations. Equally important was the fact that fraternities offered to their members primitive burial insurances: the family of a deceased fraternity member who had regularly paid the fees, received money to cover the cost of the funeral (sometimes the amount of policy would exceed the costs of funeral, thus such insurance might in fact be concerned a life insurance policy). Fraternities were classified as secret societies because their members during closed meetings performed masonry-like rituals. At the same time, however, the membership in them, as well as many of their activities were public – for instance, fraternities were very proudly presenting themselves during holiday parades.

The character of American associationalism was described by Kaufman (2002: 7) as "competitive voluntarism," which he defined as "a general social process whereby by number of voluntary, or nonprofit, organizations in a given society rapidly increases, thus fueling competition among them for members, money, institutional legitimacy, and political power." The fraternity-like associations were competing over their members (in case of having the same recruitment base) but they were also competing against each other. The most illustrative cases of this competition were wars between voluntary fire-brigades fighting over turf and the possible profits connected to it. Competitive voluntarism, according to Kaufman, contributed to the increasing differentiation of American society.

Fraternities became a platform for social life as very often they had their own club space or meeting rooms. In the peak of the golden age of fraternities in the USA, around half of the adult Americans participated in lodges, clubs, and other similar organizations (Kaufman 2002: 21). Obviously, this was opening the possibilities for collective action and facilitating the growth of social capital of fraternities' individual members. Yet, Kaufman's book points to several outcomes of associational life in the USA which he evaluates as negative. These are: societal segregation, lack of national insurance system, weak trade unions, and wide gun possession.

The most important accusation of associationalism stated by Kaufman (2002) is that it vastly contributed to the American ethnic and religious segregation. This point is particularly important because, conventionally, associations are

believed to foster societal integration. In reality, however, associations brought together only the members of their recruitment base, and blocked their social interaction with members of other social categories. The majority of fraternities were recruiting members only of a very specific social category. They were gender-segregated (majority of associations were accepting only men) and as the so-called native American[47] fraternities, they did not accept members of the new migrating ethnicities – Germans, Irish, Italians, Poles, or Jews – as well as African Americans. The segregation was based on race, ethnicity, and – what was often reinforcing the previous bases for segregation – religion (in the 19th century, American Protestants treated Catholic groups with suspicion, and Jews were openly discriminated against). The feed-backing mechanism contributed to segregation and distrust between different ethnic groups until the 1920s when the immigration to USA became limited, yet the discrimination of African Americans, Jews, and unprivileged Catholic migrant groups (the Irish, Italians, Poles) continued throughout the entire 20th century.

Kaufman (2002: 144) claims that the most powerful American associations providing insurance policies were lobbying against enacting the compulsory health insurance in the early 20th century. Since benefit plans were the key reason for participating in them, the associations recognized the possibility of establishing a national health insurance system as a large threat. The introduction of a healthcare system following the European model, and applied also in other former English colonies such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, would have made it much more difficult for fraternities to recruit new members. Although in the political campaign against the enactment of compulsory health insurance, fraternities presented the state as an evil power which should be limited, and emphasized the importance of individual entrepreneurial skills or community self-organizing. Yet, according to Kaufman, these ideological justifications were only a facade for preserving the interests of fraternities and the emerging private health insurance industry.

Kaufman (2002) provides also evidence for the claim that American associationalism was one of the reasons for which the workers movement in the USA did not develop into a large-scale movement, similar to those in Europe. Referring to the example of the Knights of Labor – a fraternity-type organization which was an American proto-trade-union – Kaufman claims that the organizational

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47 The term "native American" denotes here people of a well established, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant background and not "American Indians," as this term is understood today.

142

form of fraternities, their high-exit character, and segregational policies disabled the possibility of creating an institutionalized movement based on working-class identity.

Finally, Kaufman (2002) blames associationalism also for fostering the gun culture in the USA. As he points out, contrary to the popular myth, gun ownership in USA before the Civil War (1861–1865) was rare (Kaufman 2002: 138). Kaufman believes that the change that came after the Civil War was linked to the simultaneous development of fraternities, which by promoting gun culture through displaying guns or practicing shooting, as well as taking part in acts of violence between various ethnic groups, contributed to the spread of the gun ownership. Perhaps the most vivid example of such groups is, the National Rifle Association (NRA) which became established as an organization right after the Civil War, and until today remains a powerful and influential lobby for gun ownership in the USA. It goes without saying that the use of guns in the USA is much more common than other countries.

I will now compare American associationalism to a well-known case study of ethnic antagonism conducted in 1930s by the Polish sociologist Józef Chałasiński (1935). Chałasiński focused on the ethnic antagonism in one of the mining settlements in Upper Silesia. In his book, the settlement was coded under the fictional name "Kopalnia" (which in English means "mine"), yet it is now commonly known that his research study was conducted in Murcki – nowadays a borough of Katowice, the capital of the industrial region of Upper Silesia. Murcki was a working-class settlement built around the mine owned by a German capitalist, in 1934 inhabited by 3,330 people (Chałasiński 1935: 14). After World War I, this part of Upper Silesia became a part of newly independent Republic of Poland, yet the property relations and ethnic tensions were influenced by the former social structures, established when the territory was still a part of the German Empire. Ethnic relations in Murcki were to some extent parallel with social class relations: the owners and mine administration were Germans – not Poles – the workers comprised of both ethnic groups. In the context of associatonalism and competitive voluntarism, passages of Chałasiński's (1935) work describing associational life of Murcki seem particularly interesting. Both ethnic groups, Germans and Poles, were creating their own clubs and associations. Thus, in Murcki there were two separate German and Polish football clubs, two separate association for German and Polish homing pigeon breeders, and two separate choirs – the Polish choir "Paderewski," named after the famous Polish pianist and politician, and a German choir "Uthmann," named after the German composer and singer (Chałasiński 1935: 128–130). All together, in 1934, in a settlement of

3,300 inhabitants, there were 39 associations[48] and each of them had a national affiliation. The case of Murcki is similar to phenomena described by Kaufman (2002): the initial hostility between categories became the base for associational life. The proliferating associations were strengthening the ethnic segregation and contributing to the already strong antagonisms rooted in different ways of remembering the past, social class differences, and positions in power relations. As Chałasiński (1935: 134) concluded his analysis of associational life in Murcki: "Residents organization is in large extent a function of an antagonism: they organize to fight the enemy."

The conclusions of Kaufman's and Chałasiński's works written in different times and different social contexts are important for the proper interpretation of indicators of civic engagement. High participation in associations and a large number of associations may mean that a given society is divided by intense conflicts, and although the integration in smaller social categories might be increasing, the global outcome might be perpetuating segregation and hostility.

The second lesson from Kaufman's (2002) work is that civic engagement in associations is usually interest driven. It is true that people join associations in order to fulfill their need of sociability, but the popularity of associations is also facilitated by the profits they provide to their members. In case of fraternities, their individual profits were the insurance benefits. The interests of different social groups building associations are sometimes conflicted. The organized form of conflict contributes to its institutionalization, which – at least in classic sociology of conflict – was perceived as something positive (see Dahrendorf 1959). Yet, the organizational level of interests adds up to the previous level of individual interests and social categories interests. Associations become organizational actors and establish their own aims, which cannot simply be reduced to the aims of their individual members. Furthermore, the presence of organizations oriented towards reaching their aims results in an emergence of a social field (Hoffman 1999). This starts a new dynamics (which has been described in Chapter 2) of organizational interests being not only an aggregation of their members' interests or interests created by the organization-level dynamics – the interests of organizations are also co-created by their position in the field structure and orientation towards other organizations. As I have stated in the chapter on social fields, they

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48 This makes approximately 85 persons per association. To compare it with the current situation in Poland, there are approximately 70,000 active associations and foundations (Adamiak, Charycka, Gumkowska 2016: 28), which makes approximately 550 residents of Poland per organization. The associational life in Murcki in the 1930s was indeed vibrant!

might be a space of conflict, a space of cooperation, or a space of a specific mixture of both. This conclusion calls into question the assumption that a high rate of associational participation and a high number of associations is always for common good. I am not trying to say it is a factor which always disrupts societal cohesion and that I am an enemy of people gathering in associations: I am just saying that associationalism may have various outcomes and there is quite strong evidence not to assume that it is always brings positive results.

6.5 In search of civic life in Poland

Polish historiography of 19th and 20th centuries was (and still is) dominated by the interest in national independence movements, and the history of ideas contemplates much upon the idea of nation and its relations to romanticism and philosophical positivism (Kurczewska 1979). The concept of civil society, however became used in the interpretations of Polish history only recently. An interesting example is the book of Alicja Kulecka (2016), who reinterpreted the political debates and political practice before and during the Polish January Uprising of 1863 as concerning the civil society. According to Kulecka (2016), conventionally, the January Uprising and the preceding period of political mobilization was described in the context of the uprising's political and military consequences. Yet, as she points out, the political debates and practices of the uprising leadership (i.e. the compulsory draft or taxation) to much extent considered the questions of citizenship, relations between the citizens and the states (the Polish state claiming its independence, as well as the Imperial Russian state controlling the territory), and societal self-organization. These political debates and practices were usually interpreted by Polish historiographers in the context of nation building, national state building, national identity etc. Kulecka (2016) argues that the problems of nation and citizenship were in this period very much entangled, so one cannot say that the debate concerned only national independence, or the question of citizenship and equality in front of the state institutions. This problem is still relevant when abstract models of national community or civil society are being used to describe a given social process. According to the Szacki's (1997) considerations, mentioned in Section 6.2 of this chapter, nation and civil society are contradictory concepts, and on the definitional level, civil society must comprise only the associations formed by the free individuals by their choice. Using the example of the January Uprising, Kulecka (2016) shows that associations created by choice and communities (at least as social constructions) in which the membership is regarded as ascribed, are in reinforcing relations. Kulecka's (2016) work is a case study well illustrating Szacki's (1997: 45)

statement that in reality, the victory of an idea is always an outcome of its hybridization, so theories of civil society need to take into account the nation-state.

Zdzisław Kowalewski (1991) documented the life of civil society in various periods of Polish history. According to him, the period between the two world wars was not only a time of agitated political activity and state-building, but also a time of the eruption of civic activism of various shades. An example of such activism was presented by Chałasiński (1935) in his work on Polish-German antagonisms discussed in the previous section. However, different kinds of associations had already been forming during the three partitions of Poland in the late 19th century, reaching their momentum in the early 20th century, and developing since than at a large pace. Among the most popular forms of associations were trade unions, scouting organizations, organizations dedicated to education and "enlightenment" (i.e. education of illiterate adults, which was an important social problem in interwar Poland), scientific associations, and many others. Particularly impressive was the growth of cooperatives: in 1938 there were 13,741 active cooperatives in Poland (Kowalewski 1991: 332). Thus, it might be assumed that associational life of Polish society before the communist period was very rich and already had its deeply embedded traditions.

Dariusz Gawin (2013), specializing in history of ideas, presented an analysis of the way in which the leaders of leftist anti-communist opposition took up the idea of societal self-organization against (or alternative towards) a communist state. Gawin's book (2013) is not a study of practices of civil society but a study of how the ideology of civil society (although under different labels: the term "civil society" started to be used in Poland in the 1980s in the context of Solidarność) was developed by intellectuals turning against the communist regime. According to Gawin (2013: 10), during the twenty years between 1956 and 1976, Polish intellectuals made a "great turn"[49] from the traditional way of thinking about revolution to the new theory of political action, understood as a peaceful building of independent from the state civic structures. This political theory of action is best described by one of the slogans used by Jacek Kuroń, the leader of democratic opposition in Poland, in which he referred to the incident from the 1970 protest in Gdańsk, during which shipyarders set on fire the building of the local committee of the Polish United Workers Party: "Don't burn committees – create your own!"

On the level of practices, according to Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik (2014), the associational life of Poland and other communist societies was quite rich – organizations had many members and possessed large resources. The authors

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49 This is a direct translation of the Polish title of Gawin's book – *Wielki zwrot*.

admit, that these were incomplete civil societies as they were largely controlled by the communist states, yet they recognized a certain diversity of interests and provided organizational infrastructure for the development of associational life after the fall of communism (Ekiert, Kubik 2014: 47). Ekiert and Kubik oppose the claims that only the anti-communist opposition or informal social life were the antecedents of civil societies in Central Eastern Europe. Also Adam Podgórecki (2016) claimed that civil society was relatively vivid and, for example, it was able to mobilize against amending Polish constitution in 1976. In a similar vein, Polish sociologists like to claim that the Polish Sociological Association was one of the rare enclaves of civil society in communist Poland, as it maintained democratic procedures and freedom of expression (Sułek 2011: 157). Yet, and what seems to be under-researched topic, similar spheres of self-organization perceived as exceptional enclaves, were not so rare in the Poland of late communism.

According to some authors, who in the 1990s expressed their enthusiasm for the idea of civil society, the meaning of this concept was so broad that it encompassed any kind of social structures independent from the state. This line of thinking was most likely rooted in the fascination with the Solidarność movement and the anti-politics of political opposition in communist Poland. An interesting illustration of this is the article by the sociologist Jacek Kurczewski (1996), who at that time just stopped working as the vice-speaker of Polish parliament. In this article, Kurczewski (1996: 330) stated: "civil society, if understood as a network of autonomous structures independent of the political power of government in the broad sense, was, in Poland, clearly located not in associations but in families and the Church." Similar line of reasoning was used by Janine Wedel (1992b), who claimed that in the Poland of the 1980s civil society was built on social circles called "środowiska."

The search for the civil society in families, social circles, or church had – in my opinion – at least two reasons. First, authors of the modernizing approach where really trying to find different expressions of the phenomenon of civil society in Poland. Second – indeed, in Poland of 1980s and early 1990s, it was possible to notice collective action, not organized by state, and the social scholars needed to name it somehow. Obviously, treating the family as an institution of civil society, as Kurczewski (1996) suggested, destroys any meaning of the notion. If the family is an institution of civil society – and in the view of cultural anthropology, family is an institution present in every society – every society has its civil society and as a result the concept becomes meaningless. This idea was accurately criticized by Gellner (1991) who claimed that a society of cousins is not a civil society. Such attempts were not bringing anything useful to the understanding the

civil society in Poland.[50] I will therefore turn to the type of activities which are considered as strictly civil society related phenomena: third sector organizations and protest mobilization.

"In the modern world there is no well-functioning democracy without developed civic values and organizations, without civil society and its institutional aspect – an efficiently functioning sector of NGOs, the so-called third sector" (Gliński 2002: 5). This is quite a strong statement from the introduction to the volume of collected works from sociological studies on the third sector[51] in Poland. Its author, Piotr Gliński, before entering the world of politics, was one of the leading researchers of the civil society in Poland. In fact, it might be said that he was one of the creators of the paradigm of civil society research on the third sector in Poland. As the earlier quotation shows, this research program was strongly value-driven: the third sector was assumed to be the condition of proper democracy, and understood as something good, and desired. It would be very unjust to say that the empirical research studies on the third sector in Poland were blurred by values. Researchers were quite often critical in describing the daily practices of non-profits, as can be seen in the study of styles of the third sector activists by Gliński (2008), however, the general assumption is strongly embedded in the views on the way in which the organization of society should look like. The third sector studies in Poland are quite well institutionalized, with a history of published volumes on different aspects of civil society, its different organizational forms and transformations (Gliński, Lewensten, Siciński 2002; 2004; Gawkowska, Gliński, Kościański 2005; Kościański, Misztal 2008) and the academic journal "Trzeci Sektor."[52]

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50 We cannot forget that the family was also considered as an institution of civil society by Cohen and Arato (1992) in their influential book of the time – *Civil Society and Political Theory*. Yet, this line of thinking is against the majority of conceptualizations of civil society (Grabowska, Szawiel 2001) and was not well documented in Kurczewski's (1996) rather speculative and essayistic work.

51 In Polish literature, but also in public discourse on civil society, "trzeci sektor" – which translates directly to English as "third sector" is the most common expression used to label what is more often described in English as a voluntary sector, community sector, non-profit sector, or not-for-profit sector. In this understanding: the first sector is the state, the second sector is the market, and the third sector is a non-profit (therefore non-market), but also non-governmental, sphere of activities, as discussed by Amitai Etzioni (1973).

52 As mentioned in the previous footnote, "trzeci sektor" translates into English directly as "third sector."

148

The condition of the third sector, in the perspective of Gliński and his fellows, is often evaluated negatively. To quote another work of Gliński (2008: 7): "The structures of civil society in Poland are relatively weak and they are not equal partners for spheres of business or politics. It is one of the fundamental causes of the weakness of Polish democracy and numerous problems, with which our society does not cope." Gliński (2008), in his analysis of NGOs' styles of action, blames for the underdevelopment of civil society the social environment for civic engagement: the corrupt political class and self-centered business elites. He also puts the blame on cultural factors such as learned helplessness, demanding attitude, or the *homo sovieticus* attitude. However, the main idea of Gliński's book is that sometimes also the third sector's policies turns out to be insufficiently supportive for the desired development of civil society. He points here to the nostalgic style of action typical for organizations established before 1989, which became used to the monocentric political regime and planned economy, and to business-oriented organizations, which despite using the legal forms of associations or foundations were actually profit-oriented. It is also similar with organizations which depend on financing from various sorts of public agendas. Finally, Gliński pointed to the leader-centered style of action, which, in his view, also quite often seemed to block the development of positive effects of civic engagement. Nevertheless, the general conclusion of Gliński's (2008: 269) considerations is that although the huge potential of civic engagement in Poland is wasted, there are also some positive civic attitudes which slowly diffuse from NGOs to other social actors, such as public agencies or business.

As I have shown earlier in this chapter, in the majority of works linking the civil society in Poland with the sociological vacuum, the condition of civil society in Poland was recognized as bad. Authors were alarming their readers pointing to statistics about low membership in organizations or weak attachment to civic values. Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik (2014) criticized such operationalizations of civil society by saying that in Central Eastern Europe and in Poland organizations are as active as in Western Europe, but as non-for-profit organizations are less centralized and more informal, it is not possible to measure them with the same research tools and compare to Western organizations. One of the examples illustrating this are Polish trade unions, which have a relatively low participation rate, yet they play a vocal role and are capable of influencing the government (Ekiert, Kubik 2014: 51). The authors highlight the contentious aspect of civil society in Poland, which means that its actors are quite often not very active on an everyday basis, but are capable of mobilizing in moments of public debate. In the recent years, this could be observed on the example of the movements formed by

parents opposing the lowering of the limit of obligatory school attendance, street protests against Beata Szydło's government's disregard for the verdicts of Constitutional Tribunal, or protests against the penalization of abortion. As Ekiert and Kubik (1999) observed, it is quite difficult to evaluate the potential of a civil society to rebel using conventional research tools. Although it is often inactive, it is capable of protesting when some of its active members define the actions of the state as limiting their freedom.

Another assessment of the activists of Polish NGOs was made in the study by Magdalena Dudkiewicz (2009), who focused on the activists' self-consciousness. In her relational approach, Dudkiewicz was reconstructing the reference groups of activists of NGOs of various sizes and locations. According to her analysis, based on individual in-depth interviews, the differences in self-consciousness vary depending on whether the organization is based in Warsaw and depending on its size (Dudkiewicz 2009: 272). The activists from Warsaw more often relate themselves towards the world of organizations, while activists from smaller localities relate themselves more often towards the world of the people involved in the third sector. Similarly, for the activists of large (and usually Warsaw-based) organizations, their social world was the whole sector of NGOs, while activists from smaller localities are relating themselves rather towards their local communities (Dudkiewicz 2009: 277). At the same time, however, activists – regardless of the size and localization of their organizations – tend to exhibit certain technocratic attitudes (Dudkiewicz 2009: 282). For instance, activists are convinced that they are the ones who know, how to deal with social problems. They are also strongly convinced that NGOs are better providers of services than state agencies and, paradoxically, they are convinced that they know how to assist people in need better than the actual people in need themselves.

A similarly designed study of people involved in NGOs, conducted by Galia Chimiak (2006: 287), resulted in the finding that "altruism and self-interest do not contradict or exclude each other" as motivations of civic activists. People involved in NGOs were motivated by various reasons, but they also accepted the liberal individualistic model of civil society. This allowed Chimiak to conclude that the solidarity of Polish civil society was built by individuals with an individualistic approach. Another important finding of Chimiak (2006: 291) was that civic engagement in Poland was not longer the domain of the educated elites. According to her research, the activists of NGOs were of different social strata, although quite often, when engaged in civic activities, they developed an ethos similar to the one traditionally attributed to those educated elites.

The above-presented works demonstrate that a significant part of knowledge about civil society has been gathered in studies of individuals engaged in associations. This is the dominant methodological approach to the third-sector studies paradigm in Poland. Consequently, the knowledge on individual members who contribute to collective action is quite thorough, but the knowledge about the organizations is of a different character and it is gathered rather as statistical data on the membership, finances, and activities of various associations or foundations. The conclusion that it brings is that in the recent years there has been an impressive growth of the third sector in Poland.

The organizational-level considerations are always a base for empirical studies of civil society. In Poland, the knowledge about NGOs is gathered very systematically and published regularly by Central Statistical Office (see Goś-Wójcicka 2016), and by NGOs themselves (see Adamiak, Charycka, Gumkowska 2016). Since 2004, when Poland accessed European Union, the overall income of non-profit organizations in Poland has more than tripled from 8 billion PLN in 2005 to 26 billion in 2014; the number of active organizations has increased from 61 thousand to 101 thousand; the number of staff employed by non-profits has been increasing as well (Goś-Wójcicka 2016; Leś 2013). The fact that Poland is a member of the European Union and its non-profits have access to multiple European funds, such as the European Social Fund, is of course not a simple mono-causal explanation of this situation. Yet, the possibility of acquiring money from Brussels certainly impacted many spheres of Polish NGO activities. Some authors would agree that such a state of affairs has a postcolonial impact on the civil society project in Poland as the aims and structures of associational life were projected somewhere else, and perhaps are not fit for Polish societal life (Górniak 2014). For others, it is an interesting aspect of a broader phenomena of late modern complexity, which in the case of public policies might be understood only with regards to conceptions like multi-level governance. For example, in the narrow field of non-profits assisting immigrants in Poland, the European Union covered half of the budget of every such organization, and the transfer of money was followed by the transfer of norms (Pawlak, Matusz-Protasiewicz 2015). The tension between professionalization, on the one side, and preoccupation with acquiring grants and dependence from the public administration, on the other side, was recognized by Marek Rymsza (2014: 15) as a key challenge for the third sector in Poland. According to him, the professionalization and orientation towards project-culture may cause disembeddedness, even though professionalization and efficiency in acquiring funds is a condition of legitimacy and effective work of non-profits.

151

Ewa Leś (2013) compared the share of various social services provided by non-profit organizations in Poland and other European countries. In majority of cases (except the care for the elderly), the share of social services provided by Polish non-profits was much smaller than in France, Germany, Sweden, or Great Britain (although larger than in Hungary). This would be an indicator of relatively small significance of Polish NGOs in comparison to services provided by the state, families, or markets.

As can be seen from the above-discussed literature, scholars have a quite good knowledge about individuals active in associations (and other civic organizations) gathered through the use of conventional sociological methods such as in-depth interviews or questionnaires, as well as a good knowledge about organizations, based on their reports and documentation. Thus, the knowledge on dispositions of NGO activist and documentary reality dominates. This allows to make some general conclusions about the whole third sector in Poland (and maybe even broadly about the whole civil society). I believe, however, that there is a relatively small knowledge on the relational aspects of civil society. The studies of relations between different organizations, and between third sector actors and other collective actors are, in my opinion, very much needed in order to draw the full picture of civil society in Poland. This picture is partially drawn by studies on the institution of social dialogue (Gardawski 2009; Gąciarz, Pańków 2001), studies on cooperation between local governments and NGOs applying the relational concept of social field (Piróg 2014), or studies on relations between NGOs (Kaim 2014). I believe that more studies of certain social fields populated by NGOs, but also by other social actors, are needed. A better understanding of relations between various types of actors, and institutions (formal and informal) regulating these relations, as well as mobilizing individuals would shed more light on what is allegedly lacking in the Polish civil society.

6.6 Concluding remarks

Civil society is an important subject of sociological studies. Polish sociologists tend to be enthusiasts of associations and other forms of societal self-organization, and would like civil society to play a more important role, be stronger, and larger in numbers of active organizations and members. Because of this, some of the studies of civil society are strongly value based. As I have attempted to show in this chapter, civil society is not in such a bad shape as some authors claim. The evaluation of its condition very much depends on the conceptual and methodological tools applied. If, following Ekiert and Kubik (1999; 2014), different forms of contentious mobilization or, following Wedel (1992b), informal organizations

152

are taken into account, the emerging picture of civil society turns out no to be that dark. Additionally, the analysis of statistical data about non-profits in Poland reveals that the third sector is growing. Perhaps, it reached certain limits of growth in terms of membership and number of active associations, but non-profits are becoming more resourceful and more embedded in certain social fields, in which they cooperate or compete with the state or for-profit actors.

It is important to remember the lesson from Jason Kaufman's (2002) book: associational life does not always have positive motivations and does not always bring positive effects. The study of Kaufman, as well as the Polish study of Murcki in the 1930s (Chałasiński 1935) which brings the same conclusions, serve as a reminder that people associate also for less virtuous reasons, and even if they do so for the common good, it sometimes has negative consequences. Is then the issue of civil society exaggerated in Polish sociology? I would not fully agree, but I would say that it requires a more relational perspective when studied. The research cannot be just limited to calculating members or associations. It also cannot be limited to studies of worldviews, styles, and motivations of activists. I would say that what is needed is a more relational approach in studies of civil organizations, focusing on the way they form coalitions, the way they oppose oppressing regulations, or the way they compete for resources and prestige. Certainly, social field theories provide a good framework for studying the relational aspect of third sector in Poland.

Regarding the sociological vacuum, I do not see much theoretical connection between the claims about individuals' identifications and the practices of associational life. Most probably, only for the core, engaged activists their associations play central role as an object of identification. For many others, who associate for all sorts of reasons, or simply work for the third sector, the top identifications are located elsewhere. What is important for the condition of the third sector is not only consciousness but also social practices. For instance, people might not perceive organizations such as parent councils as important objects of identification, but working (for better or worse) in the social vicinity of schools they might help in accomplishing some collective objectives. The sociological vacuum is not a proxy for the condition of civil society. A low number of people identifying with intermediary organizations does not make it impossible for the organizations to function properly.

7 Social capital: what mediates between individuals and society?

7.1 Introduction

As Alejandro Portes (1998: 2) noticed, the notion of "social capital comes to be applied to so many events and in so many different contexts as to lose any distinct meaning." Its popularity since the 1990s has indeed been huge. It spilled from the social sciences to policy making and public debate: it was used by the US president Bill Clinton and also the Polish president Andrzej Duda in their speeches. Deeper considerations, however, show that the idea of social capital – that is, the idea that social structures bring benefits to individuals or groups – brings nothing new into sociology. Yet, sociology is not a science that develops linearly. It is banal to say that quite often its explanatory power lies in metaphors[53] and linguistic tools allowing to perceive social reality from different angles. This is probably the case of social capital – the notion which received an enormous attention in general sociology and also in Polish sociological debates.

The notion of social capital is a fuzzy one. It has many different operationalizations and there are also two different views on the kind of objects it is an attribute of: individual and collective. The uses of the notion of social capital were connected with a lot of exaggerated and moralizing statements (Portes 1998). Some social scientists, saw social capital as a remedy for social problems, and its alleged lack in certain communities was seen as a as cause for concern.

In this chapter, I discuss the relation of the conceptions of social capital with the problem of the sociological vacuum. In my opinion, it is the key to understanding the nature of the alleged vacuum or finding what fills in the vacuum. The notion of social capital became the way of discussing problems which in older sociological language were described as ties or bonds. This terminology was, in fact, used by Nowak in his discussion of the sociological vacuum – he talked about the group bonds expressed in statements on group identification. I claim that the debate about social bonds is currently going on in the area of social capital research and speculation. Thus, the problem remains but the theoretical framework and language became transformed.

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53 An abuse of a metaphor is often leading to grotesque consequences. It is so in the case of social capital. If – in a huge simplification – maximization of physical capital is something desirable, it cannot be simply translated into the social capital, the maximization of which may bring bizarre consequences.

The chapter has the following order. I start with the short history of the fuzzy concept of social capital. In this review of classical literature related to this topic, I do not intend to reveal anything new. My aim is twofold: to clarify the terminology before using it to discuss the problem of the sociological vacuum in social capital perspective, and to focus on the issue of the micro-macro relations in classical social capital conceptualizations. The next section is devoted to a discussion of publications in which authors dealt with the topic of social capital by connecting it to the issue of the sociological vacuum. Eventually, I turn to the brief review of findings of studies on social capital in Poland. I conclude the chapter with a summary in which I aim to show how the erroneous perceptions of social capital reinforced by the references to the sociological vacuum may be corrected when the cautious understanding of the micro-macro relations is applied.

7.2 Social capital: short story of a fuzzy concept

Michael Woolcock (1998) provides a prehistory of the idea of social capital discussing even authors from the 18th century who pointed to the benefits of some forms of social organization. According to this interpretation, Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, and Parsons could be also considered as theorists of social capital. The actual term appeared in the second half of the 20th century and in the 1990s it reached an enormous attention among sociologists, economists, and political scientists.

One of the first people to use the term "social capital" – even though he did so in a rather imprecise and intuitive way – was Glenn C. Loury (1977), an economist criticizing the neoclassical approach to economic processes, which he perceived as too individualistic. The social capital, according to him, could be the bridge between the individualistic (micro) and the general (macro). Although, Loury only mentioned the idea and did not develop it further, this signaled the emerging need in socio-economic theories for grasping what is on the meso-level.

7.2.1 Pierre Bourdieu and the three forms of capital

In the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, different notions of capital play a central role next to concepts such as field (for discussion of Bourdieauan conceptualization of field, see Chapter 2) or habitus. Bourdieu was mostly engaged in the project of developing the concept of "symbolic capital," and analyzed its relations with economic capital, framed by the mechanisms and structures of certain social fields (Moore 2012). In his writings, social capital is often used intuitively and understood as self-evident. A deeper conceptualization of social capital is provided by Bourdieu in his well-known essay "The Forms of Capital" (1986). The definition of

social capital he gives is as follows: "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu 1986: 248–249).

Social capital in Bourdieu's writings is usually treated as an attribute of an individual, yet this definition shows that it cannot be reduced only to the property of an individual. The first part of Bourdieu's definition recalls the network definitions of social capital (or social resources), yet its second part is strongly groupist. Social capital is not simply just a property of an individual, but it is collectively produced by a social group. Thus, for Bourdieu, the network is understood as connecting members of the same group and the principle behind the understanding of the notion of social group is homogeneity.

For the theoretical framework of Bourdieu, social capital is useful as it allows to conceptualize how social actors mobilize economic and symbolic capital they do not possess by themselves. Social capital is then a profit from the membership in a certain social group. Bourdieu highlights the ritualization of relations and membership that secures access to social capital. Although Bourdieu underlined the network character of social capital and its reproduction through exchanges making relations alive, his understanding of social capital is strictly connected with the notions of groups and classes. Social capital does not help individuals in mobilizing resources from members of social categories which are distant from them. Just as homogeneity is the principle for social groups, heterogeneity seems for Bourdieu to be the principle for social fields. Yet, heterogeneity is for him connected with conflict, or at least rivalry, over the symbolic capital. This understanding of social capital is actually very intuitive and does not help to conceptualize the gains individuals receive from ties with other individuals who are socially distant from them.

For the great sociological enterprise of Bourdieu, social capital is important because it connects members of the same homogenous group. It allows individuals to use economic and symbolic capital which is not just their own. Yet, it is not purely a phenomenon on the individual level. Social capital is a product of groups as collective agents. In this understanding, social capital is connecting an individual level with the group level; it is bonding individuals with their groups and then allows them to reproduce their material and symbolic capital.

7.2.2 James Coleman and human and social capital

The next important author cited as one who laid the foundations for the social capital concept is James Coleman. In his essay (Coleman 1988) introducing the concept, Coleman did not actually provide its definition. Coleman's work explores the issue of usefulness of the social capital for the theory of action which binds together the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. This is a true evidence for the fuzziness of the social capital concept – even its founder did not define it sharply. The most comprehensive description of social capital concept provided by Coleman is as follows: "In explicating the concept of social capital, three forms were identified: obligations and expectations, which depended on trustworthiness of the social environment, information-flow capability of the social structure, and norms accompanied by sanctions. A property shared by most forms of social capital that differentiates it from other forms of capital is its public good aspect: the actor or actors who generate social capital ordinarily capture only a small part of its benefits, a fact that leads to underinvestment in social capital" (Coleman 1988: S119).

Social capital is important for Coleman to bind together sociologic and economic theories of action.[54] In his view, the former was oversocialized and the latter overindividualized. He noticed that exchange theory of Blau (1964) and Homans (1961) was limited to microsocial relations and it lacked the "ability to make micro-macro transitions from pair relations to system" (Coleman 1988: S98). His aim was to build a comprehensive social theory bringing together micro, macro, sociological, and economic perspectives. Central for his theory was the notion of action, and social capital was understood as a resource for actors (individual or collective) facilitating their actions (Coleman 1988: S98).

Similarly to Bourdieu, Coleman considers social capital in the context of other capitals: physical and human. As he pointed out, physical capital is created by changes in material, human capital in changes of persons' skills, and social capital in changes in the relations between actors. Thus, social capital brings value for the actors by letting them utilize the social structure to achieve their interests (Coleman 1988: S100–S101). Thus, social capital brings the micro-macro link into the theoretical framework, because it allows actors to capitalize their participation in social structure.

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54 In Chapter 1 I discuss James Coleman's contribution to the 1980s debate on integrating micro- and macro-levels of sociological analysis. He attempted to do so by applying assumptions of rational choice theory.

When Coleman attempts to explain and specify the notion of social capital by describing its typical forms, he creates a new concept as a set collecting notions which were already in use in sociology. The newness of this idea lies not in defining some new theoretical tool, but in bringing together some old notions and showing what they have in common when facilitating action. Thus, social organization with its expectations, obligations, and trustiness, together with channels of information, as well as norms and sanctions, are for Coleman different forms of social capital. To some extent, the concept of social capital in Coleman's understanding is redundant: sociology already used and explained the profits of social organization, exchange of information or of having common norms in the past. The novelty of his approach is that he shows what these various forms of gaining from the social structure in order to achieve interests through action have in common. It is in a way poetic as a two-word term brings together economy and sociology, which was Coleman's intention. "Capital" is a term from the economic order but with the prefix "social" it has a virtue of bringing the two together. Yet, the disadvantage of Coleman's understanding is that a notion so wide and containing so many meanings loses its explanatory power.

Coleman's understanding of social capital has a positive overtone. Coleman, as examples, discussed profits for actors mobilizing their social capital. Yet, according to him social capital not only enables action but also coerces it. If obligations and expectations are considered in the context of social norms, social capital also limits the actor, who is expected to act in a certain way or who is sanctioned for deviant behavior. This is the difference – not expressed by Coleman – between social capital and physical capital: physical capital emancipates its owner; social capital enables an individual to act but, at the same time, it does not allow him or her to act in certain ways, i.e. it may limit the innovativeness of those who do not act according to the norms.

Coleman saw social closure as important to all forms of social capital. For him, the density of relations had a positive influence on possible gains from social capital. It is an approach similar to the one of Bourdieu, in which social capital bound with a homogenous social group. As I will demonstrate later, the closure or density of relations in other conceptualizations of social capital are not always seen as its foundation.

According to Coleman, the peculiarity of social capital lies is its public character. Other forms of capital may be public but most often they are private. Yet, social capital, as being an outcome of relations, never belongs to one individual only, and its creation spills over to other participants of the structure. Thus, Coleman perceived that production of social capital is a kind of a loss of resources for

158

an actor. At the same time, social capital is gained from the structures brought into existence for other purposes, as in the case of a social organization which constitutes a social capital for its members regardless of its basic objective (Coleman 1988: S108).

To sum up, Coleman's approach, similarly to the approach of Bourdieu, linked social capital with density of relations and explored how it translates into other types of capital. He generally evaluated it as a positive attribute of social structures facilitating action. He used it in a fuzzy way and it could be said that everything which is of social character and enables action could be pointed as social capital. In this sense, Coleman created a very broad concept which is useful only when one of its forms is taken into consideration. Then, however, it seems to be redundant as its forms, enumerated by Coleman, are well established sociological concepts, such as "social organization" or "norm."

7.2.3 Robert Putnam and capital that makes democracy work

Robert D. Putnam is the author who made the concept of social capital familiar to the general public debate. Putnam's two bestsellers *Making Democracy Work* (1993) and *Bowling Alone* (2000) brought both the author and the concept enormous popularity. However, the understanding of the notion of social capital in these two works is a bit different.

In *Making Democracy Work* (Putnam 1993), which studies the differences between civic institutions in northern and southern Italy, social capital is understood as a property of collective having three forms: trust, social norms, and social networks. Social capital is treated as a positive property of collectives. Thanks to social capital, the civic life of a collective flourishes and democracy works. Comparative study of Italian communes from the North and South delivers evidence which confirms these statements. Social capital is also path-dependent and thus causing either virtuous or vicious circles: the commune possessing high amounts of social capital will develop and then possess more social capital, or the commune possessing low amount of social capital will deteriorate or stagnate and thus not increase the volume of social capital. Hence the criticism of Putnam's approach expressed among the others by Alejandro Portes, which I will discuss in the next section.

Putnam (1995) announced the decline of social capital in his home country United States soon after publishing his work on Italy. A few years later, in his work *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam presented a developed perspective and also a modified approach to the problem of social capital. In his text, social capital is not understood as something entirely positive. Putnam divided social capital in

two general types: bridging and bonding. This dichotomy echoes the Granovetter's (1973) differentiation for weak and strong ties, however, Putnam tends to evaluate the two types of social capital from the normative angle, pointing to the inclusive aspect of bridging capital and exclusive aspect of bonding capital. According to Putnam's (2007) constrict theory, the ethnic diversity of American social communities is decreasing the levels of trust not only between the ethnic groups, but also inside the groups.

For Putnam social capital is a property of collectives, and – similarly to Coleman – he treats the stable local community as an archetypical idealized possessor of high social capital – unless its network or trust is not deteriorated by path-dependent arrangements like in Southern Italy. Any social changes (for example, migration) are perceived as a threat to the social capital. Its crucial component in Putnam's eyes – trust – needs stability and time to develop and then foster the production of benefits from social capital. Putnam's approach was very successful, but it was also very strongly criticized for romanticizing the perception of community, overlooking social networks' capability to not only trigger innovation but also to inhibit it, reinforcing traditionalism and localism – which actually might be blocking social change – and a naive use of the concept of generalized trust (Cook, Hardin, Levi 2005; Hedin 2001; Levi 1996). As I will demonstrate in Section 7.3. Putnam's approach to social capital had a strong appeal for Polish studies of social capital.

7.2.4 Alejandro Portes and the demystification of social capital

Alejandro Portes, next to the empirical applications of the notion of social capital in the studies of immigration and ethnic entrepreneurship, made some very important theoretical clarifications to its conceptualization. He underlined that social capital represents not a new idea for sociology, but it is rather a new brand for some conceptualization, visible also in 19th century theories. According to Portes (1998: 2), the heuristic power of the notion of social capital lies in its attention to its positive aspects and in placing it in the economic-like framework of the concept of capital.

Yet, Portes is much more skeptical about the power of this notion. Noticing its usefulness and attractiveness, he states that social capital always has its less-desirable consequences as well. He is also extremely critical of prescribing social capital to other units of analysis than individuals. His critique of Putnam's approach is overwhelming and points to many methodological and theoretical issues, which because of the space and scope of this book cannot be presented in their entirety. Firstly, the approach in which social capital is possessed not by

160

an individual but by a community or nation leads to the confusion of the three aspects: the possessor of the capital is at the same time its source. Secondly, when social capital is treated as a property of a collective, it becomes simultaneously a cause and an effect: communities of Northern Italy prosper because they have social capital – and because of their prosperity, they have social capital. This attempt to treat social capital as a macro phenomenon is, according to Portes, a tautology.

Portes' contribution to the development of the concept of social capital lies in distinguishing between three elements relevant to it: the possessors of social capital, the sources of social capital, and the resources themselves. The first two have an agentic character and their cooperation is needed in order to mobilize the latter. According to Portes (1998), the confusion between these elements is the main reason for the tautological treatments of the phenomena behind the concept.

In his review of social capital literature, Portes (1998: 9) points to three functions of social capital: a source of social control, a source of a family support, and a source of extrafamily benefits. But, as he ironically notices, "it is our sociological bias to see good things emerging out of sociability; bad things are more commonly associated with the behavior of *homo economicus*" (Portes 1998: 15), and this leads to the conclusion that all three functions of social capital may also cause negative effects for social actors. It is a truism for sociology that social control is crucial for social order, but at the same time it suppresses innovativeness. Similarly, the possibility of earning support or benefits is connected with the expectations of providing them also in an extent which blocks development or creates inequalities. Thus, it is possible to talk about negative social capital, which is an oxymoron. It is important to remember that material capital may be used for evil purposes, although it cannot be negative on its own. Material capital for its possessor has only an emancipatory aspect – from the sociological point of view, it is a resource enabling action. Similarly, human capital does not have a negative aspect: all new knowledge has a potential for enabling new actions. Social capital is different as it may have both negative and positive influences on actions of individuals. Portes' critique of the notion of social capital is of huge importance. It emphasizes excessive expectations towards this notion and its overly positive treatment. It also asks for a more cautious consideration of social capital as an avenue of linking micro with macro. Portes criticized the idea of pointing to collectives as possessors of social capital. Its macro aspect is to be rather seen as emergent from the relations of individual possessors of social capital who need to interact in order to mobilize goods.

7.2.5 Michael Woolcock and social capital as a factor of economic development

In his critical review of the conceptions of social capital, Michael Woolcock (1998) pointed to their faults: they try to explain too much with too little; they do not distinguish the sources and benefits of social capital; they can justify contradictory public-policy measures (non-obvious relations between the state and the social capital); they grapple with the problem of maximization. Woolcock's critique of the notion was presented at the same time as the work of Portes (1998) and shares with it many common elements. Furthermore, Portes pointed Woolcock as the only author whose conception of social capital as a property of collectives he saw as promising. The work of Woolcock is especially interesting in the context of the problem of the present book as he deals with social capital as a notion allowing to understand the micro-macro link.

Woolcock (1998) brought together the inspirations of ethnic entrepreneurship studies (micro-level) and comparative institutionalist studies of state-society relations (macro-level) to develop his conceptualization of social capital, and divided it into four dimensions according to axis of micro-macro and embeddedness-autonomy. Embeddedness[55] at the micro-level refers to intra-community ties and is labeled as "integration," and at the macro-level to state-society relations and is labeled as "synergy." Autonomy at the micro-level refers to extra-community ties labeled by Woolcock "linkage," and at the macro-level it refers to institutional capability and credibility, and is labeled "organizational integrity." Woolcock's model is seductive because of its elegance (two dimensions and four fields to be filled) and integration with the sociological tradition. Woolcock shows the heritage of proposed notions in classical theories: Integration – Durkheim; linkages – Simmel; organizational integrity – Weber. Woolcock, being interested mostly in the dynamic effects that social capital has on development, considered possible outcomes of various combinations of absence of the four dimensions. The lack of all of them he called "anarchic individualism," and the presence of all four dimensions, "beneficent autonomy."

At the micro-level, Woolcock defines the combination of high linkage and high integration as a "social opportunity." All other combinations of different

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55 Embeddedness is treated by Woolcock in the line of the Granovetter's (1985) conception stating that every economic action is embedded in social relations, thus the model of depersonalized market is deceptive. In Chapter 3, I have discussed the conception of embeddedness as one of the most promising ways of linking micro- and macro-levels in sociological theory.

saturations of linkage and integration are, according to him, not beneficial for the development of small communities (micro-level): high integration and low linkage are amoral familism,[56] high level of linkage and low level of integration are anomie (once a key notion for sociologists like Durkheim or Merton), and the low levels of both linkage and integration are the rare amoral individualism (but still possible, as in the case of the Ik tribe from Uganda).

The model by Woolcock – a World Bank Expert – is interesting also because it was developed as a heuristic for development programs. It is an emblem of the 1990s that the problems of developing countries started being perceived not only from the perspective of institutions (and their alleged corruption) but also consequences of interplay of social structures and cultural norms. Here, it is interesting to consider Woolcock's model because it explicitly deals with the problem of the micro and macro relations. The lesson of Woolcock is that only the special combination of weak and strong ties and structures on the micro- and macro-level may have beneficial outcomes. Thus, Woolcock is another author who healed social sciences from the social-capital-over-optimism.

7.2.6 Ronald Burt and structural holes

Ronald Burt's contribution to the conception of social capital is of a paradoxical nature. Before his announcement of the problem of structural holes (Burt 1992), social capital was derived from the closure and density of relations, as in the statements of Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986). The definition of social capital by Burt (2005: 4) is very short: "the advantage created by a person's location in a structure of relationships." Social capital, as Burt highlights, is a metaphor about advantage and it is the contextual complement to the metaphor of human capital. The human capital explains why people do better because they are more able individuals, while "social capital explains how people do better because they are somehow better connected with other people" (Burt 2005: 4).

The concept of structural holes is simple, though revolutionary, for thinking about social capital. Burt demonstrated that the advantages of locations in a social structure are not always caused by the density of network relations or closeness to many other participants of the network. In case of brokers fulfilling

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56 "Amoral familism" is a term coined by Banfield (1958) and also often recalled in Polish context. It was used by Tarkowska and Tarkowski (1990) to describe the state of affairs in Poland. This combination of strong intra-group ties and weak extra-group ties is often associated with the thesis on the sociological vacuum. I will explore the examples of this line of sociological reasoning in the next section of this chapter.

the structural holes, the advantage lies in the fact that they create non-redundant connections between different networks. The brokers could be perceived as marginalized in both of the groups they are members of, but the fact that they are the only ones connecting them gives them enormous advantage. They are able to control the inflow of information and mediate between the networks. They are simply in the position of a merchant buying something for one dollar and then selling it for two.

This line of reasoning about social capital, similar to this of Putnam's, inherits much from the seminal work of Granovetter (1973) who showed that weak ties are beneficial in job search because they often connect with social circles that are socially distant. Thus, it is not the tie's strength that is important but the possibility of connecting distant social worlds. Here, the location may give an individual a huge advantage.

Yet, it is necessary not to reduce the thinking about social capital only to the structure of networks. As Krackhardt (1999) demonstrated, a broker who connects two networks, but is simultaneously visible in both of them, is unable to use his or her advantage derived from location. His or her actions would break the norms of one of the two networks. In this case, the ties torture social actors, and not open new opportunities for their actions. Burt's conception of social capital is not only reduced to the location in structure. The structure has consequences on norms and trust. Thus, according to him, closure also provides advantages, for example, supporting the trust. In that extent, Burt's reasoning is in line with Coleman (1988). Similarly to Woolcock and Putnam, Burt (2005: 7) highlights the interplay of close and loose relations by saying: "facilitating the trust and collaborative alignment needed to deliver the value of brokerage, closure is a complement to brokerage such that the two together define social capital in a general way in terms of closure within a group and brokerage beyond the group."

In case of Burt's conception of social capital, there is a very interesting interplay of micro, macro, and action. Micro-level is understood as the level of individual persons, who have different capabilities of performing successful action, depending on their location in the network. But the structure and norms of this network, which are here to be understood as the macro-level, are crucial context for the action. Social capital is therefore the metaphor of a mediator between micro and macro.

7.2.7 Nan Lin: from social resources to social capital

Nan Lin's early research focused on the problem of weak ties defined by Granovetter (1973). In his research on getting a job Lin, together with his colleagues,

coined the notion of "social resources," defined as "the wealth, status, power as well as social ties of those persons who are directly or indirectly linked to the individual" (Lin et al. 1981: 395). Social resources consist of two constitutive elements: social relations and resources which are accessible through these relations. In this sense, social resources are not simply possessed by individuals – they are accessed by them, because they are embedded in their networks. Later Nan Lin jumped on the wagon and integrated the conception of social resources with a theory of social capital. The conception of social resources later transformed into the network theory of social capital (Lin 2001). According to Lin (2001: 24), social capital should be understood as "resources accessible through social ties that occupy strategic network locations (Burt) and/or significant organizational positions (Lin)." Thus, Lin, constructed his theory of social capital in a dialogue with other social network scholars such as Ronald Burt. The inspiration from the works of Mark Granovetter was also very important for him. Thus, the operational definition of social capital proposed by Lin (2001: 25) is: "resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors for actions." In his theory, Lin focuses on investments in social capital and how it is both accessible by social action and enabling for social action. At the same time, however, he also opened an avenue for the research on unmobilized social capital (Chua 2014) by coining the concept of "the invisible hand of social capital."

7.2.8 The invisible hand of social capital

The concept of "the invisible hand of social capital," which was first pointed by Lin (2000), has been receiving much attention in the recent years. The very term "social capital," used by the earlier-discussed authors, can be defined as "resources that need to be mobilized." This means that a beneficiary of these resources needs to be a social actor: capability of mobilizing constitutes his or her agency. Yet, contrary to other forms of capital, social capital quite often does not require a purposeful mobilization of its possessor. As documented in studies on the labor market, approximately quarter to one-third of employees receive their jobs without prior search. The majority of them – according to McDonald and Elder (2006), 80% in the USA – receive the information about job through personal contacts. Thus, the participants of the social networks may gain advantage of the resources embedded in these networks without agentic mobilization (Lin, Ao 2008). In case of the invisible hand of social capital, the gains received by some of the members of a network seem to be an effect of a kind of collective agency of the social group. Yet, it is an outcome of routine exchanges (such as small talks about employment opportunities) between members of networks with unequal access to the

resources. The issue of the invisible hand of social capital is helpful in understanding the central problem of this book: a tie between the micro- and macro-level of analysis in sociology. By analogy to the famous invisible hand of market, in case of the invisible hand of social capital, it is possible to ascribe the agency to the collective. It seems that this was the line of Bourdieu's (1986: 249) thinking when he stated that "the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word." The Invisible hand of social capital is an interesting example explaining this problem: individuals interact and this creates "social capital," meaning access to the resources, which are than gained by individuals. Yet, for the external observer – the one excluded from this very network – it may seem that it is a planned strategic action of the whole group guarding its resources and purposively keeping it only for their members.

7.2.9 Summary

To sum up this brief history of the fuzzy concept of social capital, it is necessary to highlight three issues. Firstly, social capital is an example of a successful concept. Since the 1980s it has gained an enormous attention of scholars, and now it is impossible to conduct sociological studies and ignore it. Secondly, many of the conceptualizations of social capital are strongly normative. It is regarded as a solution to social problems (Ryan et al. 2008: 677) and its lack is regarded a social problem. Thirdly, social capital is a concept which has a potential of understanding the relations between the micro and macro phenomena in social sciences. As Burt (2005: 4) elegantly expressed it, "the advantage created by a person's location in a structure of relationships is known as social capital." Social capital – although it is often hard to grasp what exactly it confines – is a metaphor which helps to notice the consequences of individual actions for the larger structure and, subsequently, the aggregated consequences of this structure for the actions of individuals. I will now move to the section where I explore how this "hottest" notion in current sociology became linked with the "hottest" notion of Polish sociology: the sociological vacuum.

7.3 Social capital and the sociological vacuum

The sociological vacuum conception has been coined before the social capital entered the stage of sociological debates. Yet, the sociological vacuum is, in much extent, a story of social bonds understood in groupist terms as relations between an individual and a group. This relation, as can be seen in the above history of the concept of social capital, fits perfectly in the new language of social capital. Especially the normative tones of social capital's story, highlighting the

166

gains that social structures bring individuals and – even more so – collectives, became connected with the sociological vacuum thesis of Nowak. Firstly, I will describe some general features of the process of binding together the conceptions of social capital and the sociological vacuum, and then I will go more deeply into the two examples of papers in which this connection was a central issue: Anna Kubiak and Anita Miszalska's (2004) work on social bonds, and Janusz Czapiński's (2006) work on the social capital.

The sociological vacuum appears useful for scholars in two cases. Firstly, when they draw a historical background for the analyses of social capital. As the construct of social capital emerged in sociological theory in the 1980s, in order to describe its earlier state, it is necessary to cite studies using different concepts. For example, in Działek's (2011; 2014) works there is often a repeated hypostatization that in the past the levels of social capital were low, which is supported by the reference to Nowak (1979b). Secondly, the sociological vacuum is used in order to support the considerations on the state of social capital in Poland, following Putnam's (1993; 2000) understanding of this concept: the attribute of a collective rather than of an individual, importance of the component of trust, and the differentiation between bridging and bonding capital. This brings the sociological vacuum perspective on considerations regarding the social capital very close to the considerations regarding the civil society.[57]

The picture of social capital in Poland, when applying Putnam's definition, seems to be very pessimistic. Low level of associational life and low level of generalized trust are connected to the existence of a sociological vacuum. For example, Jędrzej Chumiński (2011: 124) wrote: "Poles suffer from such a lasting predisposition to distrust and atrophy of the capabilities to cooperate." References to the thesis on the sociological vacuum very well fit Putnam's (2000) conceptualization of bonding and bridging capital. The strong bonds with family and immediate friends, described by Nowak, are treated as evidence for the existence of strong bonding capital in Poland, while the lack of bonds with groups of intermediary level are treated as evidence for the lack of bridging capital. Thus, the sociological vacuum describes the "worst" – according to Putnam – combination of capitals. Such a description of the state of social capital in Poland even allows to state that Poland is the Southern Italy of Central Eastern Europe (Lasinska 2013).

Interestingly, there are no authors who tried to present having strong bonds with the nation as a potential ground for bridging capital – a potential possibility

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57 The issue of civil society and its debated linkages with the thesis on the sociological vacuum were discussed in the previous chapter (6).

of tying together nearly all members of the Polish society. In the works on social capital, the evaluation of the situation in Poland is very pessimistic and it goes hand in hand with Putnam's normative theory. The low level of social capital is something negative, and so is the vacuum. Together, these two negative descriptions sound even more dramatic. The sociological vacuum appears in works on social capital mostly when social capital is understood as an attribute of a collective – in some cases, this collective is the entire Polish society. Thus, social capital is used as a parameter to describe the entity of a macro-level. In this approach, the potential of bringing together the micro- and macro-levels of analysis are not used. However, bonding capital (which equals strong family bonds) might be interpreted as a phenomenon on the micro scale, and the bridging social capital (lack of bonds with intermediary level groups) might be interpreted as a phenomenon (or rather lack of it) on the meso scale. I will now turn to two papers, where the sociological vacuum played a central role in analyzing social capital in Poland.

Anna Kubiak and Anita Miszalska's (2004) article "Czy nowa próżnia społeczna, czyli o stanie więzi społecznej w III RP" [New Social Vacuum, or the Nature of Social Bonds in the Third Republic of Poland], attempted to revisit the sociological vacuum concept by investigating the nature of social bonds. The paper offered a broad picture of the state of social affairs in the Third Republic of Poland and of the available literature on the topic. Nowak's thesis gave the general angle for this review, although it underwent both shift-in-meaning and selective and partial implementation in the process (see Chapter 4). Kubiak and Miszalska compressed several statements on Polish society under the name of the sociological vacuum and treated it as a general claim about social atomization and a deficit of horizontal bonds (2004: 19). According to the authors, after 1989, the vacuum was filled only to a small extent, and mainly with institutionally backward or pathological settings (Kubiak, Miszalska 2004: 19). The authors used various data sources, further developed the conclusions of other publications, and identified the symptoms of a weak condition of social bonds in present Polish society. The general message of their paper is very pessimistic.

Though non-negligible effort was put into Kubiak and Miszalska's investigation, upon a closer look it transpires that the data was treated rather selectively, and that the argument was built with exaggeration in order to dramatize the drawn picture. Data challenging the general thesis of the paper – see statistics on the small number of divorces (Kubiak, Miszalska 2004: 29) – were not given the due analytical consideration, and the analysis of interesting empirical findings got mixed with stereotypical claims, rather characteristic of socio-political

journalism than of the academia – see, for instance, the strong statements on pathology in professional corporations (Kubiak, Miszalska 2004: 31).

Kubiak and Miszalska expressed their concerns about the low levels of generalized social trust and of social capital in Poland using Putnam's (2000) theory of social capital as a framework for these remarks. It is worth noting that the authors' lamentations appear inconsistent: sometimes it is the low level of engagement in formalized organizations that they point to as a cause for concern, while on other occasions, it is the people's usage of market exchanges instead of informal networks – as with babysitting, care for elderly, etc. (Kubiak, Miszalska 2004: 26, 38). The sociological vacuum thesis was the leading metaphor in describing the situation perceived as unfavorable, but there were also other idioms applied in a buzz-worded manner – a case in point is "dirty togetherness" (see Podgórecki 1987) or "amoral familism" (see Banfield 1958; Tarkowska, Tarkowski 1990). Thus, Kubiak and Miszalska's article is a very interesting example of a dramatized sociological narrative on the condition of Polish society.

A very similar tone is adopted in the paper of Janusz Czapiński (2006), in which the sociological vacuum is used as a metaphor for describing the low levels of social capital in Poland. The author, a well-known Polish public intellectual, took up the sociological vacuum concept in the paper under a provocative title "Polska – państwo bez społeczeństwa" [Poland – A State without Society]. The article uses Nowak's conception in a quite original way, organizing around it Czapiński's line of argument – the thesis is quoted at the beginning and also invoked in the concluding part of the paper. The sociological vacuum phenomenon was converged with the topics of civil society and social capital. The article itself is very dramatic in revealing the lack of society in Poland.

Czapiński's interpretation of Nowak's thesis provides a next example of its shift in meaning: it was presented as a thesis on the lack of real structures, and not on the absence of identifications with such. Czapiński disappointedly observed that the sociological vacuum had not become filled since the 1970s. In his opinion, the existence of the vacuum means that there is no civil society in Poland. In order to support his argument, the author relates to findings from "Diagnoza społeczna" [Social Diagnosis] (research project carried in the years 2000–2013 in order to study quality of life in Poland) on low levels of engagement in civil life, generalized trust, and social capital in Poland. These low levels and lack of "society" are presented as a problem, hence the author's conviction that the vacuum should be filled. Czapiński's treatment of social capital and civil society is of a normative character: Civil society and high level of social capital are something good. Czapiński's application of the notion of social capital is also

of a Putnamian character – social capital is a good possessed by collective actors (Putnam 2000). In this case, the collective is a whole society, although according to the dramatic tone, the low level of social capital in Poland does not allow to talk about society but only about population in Poland.

The two above-presented works reveal a huge impact of Putnam's understanding of social capital as an attribute of collectives. The authors, drawing comparisons between the combination of low level of bridging capital and high level of (bad) bonding capital, and the thesis on the sociological vacuum, cited Putnam's influential theory without any criticism. Putnam's work being very influential was also highly criticized (see Section 7.2 of this chapter). These considerations are highly dramatic and describing the state of affairs in a very pessimistic manner. Yet, on the theoretical level, it is apparent that the authors struggle with the theoretical problems of linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis. In their reading, Putnam's conception is built on two elements: participation in associations and trust. The first element (analyzed in more details in Chapter 6) reveals a very straightforward way of thinking: an individual (micro-level entity) participates in association (meso-level entity), and thanks to that the society (macro-level entity) may work properly. This mechanism is very basic and does not take into account, for example, that density of associational life might also be a manifestation of conflicts and ruptures in the society, as in the case of Polish – German antagonisms in interwar Silesia (Chałasiński 1935), which I have also discussed in the previous chapter.

Another issue is a very simplistic understanding of trust used in operationalizations of social capital by Kubiak, Miszalska, and Czapiński. The authors built their indexes of trust on the declarations of respondents about their trust towards certain institutions or entities. In that manner, the strategic and interactive components of trust are lost. According to Cook, Hardin, and Levi (2005), trust is a phenomenon working only on the micro-level of interactions between individuals. All uses of this concept on other levels of analysis are of an allegorical character. Their work is a strong critique of theories based on assumption that trust is indispensable for social order. The message of their book is that complex societies need institutions allowing co-operation and collective action regardless of the levels of trust on the micro-level of interactions of individuals (Cook et al. 2005). This issue is of a huge importance for the relation between social capital, trust, and the sociological vacuum: many readings of Nowak's concept explain lack of identification with institutions, or the alienation from them (Nowak 1979b) with the lack of trust. It is important to remember that in his original work Nowak did not write about trust – this concept came to the

minds of sociologists later in the beginning of the 1990s, under the influence of Putnam's (1993) work on social capital and the work of Fukuyama[58] (1995), who set an agenda for sociological celebrations of trust as something pivotal for efficient social order. This was later highlighted in the context of transition into democracy by Sztompka (1996; 1998; 1999), and in this context it is going to be discussed in Chapter 8.

Cook, Hardin, and Levi (2005; see Hardin 1991) proposed a conception of trust as an encapsulated interest, which is a phenomenon existing only on the level of interacting individuals, who are capable of evaluating the interest of the interaction partner. Their perspective is sociological, because trust requires a dyad – it cannot emerge without a relation. This is different to psychological conceptions of trust, in which only the individual's capability to trust or to be trusted is taken into account. On these theoretical grounds, the authors criticize the concept of "generalized trust," usually measured by the level of trust to abstract macro-level institutions or generalized others. Firstly, it is impossible – in their opinion – to talk about trust without considering actual interactions of two parties. Trust must be something particular – not general. Secondly, the survey method of measuring trust towards the government was designed to measure cynicism, and it is both methodologically and theoretically incorrect to consider cynicism as simply equal to distrust or the lack of trust.

In my opinion, this is the critical weakness of comparing the sociological vacuum with low levels of trust. Only when the possibility that trust may be generalized and extended beyond the micro-level phenomena is taken into account, it is possible to think of using the conception of social capital as tying the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. What can be learned from Cook, Hardin, and Russel's (2005) critique of such kind of uses of the notion of trust is that other devices are needed in order to cooperate. In consequence, other concepts to describe the link between micro- and macro-structures become necessary. Pointing to collectives (as large as societies) as possessors of social capital is a naive solution to the theoretical problem. It does not mean that the lack of "something" in between is an artifact. Both the lack of identifications with middle-level structures and the low level of generalized trust (and other aspects of social capital as

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58 It is worth noting that Fukuyama's (1995) book title was translated into Polish as "Zaufanie: kapitał społeczny a droga do dobrobytu," which retranslated into English would be "Trust: social capital and a way towards welfare." "Social virtue" was replaced here by "social capital," and in Polish sociological discourse this work is treated mostly as book on social capital (equal to trust), and often recalled together with Putnam's (1993; 2000) works on social capital.

defined by Putnam) reveals something about Polish society. Perhaps, they are even somehow connected, although saying that low level of social capital equals a sociological vacuum is just a rhetorical trick. The lack of identifications and the lack of social capital seem to be so problematic because there is a lack of other theoretical tools to describe the micro-macro link. The real vacuum is not in the society but in the theory forged to describe it.

7.4 What do we know about the social capital in Poland?

The variety of concepts under the common label "social capital" received enormous attention in the studies of Polish society. Describing the state of affairs of this research would require a huge effort and a separate book. However, since the main topic of this book is not social capital but the problem of linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis, and the intractable problem of the sociological vacuum, I will limit myself to an arbitrary selection of the most important studies on the social capital in Poland, which are also relevant to the key-problems of the present book. I will also pay attention to the findings that contradict the described above discourse on the alleged negative syndrome of low social capital in Poland. First, I will discuss the findings of other researchers who treat social capital as an attribute of collectives. Then, I will discuss the findings of studies in which social capital is regarded as an attribute of individuals.

There are different sizes or ranges of collectives considered as possessors of social capital that have been analyzed during its studies in Poland. In the above discussion of the uses of the sociological vacuum thesis in the context of social capital, the latter was attributed to the whole society. The dramatic assessment of the condition of Polish society is supported by the data on low level of social capital in Poland – thus, it is regarded as a feature of the whole society. Perhaps, this is one more remark that needs to be added to the critiques of the social capital conception: the larger the collective regarded as a possessor of social capital, the less useful the explanatory capacities of the concept. Other streams of studies focus on the social capital as an attribute of regions or local communities. Interestingly, the collective which is supposed to be bearer of a social capital is usually defined territorially.

Tomasz Kaźmierczak and Marek Rymsza (2007) attempted to merge the social capital perspective with the social economy perspective. Their work is worth noting as an example of an applied program for the new development of local communities grounded in their own social resources, but facilitated by the European Union programs. Similarly, Maria Theiss (2007) described the social capital as a context of local social policy. According to her findings, social capital of the

local community, together with institutionalized intervention of social welfare, have a synergic effect. At the same time, social capital on the level of households has strongly unequalizing effect as it is correlated with education and position in social structure. Ireneusz Sadowski (2011), building on theoretical framework of Putnam (1993), demonstrated that local governments in active communities do not commit spectacular failures. This does not mean that inactive communities sometimes do not have successful local governments, yet their efficiency is only a function of decision-makers' efficiency, and these communities are not immune to failures.

In the afterword to the large volume entitled *Kapitały ludzkie i społeczne a konkurencyjność regionów* [*Human and Social Capitals, and the Competitiveness of Regions*] (Szczepański, Bierwiaczonek, Nawrocki 2008), the authors concluded that although much of the research in Poland focuses on the theoretical considerations or on the causes of social capital, there is no convincing evidence for conversion of social capital into other forms of capital (Lewicka et al. 2008: 518). Similarly, Cezary Trutkowski and Sławomir Mandes (2005) came to the conclusion that the relation between the strength of social capital and economic development is not so apparent. In these studies, social capital was considered as an important context of collective actions taken by different agents located in the structures of local governments. This links the social capital research with the research on democracy, which I will analyze in Chapter 8. Locating social capital as a property of local (or regional) community is an attempt to tie together micro- and macro-levels of analysis and set the intermediary meso-level of community. Indicators and based on them indexes of social capital usually aggregate the individual level of analysis (i.e. number of participants in associations, or number of respondents declaring trust) and sometimes the group level of analysis (i.e. number of non-governmental organizations in a given community). The above-mentioned researchers were testing the hypothesis stating that social capital is a feature of the local community that translates (or is at least correlated) to other aspects of its wellbeing, such as economic development, quality of local government, or efficient social policy. On this level of analysis, the results are very ambiguous. Contrary to sociologists' expectation that social capital – this truly social attribute – of local community is a crucial coefficient explaining their situation, it seems that social capital is not a key factor for the wellbeing of communities. Of course, this understanding of social capital is not totally redundant, yet it is rather useful in describing the context of the local situation – not in explaining it.

The importance of social capital on a regional level has been demystified by Jarosław Działek (2011). According to his findings, there are no patterns of regional variety of social capital in Poland. Against assumptions that alleged different levels of social embeddedness in various historical parts of Poland are not connected with differences in the social capital. Polish territories that in the past have been occupied by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as Prussia and Russia, are very much heterogonous regarding the levels of social capital. The same is valid in regards to western and northern territories of Poland incorporated after World War II (so-called "Ziemie Odzyskane"). Against the assumptions and evidence from USA and Western Europe (Sabatini 2008; Woolcock 1998), the levels of social capital in Poland are not correlated with economic development. According to Działek's (2011) analyses, the indicators of social capital are statistically insignificant in models explaining the economic development. Economic development in Poland is conditioned by the levels of human capital and economic capital.

Much different are the conclusions from studies considering the social capital as a feature of individuals. The conversions of social capital into other forms of capital are also not so obvious, yet studies made in Poland allow to understand both the sources of social capital and its benefits for individuals, without much doubt that social capital is beneficial for individuals.

Similarly as in other countries, in Poland the level of social capital of individuals depends on variables such as sex (man have more social capital) and age (elders have less social capital). Moreover, people with more cultural capital have more social capital, and various occupational groups have different amounts of social capital (entrepreneurs possess the largest amounts). The size of the locality does not matter for the amount of social capital in Poland. Participation in religious rituals is correlated (although not very strongly) with the amount of bridging social capital (Growiec 2011).

Ireneusz Sadowski (2012) highlighted the uneven distribution of social capital in Poland. According to his analyses, on the panel survey of the generation of people who became adults at the fall of the communism, the distribution of individual social capital between members of Polish society is similar (in terms of Gini coefficient) to the distribution of other forms of capital: human and material. Sadowski (2012) also found correlations between individual social capital and income, and psychological wellbeing. Social capital in Poland is not simply transmitted as such between generations. As Sadowski (2012) noticed, the cultural capital mediates in this process, and high schools, as institutions forming ties, play in it a crucial role. The mechanism is as follows: children of parents

174

with a better social position do not simply become members of parents' social networks, but follow their educational path and build their own social capital thanks to the participation in the educational institutions. As a result, their social capital and social position is adequate to the cultural capital of the parents.

Social capital was also studied in regards to Poles who migrated from Poland. Louise Ryan and colleagues (2008), using qualitative research techniques, investigated the different ties sustained by Polish migrants in the UK. According to Ryan, social capital is a complex phenomenon. Polish migrants possess social ties of different strengths and lengths – (connecting them with new neighborhood in UK but also with the family and friends back in Poland). The rivalry between Poles is perceived mostly by the ones who do not speak English and are dependent on "Polish" networks. Yet, there are high levels of trust and support in close groups and, on the contrary, there is no trust to the members of the imagined community of Poles. Interestingly, the Poles who have extra-ethnic ties do not perceive the threat or competition from their co-ethnics. The lesson from this study is that in order to understand the gains from the individual's location in the social structure, it is necessary to take into consideration the complexity of this structure and also the attributes of the individual. In the case of Polish immigrants to UK, the knowledge of English was crucial for their capability of creating new ties. Again, cultural capital seems to be synergetic with social capital.

On the individual level, there is evidence that social capital influences income attainment in Poland. Kazimierz M. Słomczyński and Irina Tomescu-Dubrow (2005) operationalized social capital as participation in the social network of multiple structural holes, and in their analysis of panel data they showed that larger amount of social capital is correlated with an increase in income. Similar positive correlation of social capital (this time defined as membership in associations and meeting friends socially) and income was found by Jan Fałkowski and Beata Łopaciuk-Gonczaryk (2010). These economists used the same Social Diagnosis data, which let Czapiński (2006) announce that in Poland there is no society. The same data of Social Diagnosis allowed Jakub Growiec and Katarzyna Growiec (2010) to conclude that bonding social capital has negative impact on income, while bridging social capital has a positive impact on income and other variables representing respondents' wellbeing.

A comparison of above-presented selection of studies on social capital is a hard task, because of a plethora of used indicators and differences in operationalization of the concept. The methodological complexity magnifies the complexity of various theoretical frameworks applied. Without a quite long explication of what is actually meant by social capital in a given study it is impossible to

assume, if this is the "same social capital" that other researchers studied. Social capital, understood as property of individuals, is also a strictly sociological concept which allows to understand gains (and sometimes losses) caused by a person's position in a social structure. Such an understanding of social capital has the virtue of connecting the micro (individual and her immediate relations with other individuals) and the macro (structure). It is clear that the proper location in structures is beneficial to individuals. The outcomes of studies of social capital defined on the level of individuals (and informed by the network tradition of understanding the notion) in Poland are coherent with the outcomes of the studies in other countries.

7.5 Concluding remarks

Social capital is an extremely fuzzy concept. Some of its definitions and applications are very useful in understanding the benefits of position in social structure, but some other are just noisy misinterpretations of properties emergent from the participation in social settings. In this chapter, I have reconstructed the most influential definitions of social capital with a focus on their relation to the micro-macro problem in sociological theory. I am convinced that the erroneous perceptions of social capital supported by the references to the sociological vacuum may be corrected, when the cautious understanding of the micro-macro relations is applied. I truly believe that the definitions of social capital as an attribute of collectives are not bringing too much new value to theory. On the contrary, the definitions of social capital as an attribute of individuals (but an attribute derived from participation in networks of relations) are useful in linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis. By the same virtue, they are useful in refuting the problem of the sociological vacuum. The problem of the sociological vacuum was defined in terms of aggregation of attitudes and identifications of individuals. Social capital puts the attention to relations between social actors, not only the imagined bonds social actors maintain with social groups. Social capital is an attribute of an individual, but it cannot be simply possessed like material capital – it can be best defined as resources embedded in a network of relations. Thus, social capital, in its social network understanding, is next to the conception of embeddedness (discussed in Chapter 3) one of the promising lines of framing the micro-macro link. Social capital is a mediation between individuals and the society.

In this chapter I have discussed the most influential variants of the social capital conception with special focus on the problem of the micro-macro link. For Pierre Bourdieu, social capital is a link between individual and her homogenous

social group, so it has a segregating character. In Bourdieu's theoretical enterprise, social capital is the least theorized concept which is actually understood intuitively. James Coleman's approach brought the micro-macro link into the theoretical framework because, according to him, social capital allows actors to capitalize their participation in social structure. Robert Putnam received a lot of attention and contributed to the popularization of the concept of social capital. Yet, from the theoretical point of view, Putnam's approach was strongly criticized for romanticizing communities, overlooking some of the negative aspects of social networks – such as reinforcing traditionalism and localism – and naive understanding of generalized trust. Alejandro Portes criticized the idea of pointing to collectives as possessors of social capital. Social capital's macro aspect is to be rather seen as emergent from the relations of individual possessors of social capital who need to interact in order to mobilize resources embedded in their networks. Although Michael Woolcock perspective on social capital treats it as an attribute of collectives, it provides an interesting combination of micro-level and macro-level factors. This approach was influential for studies on the interrelation of social capital and regional development. Ronald Burt treated social capital as a mediator between the micro-level (understood as the level of individuals whose actions depend on their location in social network) and the macro-level (understood as the norms and the structure of the network). Nan Lin started with a conception of social resources and then transformed it into the network approach to social capital and highlighted that social capital is connected with social action. Nan Lin also created the concept of the invisible hand of social capital which allows to grasp the benefits of participation in networks which were not mobilized by purposive action. As it can be seen in various theorizations, social capital is always a mediation between individuals and larger structures. Although the concept is extremely ambiguous it helps noticing the feedbacks between the actions of individuals and their aggregation on the structural level.

In this chapter I have discussed how the thesis on the sociological vacuum was connected by scholars with the conception of social capital. The important conclusion is that some researchers treat the sociological vacuum as a proxy for social capital. The notion of social capital coined in the second half of the 1980s was obviously not used in studies conducted during the period of communism in Poland. Currently, in analyses of genealogy of social capital in Poland, the statement about the sociological vacuum is used as evidence for the low level of social capital in Poland before 1989. Another conclusion that requires highlighting is that authors citing the thesis on the sociological vacuum in context of social capital usually tend to follow its normative definition proposed

by Putnam. Bonding capital is then associated with strong identifications with primary groups, while bridging capital is associated with weak identifications with intermediary groups. Therefore, the use of the sociological vacuum concept in connection to social capital concept merges the theoretical shortcomings of Putnam's theory with the abuses of Nowak's thesis. This is clearly illustrated by the example of papers written by Miszalska and Kubiak (2004), and by Czapiński (2006).

The studies of social capital as a property of collectives that have been conducted in Poland are in my opinion inconclusive. The findings from other countries about the correlation of social capital with regional development were not confirmed in Poland. On the other hand, the findings of studies of social capital as an attribute of individuals conducted in Poland are congruent with the outcomes of studies conducted in other countries. This allows to speculate that the larger the subject regarded as a possessor of social capital, the less explanatory capacities of the concept. The studies which regard the whole society as a possessor of social capital, have minimal explanatory capacities.

Social capital is the notion that gained enormous attention and since the 1990s has become one of the hallmarks of sociology. Ironically, its roots are in economics. Social capital is an attempt at measuring, in quasi-monetary terms, the advantages of having social relations. Yet, social relations have always been an element of human environment, while capital is a relatively new invention. Social capital is regarded by some optimists as a condition for social wellbeing but, in my opinion, it should not be overestimated. Successful cooperation between humans is possible without social capital.

8 Quality of democracy: social base for political institutions

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I deal with the concept of democracy from the perspective of connecting micro- and macro-levels of social phenomena. Democracy is a central notion for the Western culture and a proper discussion of its roots and history would be a life-time project. In literature, it is possible to find at least six general understandings of democracy, which in some aspects contradict each other (Coppedge, Gerring 2011). Thus, I limit my considerations to the aspects important for the problem of the way in which political system is capable of transforming the will of individuals into the action of a whole state; in other words: the way in which the micro-level is linked to the macro-level by mechanism of democratic decision-making. In the studies of democracy, the micro-level is very often identified as the

level of individual – it is the basic assumption of modern democracies, that each individual has an equal vote. For some scholars, the micro-level in studies of democracy is the level of interactions in which decisions might be taken after direct considerations, or interactions which shape opinions then influencing political acts of individuals. The macro-level is usually located on the level of state or whole political system. The micro-macro issue in studies of democracy is, to some extent, overlapping with the individual-society issue. In this chapter, however, there will be no considerations about the agency-structure pairing.

I start with an excursion into the classic writings in the field of political science and sociology of politics, which contain traces of meso-link between individuals (micro) and the state, decision-makers, or elites (macro). Then, I move to the analysis of literature on the quality of democracy in Poland for which, according to the discussed authors, the sociological vacuum is an important context. As I will demonstrate, there is a strong connection between this chapter and two previous chapters (6 and 7) because weak civil society and low levels of social capital are often perceived as obstacles for the desired development of democracy in Poland. The chapter is concluded with remarks on the problem of linking micro- and macro-levels in understanding democratic processes.

8.2 Democracy: aggregating individual wills into collective action

One of the huge problems with concepts such as democracy is their fuzziness. For intellectuals, political scientists, and sociologists it is a fuel for eternal debates. Yet, clashes between different ways of understanding democracy can lead to actual political conflicts and influence state governance.[59] In this section of the chapter I attempt to locate the issue of the micro-macro link in considerations of

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59 This present book is written at the time of the constitutional crisis in Poland, during which two main political forces are both convinced about being democratic and their opponents being anti-democratic. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice] political party understands democracy according to the electoral conception, while the supporters of the independence of the Constitutional Court understand democracy according to the liberal conception. Interestingly, the egalitarian conception of democracy has its supporters only among some marginalized political parties (such as Razem [Together]). Moreover, the main opposition party – Platforma Obywatelska [Civic Platform] – when ruling the country, also had a strong tendency to support the electoral conception of democracy, and Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, being at the time in opposition, was calling for a stronger control of the majority.

classic authors writing on democracy.[60] The authors whose various perspectives on democracy I arbitrarily chose to analyze are: Benjamin Barber, Robert Dahl, William Kornhauser, Arend Lijphart, Charles Lindblom, Seymour Lipset, Adam Przeworski, Giovanni Sartori, Joseph Schumpeter, and Charles Tilly. According to Michael Coppedge and John Gerring (2011), in literature there are six different conceptions of democracy: electoral; liberal, majoritarian, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian. Among these six conceptions there are some overlaps and similarities, but some of them are contradictory to each other. It is not a classification or outcome of a conceptually constructed grid.

8.2.1 Six conceptions of democracy

In the electoral conception of democracy (equivalent names are contestation, competition, elite minimal, realist, or Schumpeterian), parties and elections are crucial elements of the democratic process. Elections are the mechanism of aggregation of preferences of individuals (micro-level) to produce one outcome: a mandate for a certain group among elites to lead the state (macro-level). Parties (meso-level) are means of accumulating individuals of more or less similar preferences, which compete for power. The authors, whose works on electoral (minimal) conception of democracy I am going to discuss below, are Adam Przeworski (1991), Giovanni Sartori (1987), and Joseph A. Schumpeter (1942).

In the liberal conception of democracy (equivalent names consensus or pluralist), the political power is assumed as something that must be distrusted, and for this reason arrangements such as transparency, civil liberty, rule of law, effective checks on rulers (like strong constitutional tribunals), and minority rights are not just add-ons to the rule of the people, but lay at the heart of the democracy. In this case, it can be said that the meso-level between individual freedom and state authority is located in the institutions and organization securing the proper (according to the supporters of this conception) functioning of the political system. Among many authors writing on this conception of democracy, here I will pay attention to the works of Robert A. Dahl (1971; 1998) and recall the theory of mass society built by William Kornhauser (1960).

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60 This strategy is indebted to Cześnik's (2008a) idea expressed in the article in which he attempted to answer whether the presence of the sociological vacuum is problematic for democracy by searching for clues in the writings of classical authors. Here, I am answering the broader question of the way in which different classical authors address the problem of the micro-macro link in their writings on democracy.

180

The majoritarian (or equivalently responsible party government) conception of democracy is in opposition to the liberal one. The government needs to be effective and it is simply fulfilling the will of majority. The government, as an emanation of the sovereign, is to be trusted, so there is no need for building the institutions limiting its powers. The link between the micro and macro-levels here is to be conceptualized similarly as in electoral conception of democracy: on the one hand, as an election mechanism, and on the other hand, as parties competing for the right to represent the sovereign. I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of putting into practice of majoritarian model of democracy in the latter part of this book referencing the work of Arend Lijphart (2004; 2012).

The participatory conception of democracy is based on criticism of the idea to pass the rule to the elected representation of voters, thus, it may be considered as an opposition towards the electoral conception of democracy. Instead, all other institutions of consulting decisions with citizens are to be employed – referendums, public hearings, social movements – as well as all other vehicles of engaging the citizens into the control of government and influencing its decisions. Here, the meso-level of analysis ought to focus on collectives such as social movements or civic organizations of different sorts, and institutional mechanisms providing participation, which means different than election ways of aggregating individual opinions into the decisions on the state level. I am going to look at the participatory conception of the democracy through the critical eyes of Giovanni Sartori (1987) and the enthusiastic eyes of Benjamin Barber (1984).

The deliberative conception of democracy is process-oriented. Here, the elections are not enough to secure the democratic outcome, because they are an automatic way of aggregating preferences. According to the deliberative conception, democracy requires a continuous dialogue between the citizens, performed on different levels of decision-making. Thus, the deliberative conception stresses the salience of institutions of public consultation, but also invests much hope in the possibility of running a rational public debate in the mass-media. These institutions might be considered as meso-level transmitters of individual-preferences into collective decisions. Although the father of the deliberative conception of democracy is undoubtedly Jürgen Habermas (1984), in this chapter I will pay attention to the process-oriented conception of democracy presented by Charles Tilly (2007) which, although not equal to the deliberative conception of democracy, is an interesting case for analyzing the micro-macro link.

In the egalitarian conception of democracy, the key concern is the equality of citizens. The political equality is not possible to be achieved without social equality. The goal is to achieve equality in domains such as participation,

representation, protection, and resources. Although, ideally, the equality is to be achieved between individuals, the most visible inequalities to be fought by democracy are between social categories. The meso-level in this conception of democracy is the level of categories which sometimes achieve subjectivity and turn into social actors. In order to discuss this issue, I refer to the works of Charles Tilly (2007) and Charles E. Lindblom (1988).

In the following review I pay unequal attention to the conceptions of democracy. I focus more on the electoral, liberal, and participatory conceptions than on the three others because they are more often used by scholars studying the interplay of quality of democracy and the sociological vacuum. In this manner, the review of the six conceptions of democracy prepares the ground for the proper interpretation of the use of the sociological vacuum in the research on democracy in Poland.

8.2.2 Electoral conception of democracy

Even in the most minimalist definitions of democracy there is a space for considering the micro-macro link. Adam Przeworski (1991: 11) phrased the definition of democracy in nine words saying that "democracy is a system in which parties lose elections." Thus, democracy requires elections and protagonists who compete for the votes. As Przeworski (1991: 11) highlights, these protagonists are collectively organized and capable of coercing those whom they represent. This means that democracy requires elections as a mechanism of translating individual preferences into a common will, as well as leaders – members of elites – who represent and organize the masses. The link between micro and macro is achieved thanks to the elections as a translation mechanism, and thanks to the intermediation of organizations. The consequence of this arrangement are expressed in the famous dictum of Przeworski (1991: 12) stating that democracy is an institutionalized uncertainty "because it is a system of decentralized strategic action in which knowledge is inescapably local." Again, an entity from the macro-level – "a system" – regulates and is regulated by actions which are embedded in local knowledge (micro-level).

Electoral democracy requires two steps: reduction of preferences to a reasonable number, and choosing between the alternative preferences. Both of them require some kind of intermediary mechanism. The most often pointed intermediaries between the individuals and the state in a democratic process of reduction of preferences and then choosing between them are political parties. There is an old sociological tradition of analyzing parties as organizations (see Michels 1915), but they can also be seen as mechanism of gathering individuals

of more-or-less similar preferences, and then allowing the competition between these generalized preferences, personalized in their leaders, as in the understanding of democracy by Schumpeter (1942: 273), who defined the principle of democracy as follows: "the reins of government should be handed to those who command more support than do any of the competing individuals or team." Parties not only gather the voters of similar preferences – they also shape these preferences, therefore, the mechanism is interactive.

The second step – choosing between alternative preferences – is achieved through some form of voting mechanism. It could be achieved in a referendum, which to some extent could be compared to elections, yet the majority of decisions in representative democracies are taken in parliaments and are not directly consulted with voters. The mechanism of consulting the decision involves such actors as media, trade unions, social movements, interest groups, non-governmental organizations, local governments, agencies researching public opinion etc.

Sartori (1987) saw a difference between the democracy and other political systems in the fact that it is – at least in its ideal model – a horizontal system. Politics is determined by the relation between the ones who govern and the ones who are governed, so it is a vertical system based on hierarchy. Democracy is the only political system in which the governed are sovereign to the ones who govern. Yet, it is only an ideal and, according to Sartori, the border line between the governing and the governed – even if it is blurred – exists. The vertical aspect of democracy seems to be in constant tension with the horizontal aspect. The former has its historical roots in previous, non-democratic forms of government. What is crucial for the subject of this book is that the vertical aspect of democracy is related to the problem of linking individuals (micro-level) with the societal (macro-level). Horizontal aspect is the ideal of democracy, which is impossible to be achieved from the organizational point of view. For example, it is an often recurring argument that the "real" kind of democracy is direct democracy, in which decisions are taken in referenda by citizens. It is a utopian argument derived from the wrong assumption that the organization of a collective of a large number of people is possible according to the same principles as the organization of a collective of a small number of people, as in the mythologized Greek polis.

Thus, in democracy there is a need to create representation. Representation is created in elections, in which decisions of voters are registered and their opinions are aggregated. The election system is an important mechanism allowing the emergence of the macro from the micro. From this perspective, the analysis of mechanisms and entities engaged in electoral procedures is an analysis conducted on the meso-level. Elections are the mechanism of democracy, but the opinions aggregated during them are not constant. Voters are reflexive individuals and

the micro-macro link here does not work only in one direction: from individual voters to the elected representation. Opinions are formed on the basis of evaluation of the present government's actions and, again, individual voters usually do not shape their own opinions without the influence of others. Here, as concludes Sartori (1987), the free public opinion is another necessary condition for democracy to work properly. Opinion forming is a three-fold process: opinions are transmitted from the elites; opinions formed at the bottom are transmitted to the elites. Sartori refers to the cascade model of opinion forming, described by Deutsch (1968), in which opinions are first transmitted from the elites via mass-media, and then are disseminated by opinion-leaders, who operate on the level of micro-relations and, in the course of daily routines and interactions with others, transmit their interpretations of what they had learned from the mass-media. The opinions are also formed on the micro-level and then transmitted to the elites. This process is often observed during mass protests and the formation of social movements. These instances, however, seem to be incidental.

The third process described by Sartori (1987), in reference to the work on voting and public opinion by Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954), is essentially important for the conceptualization of the micro-macro link. Opinions very often are not formed as an outcome of information evaluation, and they are simply evaluations without information formed as outcomes of identification with a reference group. The opinion of an individual is formed because of his or her attachment to a given group: family, group of friends, occupational category, party, or social class. Membership in this groups (or at least identification with them) mediates the membership in the polity. Yet, identification with them tends to influence the opinions in a way which, according to Sartori's considerations, is not quite rational because it is not based on information. Below I am going to discuss the work by William Kornhauser (1960), who saw the loss of community and the lack of groups influencing opinions as a threat for democracy. This problem is very relevant to the conception of the sociological vacuum and I will turn to this link at the end of this chapter. In this process, the identification with a group influences the opinions of an individual, which are then aggregated in elections and create the macro-level dispositions for the action of the state. According to Lipset (1981), for a very long time, voting was a phenomenon determined by social class membership – so-called "class voting." Yet, since the 1960s, in the majority of democracies, class voting has decreased in its intensity. An oversimplified understanding of the mechanism in which political preferences are determined by the membership in certain categories would allow to take the individuals out of the equation and treat democracy as an interaction of large-sized groups.

I find the problem of opinion (or preferences) crucial for the discussion on democracy in context of the micro-macro link in sociological theory. The minimalistic understanding of democracy, in which elections are the event of translating individuals' opinions into dispositions for the elites of decision-makers, tends to focus on the electoral mechanism. Yet, opinions are formed and transmitted, or they may be "read" by elites. In order to understand these mechanisms, one needs to take into account the following institutional domains: field of the media, educational system, and higher educational system. Educational systems shape capabilities for formation of opinions by citizens. Higher education produces professionals, who create opinions in certain fields of activities – they transform uncertainties into risks (Bromley, Meyer 2015). Yet, the universities and other higher education entities are homes for the public intellectuals taking part in mass media opinion formation. To understand the design of media and education domains, it is useful to apply one of the social field theory approaches (see Chapter 2). Then, the meso-structures of certain social fields become pivotal for understanding the connection between individual opinions and actions of the elites.

8.2.3 Liberal conception of democracy

William Kornhauser (1960: 228) defined mass society as a society in which "both elites and non-elites are directly accessible to one another by virtue of the weakness of groups capable of mediating between them." Both Western societies and communist societies from the period of the late 1950s, discussed by Kornhauser, were getting closer to the model of mass society, in which an individual is faced with the totality of the state. According to him, mass society was lethal for liberal democracy, in which medium-sized groups or communities became vehicles for expressing the interests and context to form political opinions. Thus, for liberal democracy, one of the mechanisms of controlling those in power is the pluralism of groups and categories among society, which prevents the elites from steering the whole society in a direct way.

According to Robert A. Dahl (1971: 1), the key characteristic of democracy is "the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals." Focusing only on the political systems of modern states and putting aside democratic institutions in smaller collectives or historical Greek polis, where it was possible to exercise the responsiveness of the leadership to the preferences of the members of collective directly, will allow to see that the conceptualization of the micro-macro link is necessary to understand how the government – the entity located on the macro-level – is capable of responding to the preferences of individuals (as individuals located

on the micro-level), and how the individuals are capable of communicating their preferences to those in the government.

As I have pointed above, the first step that needs to be taken in all democratic regimes (also the ones among small numbers of people) is the reduction of the number (possibly at least as large as the number of members of a given polity) of individual preferences to a comprehensible selection of alternatives for action. The second step is the mechanism of choosing between these alternatives. For democracy to work "among a large number of people," Dahl (1971: 3) provides eight requirements that need to be met: 1. Freedom to form and join organizations; 2. Freedom to expression; 3. Right to vote; 4. Eligibility for public office; 5. Right of political leaders to compete for support; 6. Alternative sources of information; 7. Free and fair elections; 8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference. The electoral conception of democracy discussed in previous section takes into account all of these factors, yet they are perceived as secondary. In case of the liberal conception of democracy, they are crucial in securing checks on those in power (Coppedge, Gerring 2011: 253).

If there is an agreement on Dahl's requirements, it is possible to operationalize the quality of democracy according to his definition. Of course, there are other indexes of democracy, such as the ones performed by the Freedom House or the Economist Intelligence Unit. Here, the idea is not to take part in the debate on how to measure the quality of democracy (assuming that it is possible), but to discuss how the key elements for the democratic process are related to the problem of the micro-macro link in social theory.

8.2.4 Majoritarian conception of democracy

I have already discussed that in democracy the mechanism of choosing is a form of election. In definitions of democracies, elections are usually mentioned directly, but the details of the voting system are left as a technical issue – even though they have profound consequences for the political life of a given nation. Arend Lijphart (2012: 47), following American President Abraham Lincoln, as a definition for democracy used the sentence "government by the people (or by the representatives of the people) and for the people." From this short definition, he arrives to considering elections and their organization as a central problem of democracy studies. The threshold criterion for him to evaluate the country as democratic is the universal suffrage. Arrangements for electing representatives allow Lijphart to investigate the patterns of democracy, in which he distinguished two elementary models: the Westminster (majoritarian) model of democracy, and the consensus model of democracy. The applied models of democracy,

186

according to Lijphart's analyses of 36 states, have serious consequences: consensus democracies (against common sense) outperform the majoritarian democracies in effective government and effective policy-making. They are also democracies of a higher quality. Thus, the central institution of democracy – the elections – which translate the preferences of citizens into the decisions of elites, have consequences for other aspects of institutional design and performance of a given country. Lijphart also pointed to the fact that majoritarian democracies fit better homogenous societies, and the ones with significant minorities require a consensual electoral system. If the electoral system of heterogeneous society is majoritarian, the minority is likely to be marginalized. In the practice of political life, the majoritarian conception of democracy may also legitimize the politics of the majority in parliament elected in proportional elections. Yet, in that case, the discourse about legitimacy is in conflict with institutional arrangements of elections and government.

8.2.5 Participatory conception of democracy

Sartori's (1987) considerations on participatory democracy also shed light on the problem of linking the individuals with macro structures. Sartori was a great supporter of representative democracy, in which citizens delegate their preferences to elected leaders to make decisions for them. Next to representative democracies, it is possible to imagine (imagine because, at present, no such political system exists) direct democracies. Literally understood, direct democracy is possible only in a small collective of people capable of discussing together decisions to be taken during a gathering – it is a micro-level phenomenon.[61] Therefore, Sartori (1987: 112) divides direct democracies into two general sub-types: one, in which there is possible face-to-face contact and direct interaction with all members of polity, and the other in which there is no possibility to interact with all members of a collective and there is a need of some form of mediating its directness. The phrase "mediating the directness" sounds paradoxical, but it

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61 Anyone who took part in a gathering of a small number of people who were supposed to make a common decision knows how much depends on the social definition of situation, exercise of power etc. Still, someone presides the gathering, someone sets the agenda, and so on. Both the institutional setting of such a situation and the skills of the actors involved in the gathering – the way they express their preferences, their use of rhetoric and persuading fellow participants – are a fascinating topic for studies of interaction process on the micro-level. The conclusion from this short excursion is that the arrangements of small-scale direct democracy do not secure democratic outcomes.

is crucial for the problem of the micro-macro link in social theory. One of the forms of mediation in direct democracies is the referendum. Sartori highlights that although technically, at present, thanks to electronic devices, a direct democracy based on referendums considering all decisions to be taken by a political system is possible, this type of democracy is a contradiction of democracy. Democracy via referendums is named by Sartori a "macro-democracy." According to him, it would be only an illusory direct democracy – there would be a need for some institution or committee to set the agenda and edit the questions to be voted.[62] Yet, what is even more worrying for Sartori, a democracy via referendum would be a zero-game decision mechanism: it would literally be a government of the majority with a very limited space for consensus between political preferences. This kind of democracy would maximize conflicts and mechanically lead to the tyranny of majority. In this reduction *ad absurdum*, Sartori presents his support for representative democracy, in which the intermediation between individuals' preferences and decisions is supposed to be "smarter."

Next to direct democracy and representative democracy, Sartori (1987) considers also participatory democracy, towards which he is skeptical as well. The problem of participatory democracy is presented at the transition from the level of small groups to the level of political system. Sartori admits that participation is the essence of micro-democracy and contributes to the working of the whole super-structure of the democratic regime, yet he also points to the contradictions in the reasoning of the advocates of participatory democracy. Participation is a personal experience of taking part in something in an active way. Thus, according to Sartori's reconstruction of the theoretical concept, participation assumes intensity. Engagement is presented as equal to intensity and easily leads to extremism, which prevents people from recognizing the complexity of the matter. Sartori, in reference to Berelson et al. (1954), speaks with irony about the image of democracy in which all citizens would be deeply interested in politics. It does not mean that Sartori is calling for apathy as a basis for democracy, yet he is far from lamenting about the lack of engagement of huge parts of society in political life. As he comments, it would be ridiculous to require citizens to be capable of making all the political decisions rationally – as the imagined proponents of direct democracy do – but it would be appropriate to focus more on the rationality of decision-makers. The inference drawn from these considerations

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62 Thus, even in the most radical direct democracy that we can imagine there would be still a need for some kind of representation to deal with selecting the issues from which to choose, editing the questions, and managing the technicalities of voting.

188

might be that the vertical link between limited rationality of voters and the limited rationality of decision-makers may sometimes lead to collective rationality.

Benjamin R. Barber (1984), as an enthusiast of participatory democracy, which he described as "strong," opposed it to liberal democracy, which he called "thin." In his opinion, liberal democracy was a democracy of elites and masses, and the participatory democracy, in which politics is a way of living, was challenging this divide. He defined the central problem of politics as a conflict between private interests. According to Barber, liberal versions of democracy were eliminating conflict (the anarchic disposition), repressing conflict (the realist disposition), or tolerating the conflict (the minimalist disposition), while participatory democracy should transform the conflict – "[seek] to create a public language that will help reformulate private interests in terms susceptible to public accommodation" (Barber 1984: 119).

The key notions used by Barber (1984) in his thinking about democracy are: action, publicness, necessity, choice, reasonableness, conflict, and absence of independent ground. It is clear here that this conceptualization of democracy requires the conceptualization of the micro-macro link as well. Private "actions" sometimes have "public" consequences, which creates a "necessity" of "reasonable choice" in order to transform the "conflict." Defining what is – and what is not – public, and what is the community of people calling themselves "we," are the subject matter of one of the key debates of democratic politics which, according to Barber, can never be settled – the debate about drawing the boundary between private and public, aggregating private into public is the core of democracy. As the most original and central to his thinking about democracy, Barber announced the element of the "absence of independent ground" – the idea that the public always needs to be defined and that it is not something stable – and neither are the all problems that need to be politically solved. When there is an absence of independent (external, metaphysical) ground, all conflicts need to be solved in an ongoing participation and collective search for solutions. Thus, unlike in the earlier mentioned (and praised by Sartori) approach of Berelson, politics is to be done by citizens – not for them. The crucial difference, in contrast to other conceptions of democracy (especially the electoral, majoritarian, and liberal ones), is that – according to Barber – participative democracy does not only concern choosing between solutions or interests, but through citizen participation, public deliberation, and civic education it transforms the possible profile of choices. In his metaphor of a collective choice in restaurant, Barber (1984: 136–137) describes other forms of democracy as bargaining what to order

from the menu, while in participatory democracy a collective is inventing new recipes and creating a new menu.

The crucial element of thus understood participatory democracy is establishing an institutional platform allowing citizens with their private interests (micro) to transform the conflict and, by overcoming it, to create the community (macro). The micro-macro is connected in institutional venues – among others, neighborhood assemblies, national initiative and referendum process, or electronic balloting. In Barber's idea, these venues were to supplement and then transform the institutions of liberal democracy. In my opinion, Barber's proposals of turning participative democracy into a practice are a bit naive and are very vulnerable to critique such as the one coming from Sartori. The weakness of Barber's proposals on how to amend democratic institutional arrangements lies also in their under-theorized micro-macro connection: they are an interesting proposal for experiments with democratic participation, but it is hard to imagine that a national referendum with a multichoice format (Barber 1984: 286) would solve the problem of translating divergent private interests into public action. In many aspects, participatory conception of democracy overlaps with the deliberative conception of democracy, which is going to be discussed in the next section on the example of Tilly's (2007) considerations.

8.2.6 *Deliberative conception of democracy*

Charles Tilly (2007: 7), in his considerations on democracy, points to the tradition of distinguishing four possible ways of defining it: constitutional, substantive, procedural, and process-oriented. Tilly pursues his analysis according to the process-oriented understanding of democracy. According to him, democracy is about the relation between state and its citizens, which exist in four dimensions: breadth, equality, protection, and mutually binding consultation. In all countries it is possible to notice a constant and parallel presence of processes of democratization and de-democratization. In this sense, democracy is not a defined state of political affairs, but rather an equilibrium of on-going processes.

In Tilly's (2007: 22) understanding, high-capacity democracy involves the presence of frequent social movements, interest group activity, political party mobilization, and formal consultations (which also include elections; consultations are not limited to elections). The state, according to his definition, is capable of monitoring the public politics but there is also a requirement of low levels of political violence. From this point of view, the strong intermediary collectives such as social movements, mobilized party electorates, and the mechanism of consultation expanding beyond elections are prerequisites of a good democracy.

190

Tilly's sociological process-oriented approach to study democracy focuses not only of political parties but also on social movements and various mechanisms of consultation. This shows that the problematization of the micro-macro link is crucial.

Tilly claims that in order to understand democracy one needs to take into account interrelations of trust, inequalities, and autonomous power clusters. Trust networks are "ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes, or failures of others" (Tilly 2007: 81). Tilly also takes part in the debate between Putnam (1993; 2000) and Jason Kaufman (2002)[63] regarding the actual role of associations in civil society. In Tilly's view, Kaufman is right in saying that the particularistic interest of associations was not contributing to common good as such, yet all in all, participation in these associations is beneficial for democracy because it includes to public politics people who were outside the trust networks and it provides them with an experience of civic life.

According to Tilly (2007), the role of trust networks in democracy is ambiguous. The democratic dilemma of trust consists of a tension between competition of collectives internally bonded by trust. Democracy involves making decisions about limited resources and it is a reason for the emergence of conflicts. One may say that it means that democracy requires a larger amount of trust. Yet, Tilly claims that while trust networks enable democracy, democracy requires as a necessary condition also distrust. Thus, to conclude, in his process-oriented understanding of democracy, democratization in regards to trust relies on including to public politics trust networks.

Another mechanism of democratization is a decrease in autonomy of power centers, which are organizations of different types, capable of influencing the state or exercising their power outside of the state (like criminal gangs or local warlords). Tilly (2007) remarks that a decrease in autonomy of these actors does not always contribute to democratization – in some sequences, in strengthens the authoritarian state. From the perspective of the central problem of this book, particularly important is the issue of constellation of social actors (often being large organizations capable of mobilizing individuals and resources). Autonomous power centers could be also considered as entities linking the micro- and macro-levels.

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63 This debate is presented in Chapter 6.

8.2.7 Egalitarian conception of democracy

Another important mechanism seen by Tilly (2007) as a part of the democratization process is an eradication of inequalities between different categories of members of society who, as a result, should fall into one category of citizens. In that sense, democratization is achieved thanks to a weakening of intermediary structures such as ethnicities or social classes (but also gender, race, caste etc.), which in unequal societies defined the position of an individual in the state and his or her relations with individuals from other categories. Usually, these categories were grounds to form collective identities, and a source for mobilization for collective action.

Charles E. Lindblom (1988), in his remarks about the relations between democracy, market, and policy-making, stated that in the course of theorizing democracy the views on the conflict between values of freedom and equality have reversed. In the 19th century, in liberal thinking, equality was perceived as a constraint to freedom, and the only acceptable form of equality was the equality of opportunities. In the late 20th century, an increasing number of thinkers (also, but not only, thanks to the Marxist inspiration) started perceiving equality as a precondition of freedom. As Lindblom (1988: 98) stressed, freedom is about being able to make choices, and inequality means making some categories of citizens incapable of making choices, or at least limiting their range of possible choices. In relevance to the micro-macro debate, Lindblom added that political system forms individuals who participate in it, thus the free market creates individuals who believe that they are free.

In case of the egalitarian conception of democracy, the role of the state is to apply policies securing the equality such as income, education, or health. These might be secured thanks to the welfare systems of redistribution. Systems of redistribution are another possible micro-macro link in the theories of democracy. Building on the assumption that society with large differences in opportunities, resources, and access to services is not truly democratic, there is a need for designing a system in which taxes are collected from individuals and corporations. Then, the common large pool of financial resources is divided between various branches of the welfare state, which supports the individuals or nuclear families.

8.2.8 Summary

To conclude the brief review of six conceptions of democracy with a focus on the role of the micro-macro link in their construction, connections between the level of citizens and the level of political system are present in all of them. Theorizing how to connect the individuals and processes shaping their opinions with

192

the government requires solving the micro-macro analytical problems. For the majority of the discussed scholars, regardless of whether they concentrated on elections, consultations, institutions securing participation or deliberation, and systems of redistribution, the micro-macro issue was not the center of attention. Yet, as I tried to persuade, without the proper grasping of the mechanisms connecting the micro-level with the macro-level it is not possible to understand the democracy in any of its definitions.

8.3 Democracy in the vacuum?

After the fall of communism in Poland, studies of democracy became a focal topic for social scientists. The country started its transition from the mono-centric order to the poly-centric one (Ziółkowski 1993), which involved undergoing two most important transformations: the economic one, from the planned economy to the capitalist one, and the political one, from the communist totalitarian (at least in its ambitions) to the democratic one. Sociologists made the transformation the main subject of their studies (Kolasa-Nowak 2010). The huge interest in the study of politics has always been a peculiarity of Polish sociology, yet just after 1989, the formation of the democratic system was one of the most interesting social phenomena. Sociologist also felt more competent and legitimized than political scientists[64] to study democracy and its institutions. For this reason, it is not surprising that in some of the analyses the problems of democratic political institutions were considered in the context of the alleged sociological vacuum.

The works dealing with the sociological vacuum thesis in context of democracy may be grouped into three categories: those considering the electoral mechanisms (close to the minimal and electoral conceptions of democracy); those dealing with the problem of checks on the government (close to the liberal conception of democracy); and the ones dealing with the problem of participation and involvement of civil society in democratic processes (close to participatory conception of democracy). This working typology is proposed by me only in order to emphasize some patterns in discussions about the sociological vacuum and democracy. I start this section with a presentation of concepts like the

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64 From the point of view of sociologists in Poland, political science was a communist project which as a tool of ideological propaganda was not worth the attention. The present book is not a place to discuss the grounds for this perception, yet it certainly had actual consequences: sociologists in Poland felt more competent and legitimized to study and comment on politics. To this day, sociologists hold key positions as public intellectuals "explaining" politics in the media (Warczok, Zarycki 2014).

missing-middle approach and the hour-glass society, which are often regarded as theoretical kin of the sociological vacuum. Then, I move to the sociological vacuum itself and start with an analysis of works, in which scholars consider the sociological vacuum as an obstacle for the electoral system. Subsequently, I briefly focus on the sociological vacuum as a space for corrupting political institutions. The next discussed problem is the sociological vacuum and political participation. Finally, I consider the insightful work of Mikołaj Cześnik (2008a; 2008b) on relations between democracy and the sociological vacuum.

8.3.1 Post-communist Eastern Europe and insufficiencies of the micro-macro link

The problem of insufficient meso-mechanism transmitting between individuals and state institutions, as well as the elites, was mentioned in a number of works focusing on the post-communist zone in particular. Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield (1993) attempted to answer the question about the conditions for the emergence of stable party systems in Eastern Europe. In their literature review, they identified three models which explained the formation of party systems in the region: modernization approach, missing middle approach, and comparative communist approaches. The latter was pointed by the authors as the most suitable approach to study the post-communist democracies which, according to them, were somewhere between the extremes of missing middle and modernization. According to the missing middle approach, reconstructed by Evans and Whitefield, in Eastern Europe there was an absence of stable cleavages and based on them intermediary structures, which allowed to articulate interests only on the level of mass collectivism of the nation or state. The reason for this situation was the fact that the communist system perceived all intermediary structures as a threat. The lack of the meso-structures blocked the articulation of interests of narrower groups. In consequence, it was impossible to establish stable political cleavages, and a stable political system could not emerge (Evans, Whitefield 1993: 528–529). Evans and Whitefield did not agree with the missing middle approach and, what is often forgotten, they highlighted that the approach did not suit the Polish case to which the modernization model applied better.[65] Similarly to the reconstructed missing middle approach, Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan

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65 As I have discussed elsewhere (Pawlak 2016), Evans and Whitehead did not refer to the thesis on the sociological vacuum, yet they reconstructed the missing middle approach seeing it also in the works of Polish authors, such as Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (1990), Mirosława Marody (1990), or Marek Ziółkowski (1990), who were either citing

(1992: 132) described the landscape of Eastern European civil societies as very flat and as such negatively affecting the development of political systems.

Richard Rose (1995) coined a notion of the "hour-glass society" to describe the conditions for building democracy in Russia. The lower part of the hour-glass was the vivid life of informal networks of acquaintances and kin active in small social groups. The upper part of the hour-glass was the political life of elites competing for authority, wealth, and prestige. The contacts between the two parts were very limited, as in the narrow neck of hour-glass through which sand trickles. In Russia, according to Rose, there was no citizen community. Its hour-glass-like structure was beneficial for elites, because it made it hard to control them. Yet, paradoxically, it also protected regular citizens from the excessive control of the state: citizens coped with everyday life not thanks to the state, not against the state, but despite the state. Rose's metaphor of hour-glass society has been quoted many times not only in the context of Russia but also other post-communist societies.[66]

The issue of the micro-macro link has been traditionally analyzed in studies of democracy and it was also pointed as a problematic question in regards to the Eastern European political systems emerging after the fall of communism. I will now discuss how the conception of the sociological vacuum was placed in this context.

8.3.2 The sociological vacuum and electoral system in Poland

If the model of democracy in which individual wills are transmitted through political parties competing for power to make decisions concerning state policies is considered, the weakness of political parties is to be pointed as a crucial problem. In this approach, individuals (micro-level) sharing similar interests, ideologies, and views are gathering as electorates of parties (intermediary level) which influence state policy (macro-level). Mirosława Grabowska, for instance, calls attention to the vacuum as a condition of emerging party electorates which needed to be "glued" together by political entrepreneurs (2004: 163). Hieronim Kubiak explicates the weakness of the party system by the fact that people do not identify

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Nowak directly, or were at least very much influenced by the intellectual climate in which existence of the sociological vacuum in Polish society was regarded as a fact.

66 Some authors writing about Poland perceive the similarities between the hour-glass society metaphor and the sociological vacuum (see Dzwończyk 2009; Lasinska 2013; Szczegóła 2013). Indeed, both ideas consider the somehow defined meso-level, yet the difference is crucial: hour-glass society concerns communication between elites and society, while the sociological vacuum concerns identities with medium-size social groups.

themselves with political parties – thus, again, the sociological vacuum mechanism appears (1999). The unstable party system was often pointed as a weakness of the young Polish democracy. For Grabowska and Kubiak, its weakness was connected with the sociological vacuum, suppressing the emergence of strong parties embedded in the socio-political system. According to these authors, week parties are dysfunctional for the proper functioning of democratic institutions.

Jacek Wasilewski's (2006) introductory article "Wprowadzenie. Elita polityczna średniego szczebla – problematyka badania" [Introduction. Political Elite of Middle Level – Problematics of Research] is a fine example of the ability of Nowak's conceptual framework to inspire and guide further research. Wasilewski coined the notion of "political vacuum" in order to describe the hiatus between the central political elite and the masses (2006: 16). Accordingly, there is no communication between these two layers, because the political life on the local level is underdeveloped (Wasilewski conducted his studies on the level of the Polish *powiat*, the closest equivalent of which is "county"). Notwithstanding the terminological resemblance, the political vacuum is not a direct transposition of Nowak's idea, but rather a new research direction inspired by this. Wasilewski's presentation of the sociological vacuum also assumed the shift-in-meaning: it got "translated" into a claim regarding the lack of institutions between families and national community, and the paucity of civil society (Wasilewski 2006: 16). According to the author, the political vacuum resembles the sociological one in the sense that there is a sort of paresis of political society and that the political structures on the local level are of a vestigial character. This situation is defined as alarming, and it is suggested that should the vacuum become filled, it would be beneficial for political life. The conception of "political vacuum" empirically and conceptually is, in fact, quite far from the conception of the sociological vacuum, yet they are both built on the common theoretical problem of framing the relation of the micro-level and the macro-level. For political theory, it is crucial to understand the transmission from the masses (these I paradoxically treated as being on the micro-level as they are an aggregate of individuals) to the elites which make the decisions and conduct the policies on the macro-level of the state. In this conception there is a need for actors who would transmit the will and desires of the masses to the elites, and then translate the decisions and their justifications from the elites to individual voters. These actors, according to Wasilewski's assumptions, should be the members of local political elites remaining in contact both with individual citizens and members of the leadership. The weakness of the local party elite is perceived not only as a weakness of a particular group of political activists, but also as a weakness of the mechanism

of transmitting information and mobilization between the levels of action. The local political elite plays the role of the micro-macro link in this approach.

8.3.3 The sociological vacuum as a space for corruption of democratic institutions

A different problem was pointed out by Andrzej Zybertowicz, a sociologist and political advisor interested in studying conspiracies and hidden agendas of interest groups. Zybertowicz (2009) stated that there is no proper social control and regulation in conditions of a sociological vacuum, and therefore Polish democracy is open to abuse by anti-development forces. This remark binding the sociological vacuum with the favorite subject of Zybertowicz, shows that the meso-level could be also treated as a space for social control. Zybertowicz builds on Podgórecki's (1976) conception of the third order of social control. The first order is the social control of members of a small group exercised in direct interactions. It is possible to treat it as a micro-level phenomenon. The second order of social control appears with specialized and (usually) formalized institutions, designed to control (i.e. police, judicatory system etc.). It could be said that this is a macro-level phenomenon. The third order of social control is the capture of the second order institutions by their officers in order to achieve individual goals, perverting the formal goals of these institutions. Both Zybertowicz's and Podgórecki's considerations are essayistic and do not provide deep empirical analysis, yet they also point to the problem of relations between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis.

8.3.4 The sociological vacuum and participation in political process

As the construction of this book and the organization of its chapters suggest, the works discussed below consider democracy as a phenomenon which interplays with the civil society and the social capital. Many of these works discuss society and social capital as such, which I have presented in earlier chapters (see Chapters 6 and 7). The decision to place some of these works rather in context of democracy and political institutions, and not in the context of the former two issues, in some cases, needed to be taken arbitrarily as some of studies discuss the mutual relations of civil society and democracy conditioned by the level of social capital. This issue is also very relevant to the problem of the micro-macro link because social capital and civil society were often pointed to as the intermediaries between masses of voters and country decision-makers.

Lech Szczegóła (2013) took an effort to explain the passivity of Polish citizens and its impact on democracy. According to his diagnosis, Polish society suffers

197

from the lack of participation. He attempted at tackling the reasons for such a situation from different perspectives, one of them being the heritage of the communist time. The sociological vacuum, according to his considerations, is to be blamed for the lack of social bonds, which then block the emergence of civil society (see also Szczegóła 2003), and the civil society, in turn, is the condition for the proper development of democracy. As the work is much influenced by the theoretical framework of Putnam (1993; 2000), the social capital as one of the aspects of civil society is present in it as well. Thus, according to Szczegóła's (2013) remarks, Solidarność was only the movement of features of citizenship, which quickly eroded. The strong micro-level bonds (resembling bonding capital) are not supporting citizen participation, but rather fostering backing from any public activity. Szczegóła (2013: 200) treats voluntary associations as structures on the meso-level of analysis, yet the sociological vacuum is the reason for their weakness in Poland. As a consequence, democracy has a very weak basis. Along with the sociological vacuum, Szczegóła also mentions other features of Polish society such as amoral familism (Tarkowska, Tarkowski 1990) and lack of trust (Sztompka 1999). Together, they create a syndrome which is an explanation for the lack of participation: "the suggestion about the existence of the culture of distrust, the atomization on the meso-social level, is connected with a long-lasting influence of many factors which have been disturbing the processes of citizens' socialization" (Szczegóła 2013: 203).

In Szczegóła's reasoning, the understanding of meso-level is quite plain and follows Nowak's original articulation – it is the level of broader groups between the small groups and the whole society on the other side of the continuum. Inefficiency of the meso-level is crucial for the inefficiency of democracy because it results in the lack of support for the mechanism of translation of aggregated micro-wills into one macro-act. This cannot just happen mechanically: keeping to that metaphor, the political mechanism of appointing representation needs the meso-level lubricants of participative civil society and social capital.

Recently, in studies of Polish political life there has been a growing turn from the focus on politics to the focus on policies. The conditions of translating political decisions into the actual plan of actions and policies are studied under the label of public policy studies. Recently, Andrzej Zybała (2015: 59) has stated that "the type of relations and social bonds present in Poland is a source of many salient problems with carrying out public activities". According to Zybała, the cultural context of creating and implementing public policies influences their quality. In Poland, this cultural context is said to be the key reason for the low quality of public policies which, as he points out, results from the presence of the sociological vacuum. Zybała's (2015) work impresses with the number of

198

references to analyses of historians, in which he traces the antecedents of the sociological vacuum: the weakness of the court system in the 18th century; the lack of strong state structures uniting the independent folwarks[67] in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries; or relations about the disappointment with social engagement in the late 19th century and inter-war Second Republic of Poland. In the descriptions of the state of public and social affairs in post-communist Poland, Zybała finds "dirty togetherness" (Podgórecki 1987), "amoral familism" (Tarkowska, Tarkowski 1990), "soft state" (Hausner 2009), or "cottage-made society" (in Polish, "społeczeństwo chałupnicze") (Giza-Poleszczuk 2009) responsible for the low quality of political life in Poland. What is important for Zybała's considerations is that he goes beyond explaining the sociological vacuum only with the features of the communist state. He traces the causes of its existence in the long *durée* of Polish post-serfdom culture.

Yet, Zybała's reconstruction of the sociological vacuum syndrome is rather vague. He certainly shifts the meaning of Nowak's original thesis and treats it as a statement on the weakness of bonds, not as a thesis on the weakness of identifications. Zybała also focuses mainly on the strong bonds within families and other primary groups, yet he does not build any conclusions on the strong national identifications, revealed by Nowak. The weakness of meso-structures (understood directly as medium-sized groups or associations) and the lack of culture of participation is perceived by Zybała as an obstacle for the proper creation and implementation of public policies. This claim is built on the conception that public policies are not only transmitted top-down from the decision-makers, but their proper design, consultation, and implementation requires coordinated action of different actors embedded on various levels of public life. These considerations correspond (although without direct reference) with Szczegóła's analyses of low levels of citizen participation in Poland. In the culture of the sociological vacuum described by Zybała, it is very hard to pursue public policies requiring a coordination of actions of many entities or planning in long time perspectives. The culture is a context, but it has structural consequences such as statism, in which policies are implemented on the basis of regulations, and not cooperation of different actors. According to Zybała, public policies in Poland are not evidence-based, and they are reactive, therefore strategic planning occurs very rarely.

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67 I use the term "folwark" because this serfdom based large agricultural grange is recognized as something typical for the First Republic of Poland's history of economic and social organization (Wyczański 1960).

Zybała's use of the sociological vacuum concept is also connected to the theoretical problem of the micro-macro link in the analysis. In Zybała's understanding of public policy, influenced much by the work of Wayne Parsons' (2001), the style of policymaking is conditioned by culture which regulates the participation of individuals in public sphere intermediated by medium-sized structures. These medium-sized structures are necessary for the expected public policy efficiency. Zybała's work reveals disappointment with the sphere of social life in Poland and again, as in many other examples quoted in this book, the sociological vacuum is to blame.

8.3.5 Meso-level identifications and quality of democracy

One of the deepest analysis of the sociological vacuum thesis was performed by Mikołaj Cześnik, political scientist and sociologist studying political participation. In his two successive papers – "Próżnia socjologiczna a demokracja" [Sociological Vacuum and Democracy] (Cześnik 2008a) and "Próżnia socjologiczna a demokracja – analizy empiryczne" [Sociological Vacuum and Democracy – Empirical Analyses] (Cześnik 2008b) – he discussed the possible impact of the sociological vacuum on the quality of democracy. He approached the issue with the often-encountered assumption that the existence of a sociological vacuum has a negative impact on the quality of democracy. Cześnik started with a thorough interpretation of the sociological vacuum thesis, which he read without shifting its meaning and without selective focus on the micro-level part of the thesis.

Cześnik began with an analysis of the state-of-the-art in democracy research and pointed out that in the most influential political conceptions of democracy there is no indication that the low level of identifications with meso-structures has a negative impact on the quality of democracy. What could be seen as a paradox, too strong identifications with intermediary structures (like regions or social classes) might even prove jeopardizing for the democratic process, and disruptive for the states where the macro-level identities have to compete with the meso-level ones (Cześnik 2008a: 32). This argument was built on Lijphart's (2012) analyses of patterns of democracy, according to which the Westminster model of democracy (government by the majority of people) applies to homogenous societies. The plural societies – divided along some lines[68] – under the Westminster model might be excluding a substantial minority from taking part in decision-making. Thus, Lijphart (2004; 2012) states that for plural societies the consensus model of democracy applies better.

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68 Lijphart (2012: 31) enumerates the following lines of divide: religious, ideological, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and racial.

Cześnik also highlighted that the sociological vacuum thesis has two parts: one on the strong identifications with primary groups, and the other on identifying with the nation, respectively. He commented that the latter is rarely taken into consideration when analyzing the problems of political institutions – thus, he drew attention to the process depicted earlier in this book as selective or partial implementation of Nowak's thesis. The author argued that strong macro-level identifications are expected to exert a positive influence on the quality of democracy, due to the fact that they strengthen the polity. Solidarność is a case in point: Cześnik argued that its explosion in the 1980s is actually validating, rather than falsifying, Nowak's thesis – the movement was built around strong national identification (2008a: 44–45).

In addition to the theoretical review, Cześnik also tested the hypothesis on the correlation between the indexes of quality of democracy and the existence of the sociological vacuum (2008b). Accordingly, there is no empirical evidence suggesting the positive impact of the existence of intermediary level identifications on the quality of democracy. Examples of countries which are indicative of a sociological vacuum, but also of efficient democracy (i.e. Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon ones) can be given along with countries with strong meso-level identifications, yet low index of quality of democracy (2008b: 21). Another empirical finding of interest for the purposes of this chapter is that there are countries with lower levels of intermediary identifications than Poland. This challenges the perception of the sociological vacuum as a Polish peculiarity (Cześnik 2008b: 22).

Cześnik's theoretical refinement and empirical testing of the sociological vacuum are important for the debate. He was the only scholar who analyzed the thesis in a comparative perspective. This was accomplished in two ways: the confrontation of Nowak's thesis with available theories of democracy, and the comparison of empirical data from different countries. Cześnik also followed the elements of the thesis scrupulously – neither a shift-in-meaning nor a selective and partial implementation occurred.

Cześnik's theoretical analysis allows to draw a very important theoretical conclusion on the relations between the micro-level and the macro-level of society, which is embedded in Lijphart's (2012) conceptualization of homogenous and plural societies. If the participation in the polity is intermediated by participation in some middle-range structure, it might not necessarily have to be so beneficial for the democratic system. In case of the majority of works building on the sociological vacuum, the alleged weakness of middle-range structures is perceived as problematic. Cześnik highlighted the other side of the coin: too strong middle-range structures might be lethal for many social processes, including

democracy: indeed, a crucial one! The theoretical conceptualization of the meso-level here is also quite straightforward – it is a level of groups, strong enough to create their own "political parties, interest groups, and media of communication" (Lijphart 2012: 31). These intermediary structures may not always simply enable transmission between individuals and decision-makers, as the majority of the authors linking the sociological vacuum with the analyses of democracy claim. The intermediary structures might be also causes of ruptures and conflict.

8.4 Concluding remarks

Democracy is a key concept for the Western civilization and a fiercely discussed topic in sociology dealing with the transition – as is the case of Polish sociology. One cannot forget that democracy is conceptualized in different – sometimes contradictory – ways. In this chapter, I have looked at the six conceptualizations of democracy enlisted by Coppedge and Gerring (2011) in order to tackle this complexity. The two main issues being brought into consideration regarding democracy emerging in the context of an alleged sociological vacuum are: the forming of political institutions connecting masses with elites, and participation. In both cases, the problem of the micro-macro connection in social theory is salient, because it is impossible to understand macro outcomes on the state level without conceptual tools linking them with actions of individuals on the micro-level.

For authors interested in the elections as a key institution of democracy, the sociological vacuum is a problem because it is recognized as an obstacle for creating communication channels between the masses and the elites. The lack of stability of the party system in Poland was mentioned to be influenced by the sociological vacuum in which solid party electorates do not exist (Grabowska 2004; Kubiak 1999). According to this perspective on the elections, unstable party system is a disadvantage for the democracy. Another problem with communication between the masses and the elites was pointed in the conception of political vacuum (Wasilewski 2006). Here, the problematized obstacle for the proper functioning of a democracy is the weakness of the local elites who could bridge the gap between masses and the political elites of the state level.

A different stream of work considers the problem of participation. In this case, the base for democracy is an active civil society. The focus is not on the elections and actors of political institutions, such as political parties and branches of government, but on forms of discussion and collective action. Szczegóła (2013) pointed to the sociological vacuum as one of the explanations of citizens' passivity. Zybała (2015) claimed that public policies cannot be properly designed and executed in the conditions of the sociological vacuum, in which there is not

enough participation of various social actors. This perspective on democracy is closer to its participatory and deliberative conceptions than the electoral or liberal ones. The "problem with democracy" here is rather located in the vertical relations between various stakeholders than on the horizontal relations between masses and elites, as in previously mentioned works on electoral aspects of democracy. The problem of the lack of participation, or of passivity, is very much connected to the works on civil society inspired by Putnam (1993; 2000), which influenced Polish scholarly discourse on social capital as well (these problems were discussed in Chapters 6 and 7).

Cześnik (2008a) noticed that in the theories of democracy the lack of intermediary level identifications is actually not recognized as something troubling. I would like to amend his point by saying that the existence of a sociological vacuum for some conceptions of democracy is an advantageous factor, while for others it might be a disadvantageous one; there are also other conceptions for which it might be irrelevant. It all holds true, if the strong consequences of lack of identifications with middle-range groups are assumed. The authors concerned about the quality of Polish democracy usually shift the meaning of the sociological vacuum thesis and claim that it describes the landscape of weak middle range actors. In this case, participatory democracy might have even weaker grounds. On the other hand, as Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) noticed, identifications often influence judgments of voters, who are incapable of rationally processing all the information relevant for taking political decisions. As a consequence, political decisions are identity-based not rational-assessment-based. Similarly, with this line of thinking, Lijphart (2004; 2012) pointed that too strong identifications on the meso-level are dangerous to the polity, because they cause tensions in order to rip it into smaller polities.

It seems that the problem of the sociological vacuum's influence on democracy depends on which model of democracy is taken into account. The sociological vacuum then becomes a problem, or maybe an advantage, when considering ideal types. Yet, the empirical cases of democracy are always hybrid combinations of the conceptualizations.[69] Concluding this chapter, it is worth noticing that the syndromes of a sociological vacuum may be simultaneously positive for some aspects of functioning of democracy and negative for others. It could hold true that the lack of strong meso-level identifications at the same moment supports the unity of polity and discourages the participation in deliberations. According

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69 Ironically, Lijphart (2012) mentions that the political regime which is the closest to the Westminster model of democracy is New Zealand, not the United Kingdom.

to the quantitative analysis made by Cześnik (2008b), there is no correlation between the level of the sociological vacuum and the quality of democracy indexes. Yet, the indexes usually are designed in line with certain conceptualizations of democracy (Coppedge, Gerring 2011).

I assume that the influence of the sociological vacuum (if it exists at all), on the one hand, varies in degrees and, on the other hand, depends on the aspect of democracy. Yet, besides the work of Cześnik (2008b), there are no empirical studies investigating these two factors. The majority of the works on the relations between the sociological vacuum and democracy are considerations about ideal types. The only sincere conclusion to this chapter is that the relation between the sociological vacuum and democracy is ambiguous and one has to be very cautions before stating that the sociological vacuum has a negative impact on democracy in Poland.

Part III: What fills up the sociological vacuum? Empirical illustration

9 Getting a job in Poland: how weak ties fill up the sociological vacuum?

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter I confront the thesis on the sociological vacuum (Nowak 1979b) with the conception about the strength of weak ties (Granovetter 1973). Both conceptions gained high popularity in sociological circles: the sociological vacuum is one of the most discussed concepts coined in Polish sociology (Pawlak 2015), while the strength of weak ties is one of the most discussed and replicated study designs in international sociology, in general. For both of these conceptions, the employed research technique to deliver data is a survey, which makes it easy to confront them in the framework of the same study by asking questions to the same respondents. At the same time, however, both conceptions are embedded in very different perspectives on sociology. Stefan Nowak was interested in values and attitudes of individuals and by simple statistical aggregations of individual data he was attempting at theorizing about the whole Polish society (see Chapter 4). Mark Granovetter was interested in relations between individuals which allow them to mobilize resources, but on this ground, he was attempting to theorize about the social cohesion and social networks as a context for social action (see Chapter 3).

   This chapter serves only as a small illustration for the whole narrative of this book. It is different from the previous chapters in which I have presented the findings of other authors and discussed theoretical implications of bringing together concepts such as the sociological vacuum and social mobilization, civil society, social capital, or quality of democracy. The previous chapters discuss the issue of the sociological vacuum on a quite wide scope of generality. In this chapter the possibility of extrapolation is much more limited, yet I believe that the methodological accuracy of my statements is strong. The task of providing empirical evidence for the plethora of theoretical questions of possible influences of the sociological vacuum on social mobilization, civil society, social capital, or quality of democracy would be overwhelmingly huge. Here, the objective is modest: to illustrate my claim and refute the conviction about the importance of the sociological vacuum thesis by showing that it does not have much in common with actual social relations. This strategy is similar to the one employed

by Mikołaj Cześnik (2008b), who was able to show that there is no correlation between the level of the sociological vacuum and the quality of democracy. If there is no such correlation, scholars have to be very cautions when claiming (or perhaps better refrain from it) something about the alleged influence. The main point of this chapter is that individuals' identifications with social categories are very loosely connected with their actual relations and capabilities of mobilizing resources embedded in social networks.

The structure of my argument is as follows. I start with a brief presentation of the getting a job studies, which focus on the effects of personal contacts on the labor market. Then, I present the scant literature on the use of personal contacts on the Polish labor market. This review allows me to analyze the data on the newly employed in Poland, gathered for the purpose of this book in 2014 and 2015.[70] The analyzed data set contains answers to the questions asked by Granovetter (1995) in his original survey and the questions asked by Nowak (Szawiel 1989) in his study on the inter-generational transfer of values. Regardless of the tie strength used to acquire a new employment, the profiles of respondents' identifications are very similar. This finding allows me to conclude the chapter by saying that explaining social processes (and especially the mobilization of resources embedded in social networks) with the use of the sociological vacuum as a condition for these processes is very deceptive.

9.2 Brief story of getting a job studies

As discussed in Chapter 3, the seminal paper of Mark Granovetter (1973) "Strength of Weak Ties" had a huge impact on sociology, particularly sociology of social networks, and in this field it formed the paradigm of research on acquiring jobs. The empirical base for this article was research made by Granovetter for the purpose of his doctoral dissertation on the methods of getting a job. The dissertation was published under the title *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers* (Granovetter 1995).[71] Granovetter surveyed 282 workers occupying

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70 A detailed discussion of the getting a job studies conducted in Poland and the presentation of the main findings of the study of newly employed can be found in the article which I am the co-author of – "Siła słabych powiązań na rynku pracy w Polsce" [Strength of Weak Ties in the Polish Labor Market] – which is available in print (Pawlak, Kotnarowski 2016). The dataset allows also to test other hypotheses regarding the labor market. I do not present them in the framework of this book because they are not related to the sociological vacuum thesis.

71 In this book I refer to the second, and extended, edition of Granovetter's book, which besides his doctoral dissertation, includes the review of literature that has been inspired

professional, technical, and managerial positions, who recently acquired a new job. The survey was taken in Newton, a suburb of Boston. It was a convenient location for Granovetter who was writing his dissertation under Harrison White's supervision at the Harvard University. Strength of weak ties conception is one of the products of the Harvard revolution.

Granovetter asked his respondents about the circumstances of getting their current job. More than a half of them (55.7%) found their employment thanks to personal contacts (Granovetter 1995: 19), and among them only 16.7% got a job thanks to the information passed by someone with whom they were strongly tied (Granovetter 1973: 1371). The strength of tie was defined as "a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (Granovetter 1973: 1361). The operational definition used in the research was a quite simple frequency of contacts: the respondents who reported to contact with their alters "pretty often" were recognized as strong tie users. On the one hand, the measure was built on an objective behavioral factor – contacting. On the other hand, the behavior was reported by the respondents and respondents were also evaluating what "pretty often" meant for them.

The findings of the study were counterintuitive because people tend to presume that in order to acquire important resource, important (strong) ties need to be mobilized. According to Granovetter's (1973) explanation, this would not be possible due to structural reasons. The information circulating in a network of only strong ties would not reach far. Usually, people connected by strong ties also have some kind of relation with other strong ties of their alters. The networks of strong ties are rather small and dense. The weak ties allow for connecting with people who are socially more distant and thanks to them, small groups become connected into small worlds. Seminal sociological works usually deal with paradoxes. This is also the case of Granovetter, who managed to show that the not-so-important relations have important consequences, and on the contrary – that the important relations between individuals might be blocking collective action and mobilization of resources.

Granovetter's work was consequential for the whole social science, but here I am narrowing my focus to the labor market studies. An important remark to be made here is that in no later study the proportion of strong ties was as low as

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by the strength of weak ties argument, and his paper on the embeddedness of economic action (Granovetter 1985). The first edition of Granovetter's dissertation was published in 1974.

in Granovetter's study of male professional, technical, and managerial workers from Boston's suburb. The sample he used is quite atypical for the general working population of that time: it consists mostly of white professional males from one of the wealthiest urban areas of the USA. Yet, in many replications of Granovetter's study the proportion of strong ties was usually lower than 50% of the personal contacts used in acquiring employment (Franzen, Hangartner 2006; Marsden, Gorman 2001).

Another angle of critique of Granovetter's research design and the whole paradigm it funded challenges the fact that he surveyed only people who were successful in their search for jobs and the information about those who failed was not analyzed in this line of studies. Yet, conducting an actual study considering all attempts of finding jobs through networks, including lost opportunities and other situations in which the information about the job was passed but finally was not used for various reasons, is a mission impossible. Operationalizing an interaction in which a potential job opportunity is mentioned is a futile task. The assumption that a respondent would be able to recall all such situations would be too demanding. It is necessary to come to terms with the fact that social sciences do have their limits and some things are simply too elusive to be researched.

Yet, the weak ties are not entirely elusive – although they are nearly invisible – and it is possible to conduct research on them. The plethora of studies following Granovetter's seminal work has been conducted since it was first published. It is impossible to review all of them because the "Strength of Weak Ties" article is the most often cited sociological paper.[72] The recent reviews of network behaviors on the labor market were provided by Emilio Castilla, George Lan and Ben Rissing (2013), Steve McDonald, Michael Gaddis, Lindsey Trimble and Lindsay Hamm (2013), and Lindsey Trimble and Julie Kmec (2011). Authors were also researching topics such as the impact of methods of getting a job (and especially tie strength) on income (Bridges, Villemez 1986; Marsden, Hurlbert 1988) and status attainment (Lin, Ensel, Vaughn 1981; Wegener 1991). Samples collected in the USA usually came from metropolitan areas, such as Albany, Schenectady and Troy (Lin et al. 1981), Chicago (Bridges, Villemez 1986; Mouw 2003; Reingold 1999), or Detroit (Marsden, Hurlbert 1988; Mouw 2003). In other countries samples were collected nationwide or in selected cities – for instance Samara in Russia (Yakubovich 2005), or Tianjin in China (Bian 1997). Some samples were collected from specific professions, such as scientists (Murray, Rankin, Magill 1981)

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72 As I am writing these words the google.scholar citations index of the "Strength of Weak Ties" paper is much higher than 40,000.

or managers (Flap, Boxman 1999), or certain categories of the workforce, such as the unemployed (Brown, Konrad 2001; Korpi 2001). Research on network labor market behaviors were conducted in many countries, for example Germany (Völker, Flap 1999), China (Bian 1997), Singapore (Chua 2011), Russia (Gerber, Mayorova 2010; Yakubovich 2005), and Sweden (Korpi 2001). Eventually, in the course of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), during the 2002 edition, data were gathered in 28 countries, which allowed researchers for conducting a comparative analysis (Franzen, Hangartner 2006), or analyses on large data set allowing for statistically significant implementation of complex models (Letki, Mieriņa 2015).

The results of the conducted studies are at some general points consistent: in all studied locations, the majority of the people found their jobs thanks to their personal contacts, and the majority of these contacts were weak ties. Other findings were not so consistent and varied from study to study, depending on the way in which data were operationalized. Thus, it is impossible to provide universal generalizations stating that, for example, weak ties lead to better income, or better status attainment. The differences between institutional contexts are quite significant, but the knowledge about their influence is also increasing. Yet, for the purpose of this book all the nuance already uncovered in the impact of social networks on the labor market is not that important. What is important, however, is the general message of this stream of research: social networks matter for the labor market, and weak ties matter more than people tend to think.

If personal contacts and weak ties, in particular, are so important for the labor market, it is right to assume that they also impact other aspects of resource mobilization. The relation of the strength of weak ties conception to other findings of social network analysis, such as structural holes (Burt 1992), small worlds (Milgram 1967), and the composition of large networks (Barabási 2002), have been discussed in Chapter 3. Granovetter's conception of strength of weak ties lead to the development of such concepts as bridging and bonding social capital (Putnam 2000), or social resources (Lin et al. 1981), which are key for the large domain of social capital studies discussed in Chapter 7. In the next section I am going to present the findings of my own research on the role of the weak ties on the Polish labor market.

9.3 Getting a job in Poland

The role of personal contacts in getting a job in Poland is not well developed in literature, but in the recent years there have been some interesting published works tackling this problem. The majority of them used databases which were

produced to answer other research questions, so the scope of possible inferences is unfortunately limited. Yet, the most important conclusion from these studies is that the Polish labor market is in no way exceptional. Personal contacts play a similarly important role in getting a job in Poland as in other societies. The most comprehensive database was gathered in the framework of ISSP 2002 edition. This data was analyzed by Tymon Słoczyński (2013), who found that in Poland 53% of workers found employment through their personal contacts (the average for all countries participating in the ISSP 2002 was 48%). In Poland, 18% of all employers used the strong ties, while the average for the all countries was 24%. These findings are confirmed by the data gathered as a part of "Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego" [Human Capital Balance] project (Jeran 2014).

In this section, I present results on the role of the weak ties in the labor market, which is relevant for the thesis on the sociological vacuum. The main idea behind bringing together the strength of weak ties argument and the thesis on the sociological vacuum is that the ties and the larger patterns of relations not recognized by their participants are what bonds them together. The identification with groups – although significant and having consequences for social processes – is not so important. And by saying "not so important," I mean that there are also other social structures and processes which have to be taken into account first, if one wants to understand resource mobilization, social cohesion, or collective action.

9.3.1 Research design

My intention was to replicate the Granovetter's (1995) study but with the use of the nationwide sample, and not just a sample collected in one town. In studies on getting a job conducted on nationwide samples[73] respondents are usually asked questions about the circumstances of their last employment, regardless of when it happened. Granovetter (1995: 185) surveyed employers who started a new job just recently, but he was able to produce his sample thanks to the directory for Newton, where the information on the employment of residents was registered. For the purpose of this study, I decided to interview employees who had the experience of getting a new job recently because I wanted to draw inferences on the current situation on the labor market not clouded by the past changes in the social, economic, and political context. In case of Poland, such a strategy of acquiring a sample frame was not possible, because such kind of

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73 Or international samples, which are aggregations of national samples, like in the case of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP).

directory (even on the local scale) does not exist. The solution was to use the regular nationwide sample representative for the adult population, and filter out the respondents who started a new job recently. For the purpose of this study, in ten subsequent waves of omnibus survey, conducted monthly by Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS) [Public Opinion Research Center],[74] respondents who started their new job in less than one year prior to the research were selected and asked questions from the Polish adaptation of Granovetter's questionnaire. From June 2014 to March 2015, ten waves of CBOS omnibus surveys were conducted, so the respondents in the sample started their new employment in the period between July 2013 and March 2015. In the database aggregated from the ten samples there were finally 428 observations, which was a sufficient number for conducting analyses involving standard tests of statistical significance.

The respondents who started new employment in less than one year were interviewed with the use of the adaptation of Granovetter's (1995: 207–210) questionnaire, which was translated into Polish and slightly adjusted. The questions regarding the form and frequency of contacts included the items on use of social media and e-mails. The questions about the method of finding the job also included the items on use of advertisements published in the internet. There was also an added question about the perceived closeness with the person who passed the information about the job. According to Peter Marsden and Karen Campbell (1984), the perceived closeness of relation is a better proxy for the strength of a tie than the frequency of contacts. The inclusion of the question about the perceived closeness in future replications of his study was also suggested by Granovetter (1995: 191) himself. Some questions from the demographics section were formulated in accordance with the CBOS surveys standards and not as a direct translation of Granovetter's original questionnaire. Finally, the questionnaire included also the question about the social bonds from Stefan Nowak's (1981: 52) research on intergenerational transmission of values. Respondents were asked to point to maximum five categories from the presented list as an answer to the question: "Which of the following categories of people do you feel particularly strong bonds to?"[75] This question was the empirical base for the formulation of the thesis on the sociological vacuum, and in order to confront the two conceptions, it was included to the survey.

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74 The sampling methodology of CBOS is available on their website: http://www.cbos. pl/PL/badania/metody_realizacji.php (28.08.2017)

75 The question in Polish was phrased as follows: "Jakich ludzi uważasz za bliskich sobie i czujesz się z nimi szczególnie związany?" For the discussion on the translation of this question see Chapter 4.

9.3.2 The role of weak ties

The most common method of finding jobs is through personal contacts – 49.1%
of respondents acquired their jobs in this way. This result is consistent with pre-
vious studies conducted in Poland and other industrialized societies.

Table 9.1 Job-finding method of respondents

Job finding method	Employees 2014–2015
Personal contacts	49.1%
Formal means	29.9%
Direct application	11.4%
Self-employment	5.8%
Missing data	2.1%
Total	100.0%

Source: Pawlak, Kotnarowski 2016: 199

Formal means of finding a job were used by 29.9% of respondents, while 11.4%
of respondents turned directly to their current employers. It is important to keep
in mind these figures when talking about the labor market. As it turns out, more
people acquire their jobs thanks to social networks than to the impersonal mar-
ket exchange. The "formal means" include not only answering advertisements,
but also using the help of the redistribution system: 6.8% of respondents found a
job thanks to the job center.[76] The remaining 5.8% of respondents created the job
by themselves and became self-employed.[77] Using Wellman's (1999) typology of
ways in which people get access to resources, the gradation is as follows: commu-
nity exchanges (49.1%), market exchanges (23.1%), institutional distributions
(6.8%), and self-provisioning (5.8%). For obvious reasons, coercive appropria-
tions in case of getting a job are not present in the list. This ranking of ways
through which people obtain jobs is important to be remembered. Networks are
more than twice as important as markets, and institutional redistribution falls
behind either of them.

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76 Job centers in Poland are run by the local authorities and are institutions of welfare.

77 In Polish conditions this category of respondents may also include people who use the
    legal form of self-employment but actually work for one employer. This strategy is used
    for fiscal reasons.

212

In the network strength of the weak ties argument it is highlighted that information spread and resources are mobilized through connections bringing together people of a larger social distance (Granovetter 1973). Strong ties are more likely to bring redundant information which already circulate in the network of people close to each other. That is why the weak ties are more likely to be the bridges connecting structural holes (Burt 1992).

Table 9.2 Tie strength

	Objective measurement (frequency of contacts)	Subjective measurement (closeness of relation)
Weak	47.8%	68.0%
Strong	52.2%	32.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Pawlak, Kotnarowski 2016: 201

The study of the Polish labor market revealed that 68% of respondents who found their employment through their personal contacts did so relying on weak ties (measured by the subjective perception of the closeness of the relations). The result is similar to the findings of ISSP (Słoczyński 2013) and proves that the strength of weak ties argument stands on the Polish market. The simple truth is that people find information about the most important resource for their life (job is the most important resource, because it secures the ability of acquiring all other resources) through social networks of ties, which are seemingly not important. Here lies the paradox of the strength of weak ties theory: people maintain a lot of weak ties and consider them to be not important, but altogether they link people in networks securing the flow of information and resources; therefore, they are important.

Weak ties are used when there is an opportunity, but they might be easily omitted as well. Certainly, they are omitted by research tools calibrated to ask people about things they consider important. Survey respondents would not be able to recall their nodding relations and other forms of week ties, yet when asked about the occurrence of actual situations, they are able to report their interactions with these "not so important" acquaintances who helped them in finding jobs. It has to be remarked that the strength of a tie measured by the proxy of frequency of contacts provides a different result: half of the personal contacts were reported to occur "pretty often." Yet, as Marsden and Campbell (1984) emphasized, frequency of contacts is only one of the features listed in the strong tie definition, which next to "the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the

reciprocal services (…) characterize[s] the tie" (Granovetter 1973: 1361). Still, even when using this most liberal proxy of strong ties, they do not dominate in the use of the personal contacts.

9.3.3 Ties and identifications

I will now turn to the answers to the questions first asked by Stefan Nowak and his team in early 1970s, in their survey conducted in Warsaw and Kielce. It is important to remember that Nowak surveyed both students of high schools and their parents. Here, however, comparing his and my findings, I refer only to the data on parents. Obviously, the comparison has to be caveated by saying that the two samples are very different. Nowak's sample included parents, whose children attended high schools leading to tertiary education in two large cities, which certainly made it biased towards upper positions in the social structure. My sample focused on people who had started a new employment, and because of this they were, on average, on earlier stages of their career.[78] Both samples are clearly not representative for the whole Polish adult population. Yet, I believe that confronting the answers to the Nowak's question asked more than 40 years later has the potential for helping to understand the role of identifications with social groups for social processes.

The most striking result in the below-presented table is that in the sample of newly employed, "Polish nation" as a category of identification has been selected only by 8% of the respondents. One has to keep in mind that in Nowak's sample, "Polish nation" was selected by less than a half of respondents,[79] yet still, such a decrease is striking. Equipped with my database, Nowak would not have been able to substantiate his thesis. The upper level of his dictum, according to my data, is not valid: the identification with the Polish nation, in comparison to other social categories, is not that important now. It is not my objective to try to explain here the reasons for this decrease. Undoubtedly, over the time span of 40 years, expressing one's bond with the Polish nation began to be perceived in a different way, which – to some extent – was connected with the political activity of the radical right. Yet, this book is not about identities and I am not going to engage in a discussion on the transformation of national sentiments in Polish public sphere.

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78 A detailed comparison of newly employed and general population of employed are presented in the paper on the circumstances of getting a job on the Polish labor market (Pawlak, Kotnarowski 2016).

79 In Chapter 4 I discuss possible interpretations of Nowak's reasoning about his data.

214

Table 9.3 Hierarchy of social ties

Categories of identification	Parents 1972–1973		Employees 2014–2015
	Warsaw	Kielce	Poland
Family	97%	94%	96%
Friends and close acquaintances	70%	60%	81%
Colleagues from your workplace	47%	46%	30%
The Polish nation	43%	40%	8%
Acquaintances from your neighborhood	21%	39%	24%
Former friends and acquaintances	36%	34%	18%
People who have the same occupation	26%	27%	5%
People who think as you do	27%	23%	15%
Mankind	16%	17%	2%
People of your age group	15%	15%	6%
People of the same religion	9%	12%	4%
Members of the same social or political organization	8%	9%	1%
People of the same social and economic position	7%	9%	3%

Source: Szawiel 1989: 205; Own research

From the technical point of view, it needs to be stressed that in the survey of employees, respondents were, on average, selecting less items than in the survey of parents. In the two surveys, respondents were asked to select up to five items and to rank them. In the survey of parents, the average of selected items was 4.2 in Warsaw and Kielce, while among the newly employed the same average was 2.9.[80]

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80 I can only speculate about the reasons for which the newly employed respondents from my survey were selecting smaller number of items. One ad hoc explanation is that the list of items produced in the early 1970s was partially anachronistic and some the categories it included sounded odd to them. Additionally, for the sake of comparability, my survey did not include some categories of possible identification that would sound quite obvious today – for instance, "Europeans." Another ad hoc explanation is that during the computer assisted interview conducted by the polling agency respondents felt less pressure to select more items than those who were interviewed forty years ago by research assistants from the university using paper questionnaires and vignettes. Other reasons could be connected with the excess of interview-like stimuli or pressure

If the average number of selected items decreased, it becomes necessary to look at the categories which were chosen with the same – or higher – frequency. The most important one is certainly "family" – the number of newly employed who selected it is very high, as it was in the case of parents from Warsaw and Kielce. This shows, that family was and is the main category of identification. The only category which was pointed by the newly employed more often than by parents from Warsaw and Kielce is the category of "friends and close acquaintances." It was selected by 81% of newly employed, in comparison to 70% of parents from Warsaw and 60% of parents from Kielce.

The categories "colleagues from your workplace," "acquaintances from your neighborhood," "former friends and acquaintances," and "people who think as you do" were selected by the newly employed less often than by parents from Warsaw and Kielce, yet the newly employed selected them more often than "the Polish nation." As I have already mentioned, the respondents of Nowak's survey were selecting "colleagues from your workplace" slightly more often than "the Polish nation," which did not stop Nowak from claiming that the workplace was an example of organization that alienated rather than built identity. Looking at the results of the survey of the newly employed, an unreflective data analyst might feel the urge to start building narratives in which identification with nation diminished, identification with other social categories also became weaker, and Polish people still keep close to their families and retreat to their circles of friends. This is not my conclusion, and I hope that the previous chapters of the book provided enough counterarguments to that kind of sociological interpretation. This kind of survey needs to be interpreted with caution. It is important to remember, that although the results of such surveys are somehow informative about a given society, the mechanism linking the declared identities with behaviors is very vague.

I will now move to the data and confront the two approaches. The reasoning behind my way of looking at them is as follows. If Stefan Nowak was right and the identifications with social categories indeed matter for social action, there should be some level of correlation between the level of identifications and the use of the various methods of getting a job. Particularly, there should be differences between the users of weak and strong ties and their identifications with family, close friends, residence of the same neighborhood, and colleagues from

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to finish the interview quickly, all of which are contemporary problems that were not experienced in Poland in the early 1970s.

216

the workplace. Of course, correlation do not imply causation, but certainly there is no causation without correlation.

Having the respondents' rankings of selected five categories (although on average they were selecting only 2.9 categories), I can take into account not only if the category was selected, but also how it was ranked in comparison to other categories. Thus, there is a possibility of presenting the "temperature" of identification with a given category. The scale was constructed as follows: for each respondent and each category there was assigned a number by which the category was ranked: 1 – for most important, 2 – for second important, and so on. As respondents could select a maximum of five categories for their ranking, all categories not selected by a respondent were assigned a 6. Thus, all respondents for each category had assigned a number from 1 to 6. I will refer to the value measured by this simple – if not primitive – scale as "a strength of identification." The idea was not to build a nuanced conception of identification but to make use of a research tool created in early 1970s by Stefan Nowak. Then, in order to measure the strength of identification with a given category on the population level, I calculated the means of assigned ranks.[81]

The categories of identification presented in Table 9.4 are ranked according to their strength of identification. The interpretation of the scale is the following: the smaller the number, the stronger the identification. The first category is "family," the second "friends and close acquaintances." All subsequent categories are considerably less identified with, including "colleagues from your workplace" ranking highest within this larger group. The abstract category of "mankind" is of the weakest identification, which does not mean that respondents do not recognize themselves as humans.

In order to see whether there is some connection between the strength of ties and strength of identifications, I ran the means of strength of identification scale in divided subgroups of respondents who used personal contacts in order to get a job. This allowed me to compare the means of strength of identification of the newly employed who used either strong ties or weak ties. The general means of strength of identification are different than the ones in Table 9.4 because those in Table 9.5 are calculated only for the users of personal contacts.

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81 I am aware that it is not an interval scale but a rank order scale, so the interpretation of the mean in this case is problematic.

217

Table 9.4 Strength of identifications of the newly employed

Category of identification	Strength of identification
Family	1.8180
Friends and close acquaintances	2.9369
Colleagues from your workplace	5.1359
Acquaintances from your neighborhood	5.3738
Former friends and acquaintances	5.5534
People who think as you do	5.6311
The Polish nation	5.8471
People of your age group	5.8762
People of the same religion	5.8956
People who have the same occupation	5.8981
People of the same social and economic position	5.9466
Mankind	5.9563

Source: Own research

Table 9.5 presents the strength of identifications of users of weak and strong ties. The only statistically significant differences between the weak tie and strong tie users appear in categories "friends and close acquaintances" and "colleagues from your workplace." Interestingly, the strong tie users as a whole have stronger identification with friends and close acquaintances than weak tie users. The weak tie users have stronger identification with colleagues from their workplace than strong tie users. This result is consistent with intuition: those who got their job thanks to someone with whom the tie is stronger (here the strength is measured by the frequency of contacts) have, on average, stronger identification with friends. Similarly, the results concerning the identification with colleagues from the workplace show that it is stronger for weak tie users than strong tie users. Yet, what is important in this data is that the general ranking is not changed, and that the statistically significant differences occurring in only two categories, are relatively small. Regardless of the used type of tie, the general consciously expressed profile of identifications is very similar – the differences are vestigial. I claim this finding is consequential for the understanding of the sociological vacuum. Very similar patterns of identifications among people who sought jobs by utilizing different kinds of ties suggest that drawing any conclusions about the actual behaviors and relations of individuals on the basis of the survey on identifications is very deceptive.

218

Table 9.5 Strength of identifications versus strength of ties (frequency of contacts)

Category of identification	Strength of identification		
	Personal contacts	Weak ties	Strong ties
Family	1.7608	1.8700	1.6606
Friends and close acquaintances	*2.9522	3.1900	2.7339
Colleagues from your workplace	*5.0957	4.7700	5.3945
Acquaintances from your neighborhood	5.3110	5.2600	5.3578
Former friends and acquaintances	5.5263	5.6100	5.4495
People who think as you do	5.6746	5.6700	5.6789
The Polish nation	5.8325	5.8200	5.8440
People of your age group	5.9139	5.9200	5.9083
People of the same religion	5.9043	5.8900	5.9174
People who have the same occupation	5.8947	5.8700	5.9174
People of the same social and economic position	5.9282	5.9300	5.9266
Mankind	5.9569	5.9500	5.9633

* Anova test significance < 0.05
Source: Own research

The results are even more striking, when the strength of tie is measured by the perceived closeness of relation. In Table 9.6 there are no statistically significant differences between weak tie and strong tie users.[82] I am aware that presenting the results of statistical tests which show that there is no difference is a bit unusual, but here the point was to show that drawing inferences from the data on expressed identifications on the actual behaviors based on less visible patterns of relations is unreliable. Similar analytical strategy was applied by Mikołaj Cześnik (2008b) who showed that there is no correlation between the quality of democracy index and the level of the sociological vacuum and, therefore, according to his results, drawing inferences on the impact of the sociological vacuum on the quality of democracy is not substantiated. There is also a lack of connection between the data on the sociological vacuum and data on the use of social networks in order to obtain an important resource.

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82 There are slight differences in the general strength of identification (first column) in Tables 9.4 and 9.5, because they are calculated for the respondents who declared the strength of tie they used. In case of Table 9.4, n = 209 and in case of the 9.5, n = 203.

Table 9.6 Strength of identifications versus strength of ties (perceived closeness)

Category of identification	Strength of identification		
	Personal contacts	**Weak ties**	**Strong ties**
Family	1.7586	1.8261	1.6154
Friends and close acquaintances	2.9507	3.0652	2.7077
Colleagues from your workplace	5.0985	5.1014	5.0923
Acquaintances from your neighborhood	5.3103	5.2464	5.4462
Former friends and acquaintances	5.5123	5.5942	5.3385
People who think as you do	5.6995	5.7246	5.6462
The Polish nation	5.8276	5.8188	5.8462
People of your age group	5.9113	5.9058	5.9231
People of the same religion	5.9015	5.9058	5.8923
People who have the same occupation	5.9113	5.9130	5.9077
People of the same social and economic position	5.9409	5.9493	5.9231
Mankind	5.9557	5.9638	5.9385

* Anova test significance < 0.05
Source: Own research

9.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have briefly presented the research done so far on the use of personal contacts of different tie strengths, initiated by the seminal works of Granovetter (1973; 1995). Getting a job studies are not only important for the knowledge on the labor market, but also for the general sociological perspective. Thanks to the focus on the role played by weak ties in acquiring jobs, it is known how important the seemingly not-so-important social relations for resource mobilization and collective action are in general. Then, I presented the scant literature on the use of personal contacts in getting a job in Poland. The most important conclusion of these studies is that, in this respect, there is no such thing as Polish exceptionality: employees in Poland use personal contacts similarly as employees in other developed economies, and the proportion of personal contact users, and of weak and strong tie users in Poland is similar to the one on the labor markets of other countries.

The above is also confirmed by the data from my research, which was the replication of Granovetter's getting a job study, conducted on a nationwide sample of the newly employed in Poland. Half of the jobs (49.1%) in Poland are

obtained through personal contacts and weak ties play a significant role among them (68%). I confronted this data with the answers given by parents from Warsaw and Kielce in Stefan Nowak's 1972–1973 study. The newly employed were less often pointing to the Polish nation as a category of identification. Otherwise, the hierarchy of identifications remained quite similar. There are nearly no differences between the employees who used weak ties and strong ties in terms of strength of their identifications. I claim that this evidence allows to refute any theorizations in which data on the declared identifications is used to explain or predict behaviors.

In this chapter, the data on the individual identifications with social categories has been confronted with data on the use of social relations to mobilize resources. These two kinds of data were collected using the same research tool, but they are very different in terms of theoretical assumptions behind their construction and the whole framing of the sociological processes. The data on methods of getting a job were collected on the individual level, but respondents were reporting about specific interactions and the way they perceived their relations with the partners in these interactions. Thus, this data contains information on respondents' behaviors, relations, and perceptions of these relations. The data on identification with social categories were also collected on the individual level, and respondents reported about their bonds with imagined collectives. The former data pertained to behaviors and relations, while the latter data pertained to consciousness and social groups. These are two different paradigms in sociology. Nevertheless, I believe it is worth to confront them and to look for possible connections between relational data and data on consciousness of individuals. The outcome of my confrontation is somehow disappointing: the connection between the individuals' identifications and their relations seems to be nearly non-existent. I am aware of the simple methodological framework of my data confrontation, however, my objective was to illustrate the problem and to contribute to the discussion on the validity of the sociological vacuum thesis.

I hope that in the future scholars using the sociological vacuum thesis in their explanations of social processes in Poland, or elsewhere, will be able to provide theoretical and methodological arguments to substantiate their claims. So far, it has been shown that the sociological vacuum – putting aside the question of its validity – is connected with the actual relations and behaviors of people only to a minimal extent. The conclusion of the empirical analysis presented above goes hand in hand with the conclusions of Cześnik's (2008b) analysis on the connection between the quality of democracy and the sociological vacuum. Both in mine and in Cześnik's data there is no evidence of the influence of the sociological

vacuum on other social phenomena. Thus, there is increasing certainty that the connections between the sociological vacuum and other important conceptions, such as social movements, civil society, social capital, and quality of democracy, are only of a rhetorical character.

Conclusions

The objective of this book has been to critically discuss the thesis on the sociological vacuum formulated by Stefan Nowak (1979b) and its subsequent uses in explaining various social phenomena. I am convinced that so much attention paid to the thesis on the sociological vacuum is disproportionate to its actual explanatory power. I have located the reason for this misunderstanding, which was described as "a spell" cast on Polish sociologists (Wedel 1992b), in the undertheorization of the link between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Therefore, this book is not only a book about the sociological vacuum – it is a book about the micro-macro link in sociological theory. The story of the sociological vacuum is to be treated as an illustration, or warning, of what might happen when there are no proper tools to grasp the micro-level connections between individuals, small groups, interactions, relations, and situations, and the macro-level of social classes, states, nations, and societies. Ironically, the term "sociological vacuum," which was coined to describe the lack of something in society, seems to represent the lack of something in sociology itself. The vacuum is not between the level of individuals and their primary groups, and the level of society, but in many sociological theories it is employed to explain the links between everyday experiences and large-sized processes. In this book, I have demonstrated how various theoretical approaches to integrating the micro-macro divide in sociological theory can be also useful in understanding what was troubling many scholars who believed in the thesis on the sociological vacuum.

In the introduction to the book, I have briefly outlined the problem and presented inspirations behind my interest in the sociological vacuum and its links with other important concepts. I also stated that the micro-macro issue in sociological theory is an equally important subject of this book, and that the story of the sociological vacuum is a perfect illustration of the trouble that its undertheorization may cause. I then described my strategy of approaching the problem of the sociological vacuum and the way I gathered materials which were the basis for the subsequent chapters of the book. Subsequently, I presented the outcomes of my preliminary analysis on the uses of the sociological vacuum in explaining various important social phenomena, which was the basis for selecting the most important themes, namely: Solidarność social movement, civil society, social capital, and quality of democracy. In the introduction I have also explained the reasoning behind the structure of the book.

The main body of the book has been divided into three, unequal in size and quite different from each other, parts. Part I, entitled "The micro-macro problem in sociology: theoretical background," focused on sociological theory. Part II, entitled "The sociological vacuum: the story of the spell cast on Polish sociologists," was devoted to the reconstruction of the emergence and uses of the thesis in most important research domains. In each of the domains, the thesis on the sociological vacuum was confronted with relevant theories linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Finally, in the shortest part III, entitled "What fills up the sociological vacuum? Empirical illustration," I discussed my own research confronting the thesis on the sociological vacuum with the conception of the strength of weak ties.

In Chapter 1, I have discussed the issue of the micro-macro pairing in the perspective of other divides in sociological theory. There are close affinities between the micro-macro pairing and the individual-society, and agency-structure pairings, which have excited sociologists since the establishment of the discipline (Layder 2006). I made the claim that there has been a transformation of interests in theory: starting from the classics' focus on the individual-society pairing, through the subsequent interest in the micro and macro distinction imported from economics, to the preoccupation with the agency-structure problem, which since the 1980s has been, in my opinion, the central issue of sociological theory. In this chapter I presented the views of the classics – Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, George Herbert Mead, and Florian Znaniecki – on the micro-macro issue. It has obviously been an anachronic reconstruction, because these authors did not use the terms "micro" and "macro," and rather focused on the issue of individual-society. Still, it was possible to find in them insights on the micro-macro problem as well. Then, I focused on the theoretical debates aiming at the integration of the micro and macro extremes in sociology which were conducted in 1980s. The theoretical breakthrough achieved by this debate has been that the theories reconciling the micro and macro divide are now at the mainstream of sociological thought, and so-called micro-chauvinism and macro-chauvinism, dominant in sociology before the 1980s, are currently of a lesser influence. The ongoing discussions about agency-structure are already taking for granted the need of integrating various levels of analysis and various ontological assumptions. In this chapter I have agreed that the micro-macro is an analytical, not empirical, dichotomy. Much of the theoretical confusion in thinking about the micro-macro issue stems from treating it as an empirical dichotomy, and its overlap with individual-society and agency-structure pairings. Micro is not only the level of individuals – interaction, relation and situation are

usually considered to be on the micro-level as well. Similarly, agency is not only pursued by individuals, but it also has some macro aspects, and a structure might be of the macro-level, but it also might be a structure of the situation (Ritzer 1990). There are various competitive solutions to reconcile the divide: either by describing the mechanism linking the two levels, or by introducing the intermediary level of analysis.

In Chapter 2, I have focused on the strategy of introducing an additional level of analysis in order to better understand the connections between micro and macro. The field theory had its early formulation already in the 1980s, but it was not regarded during the debate of that time as a promising reconciliation of the micro-macro divide. Currently, the concept of social field, which has been brought to sociology by Pierre Bourdieu (1993) and achieved huge importance for the institutional theory of organizations (DiMaggio, Powell 1983), is considered as one of the main theoretical instruments of sociology. Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam (2012) defined social fields as meso-level social orders, and in their strategic action fields theory they presented its applicability for various problems of sociological analysis. Social field is a good notion to understand what happens in-between – not only between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis, but also between social actors. The theory of fields applies analogies from electromagnetism, and not simple mechanics (Martin 2011), which means that the forces of the field are influencing the actors not only through the interactions, but also by the actors' awareness of existence of other actors. Although in the previous chapter I have agreed that the micro-macro divide is an analytical one, some of the authors (like Bourdieu himself) are convinced that fields are real entities. The field theory, thanks to its refining in the domain of organization studies, helps to understand the space where social actors (individual and organizational) constellate around a given issue (Hoffman 1999), and thus the common meaning system emerges (Scott 2014). In the analyses of fields, scholars bring together structures such as organizations and networks. Also current developments in the field theory allow to better conceptualize not only homogeneity in the fields, but also heterogeneity. The growing knowledge about the relations between various social fields helps to grasp the dense structures between conventional levels of micro and macro analysis. The fields are somehow invisible, and the so-called forces of field, described by electromagnetic allegory, are "sensed" by actors, who are not always capable of perceiving the totality of field relations. For this reason, social field is the meso-level of analysis that is not easily noticeable also for researchers. The studies of field-level processes, however, allow to see that in the alleged sociological vacuum there is, in fact, a lot going on.

Another stream in sociology that had already been developing in the 1980s but did not gain proper recognition as a potential micro-macro link was the social network analysis. The emergence of this paradigm and its contribution to the micro-macro debate have been discussed in Chapter 3. Early studies in social networks – patterns of social relations – were recognized by George Ritzer (1990) as an attempt to integrate the two levels from the macro-end. Yet, I think that this view about network scholars resulted from them being underestimated. The concept of the network was introduced to social sciences in the 1950s (Barnes 1954) and the predecessors of focus on relations are Georg Simmel and Jacob Moreno. The approach reached its momentum in the 1960s with the so-called Harvard revolution. In this chapter I have briefly described five various network approaches, namely: network exchange theory, Manuel Castells' theory of network society, actor-network theory, and new science of networks. I have focused on the social network analysis, although the new science of networks, which emerged in the 1990s, fueled all the network approaches with its computational tools as well as the focus on internet. Currently, social networks occupy not only the imagination of nerdy, mathematically inclined analysts, but of the whole lay of sociology, and the masses of people using internet and obsessively posting on social media. Networks replaced groups as a key category describing social structure. Yet, networks are not to so easily perceived structures. Egos are aware of their own ties but the knowledge about the ties of their alters is limited. Moreover, egos do have relations called weak ties (Granovetter 1973), which are also not always perceived by them as important. To some extent, networks do also have an invisible character and only switching between the levels of analysis allows to understand the role played by certain nodes. As a conception of huge potential to integrate the micro- and macro-levels of analysis, I have pointed to the conception of embeddedness revitalized in network terms by Mark Granovetter (1985). According to the embeddedness argument, social action is embedded in social relations and markets or hierarchies are not the only sites for agency. Then, I have discussed the ideas of authors playing with the embeddedness argument and showing how organizations and markets emerge from networks (Padgett, Powell 2012), or how organizations influence the networks (Small 2009) to finally arrive at the concept of dual embeddedness (McDonald et al. 2012). The relationist approach brings the focus of researchers to phenomena which are easy to go unnoticed. It also teaches that important consequences are not always caused by important factors. Thanks to the social network analysis, we know that these are the weak ties that ameliorate social cohesion, mobilization of resources, and collective action.

226

After the conceptual discussion on the possible links between the micro- and macro-levels of analysis, in the second part of the book – "The sociological vacuum: the story of the spell cast on Polish sociologists" – I have critically reviewed the conception of the sociological vacuum and its applications. In Chapter 4, I have presented the way in which Stefan Nowak formulated his famous thesis. First, I briefly reconstructed its context, namely the survey paradigm dominating sociology in Poland in the 1970s. Stefan Nowak was mostly researching values and attitudes of individuals by focusing on the consciousness of his respondents, and treating social groups as key social structures with the society as the largest social group aggregating individuals. Then, I presented the empirical basis for coining the concept of the sociological vacuum, which was the research on the inter-generational transmission of values conducted in Warsaw and Kielce. I enumerated various reasons for considering the thesis on the sociological vacuum as not valid. I started with the internal critique showing that even on the ground of the paradigm of sociology, to which Nowak belonged, there were certain elements that were rising doubts about the thesis. The sample was biased because it included youth attending high schools, leading to tertiary education, and their parents who lived in two large cities. Also, by the rule of thumb, the relatively numerous identifications with workplaces were treated as identifications with small and not medium-sized groups. Then, I moved to the external critique and pointed that the thesis was coherent with its paradigm, but applying relational or behavioral perspectives would not allow to draw such dramatic conclusions. Nowak, as a researcher of consciousness, was assuming that only structures perceived by social actors as important were consequential for social processes. Being interested in values and attitudes, he lacked the theory of action, which would allow him to understand the role of less visible social structures (such as relations or fields) as constraints and enablers for agency. Of course, this line of critique is a bit anachronic: Stefan Nowak did not have a chance to apply the theoretical tools which were only being coined elsewhere at the time of his studies. Yet, the thesis on the sociological vacuum acquired the status of a fact and started to be extensively used by scholars in explaining social reality of Poland. What is interesting, Nowak's thesis was often cited with a shift in its meaning, as a thesis on the lack (or the weakness) of objective structures, and not as a thesis on the lack of subjective identifications. It was also quite often cited partially, in a manner highlighting the strong identifications on the micro-level, but not drawing any references from the relatively strong identifications with the Polish nation.

I believe that the reason why Nowak's thesis became so popular is that, to some extent, the emergence of the Solidarność movement triggered a debate

about its validity. To this issue I have turned in Chapter 5. I began by briefly presenting the events of the so-called Solidarność "carnival" in the years 1980–1981. Then, I presented how the thesis on the sociological vacuum was employed to explain the emergence of a large-scale social movement in the allegedly atomized society. What is striking, is that many of these attempts were using not only mechanical allegories from the world of physics, but also even metaphysical exclamations. Solidarność was certainly a strong experience for its participants, as well as the sociologists observing it, and for this reason I claim that many of them were unable to examine it with a proper analytical distance. In fact, also some of the younger scholars have problems challenging the powerful myth created by the Solidarność generation. Some scholars claimed that Solidarność could be treated as evidence that Nowak's thesis was not valid. They pointed to structures omitted by Nowak, such as the catholic church (Kamiński 1992) or the workplace (Morawski 2010; Rychard 2010). Subsequently, I turned to a brief presentation of the use of concepts such as social networks or organizations in the studies of Solidarność. For example, Osa (2003) analyzed the networks of Polish opposition in the 1970s, which were activated in order to trigger the mass movement in 1980, and Laba (1991) presented the importance of the organizational infrastructure of large communist workplaces used for organizing the communication of protesters. In my opinion, the accounts employing the resource mobilization theory (which requires the focus on organizations and networks) are the most convincing in the analysis of Solidarność social movement. I am also convinced that Solidarność continues to be a research subject worth further studies. Certainly, the application of the social field theory may bring interesting results. A very difficult, yet interesting, research task would be to conduct deep studies of social networks of the 1970s. Their results, in my opinion, could be challenging for the strong presumption that Polish society was at that time atomized.

In Chapter 6, I have focused on yet another great subject for Polish sociology – the civil society – focusing mostly on its organizational aspect. Obviously, I did not discuss all the approaches and large debates about the concepts of civil society; I was interested in showing that civil society, understood as the self-organization of society based on free-choice associations, does not have much in common with the thesis on the sociological vacuum. I focused on organizations as the key social structures for civil society and did not discuss social movements or local governments. Focus on organizational form of an association allows to understand that the study of civil society requires also a good conceptualization of the micro-macro link. Civil society is not the kind of a macro-actor which interacts with the macro-actor – state. It is rather a label allowing to grasp the

associational life of a given society. What is very disturbing in the literature on the civil society in Poland, is the common lament about its bad condition: it is said to be weak, passive, and small in numbers. What I have seen in my review of sociological vacuum literature, was that Nowak's thesis fits perfectly into the laments about civil society in Poland. It was used to explain the obstacles for the development of civil society in Poland. I have shown that bringing the sociological vacuum thesis into the debate about civil society is a misunderstanding. There is no reason to link declarations on the identifications with certain social categories as a proxy for the quality of associational life. Following Ekiert and Kubik's (1999; 2014) line of argument, many aspects of civil society mobilization in Poland cannot be grasped by conventional methodological tools developed to study other countries. For instance, trade unions might have a small membership rate, but they are still able to mobilize and achieve certain goals. Another conclusion from this chapter is that many sociologists tend to romanticize civil society: they perceive associational life as something unambiguously positive. I confronted this vision referring to the work of Kaufman (2002), who discussed numerous negative consequences of associationalism in the United States. Similarly, the classical work of Chałasiński (1935) on Murcki settlement provides evidence that sometimes associational mobilization can fuel a vicious circle of social conflict. In this chapter I have called for more relational studies of civil society focusing on the interplay of non-governmental organizations with other organizational actors. The theory of social fields is particularly useful in understanding the relations between cooperating and competing associations, as well as other organizations belonging to the state or local administration or for-profit organizations.

Thanks to the popularity of Robert Putnam's (1993; 2000) work in Poland, the issues of civil society and social capital are often taken into account together. Indeed, their empirical connections are strong. As I have shown in my discussion of dual embeddedness, organizations form social networks and social networks help in emergence of organizations. Yet, for the sake of analytical clarity I have discussed the conceptions of social capital separately from the concept of civil society. The structure of an organization is key for understanding civil society and, by the same token, the structure of a network is key for understanding social capital. In Chapter 7 I have presented various conceptualizations of social capital formulated by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), Putnam (1993; 2000), Portes (1998), Woolcock (1998), Burt (2005), and Lin (2001). There are huge differences between these conceptualizations. In the early formulations of Bourdieu and Coleman, social capital is a very fuzzy notion. The important theoretical problem is in pointing to the holder of social capital and recognizing whether it

is a property of individuals or collectivities. I am strongly convinced that most useful analytically are formulations of the social capital conception embedded in the social network analysis. In its all formulations, the conception of social capital is a mediator between individuals and larger structures. Thus, it is a good example of a theoretical framework which requires a conceptualization of the micro-macro link. Social capital defined in terms of social network is another way, next to the conception of social embeddedness, to integrate the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Social capital is different from other forms of capital because it is not simply an attribute of an individual – an individual needs to mobilize social resources embedded in his or her social network. Thus, the notion of social capital is invariably conjunct with notions of social action and social relation. Social capital is a new term for a much older problem of sociology, namely the advantages of being in social relations, which since the 1980s has become an extremely popular notion treated by some sociologists as panacea for many social problems. Yet, the position in social structure is not only enabling but also constraining. Portes (1998) even provocatively formulated the notion of "negative social capital." The sociological vacuum was used by some researchers as a proxy for the level of social capital in the period before the formulation of the concept. Some other researchers were interpreting the sociological vacuum thesis along Putnam's (2000) categorization of bridging and bonding social capital. Strong identifications with family and close groups of friends were used as evidence for the existence of bonding capital and the lack of bridging capital (see Czapiński 2006; Miszalska, Kubiak 2004). Obviously, it is a conceptual confusion caused by the shift in the understanding of Nowak's thesis. The sociological vacuum thesis described declared identifications with social groups, while social capital is a notion describing existing relations between individuals. Of course, the relations between individuals have the aspect of identification but cannot be just reduced to consciousness. I find that in Poland the studies of social capital considered on the collective level are inconclusive, while the studies of the social capital considered on the individual level are congruent with the findings in other societies. The sociological vacuum does not have much to do with social capital.

The problem of the quality of democracy, that I have discussed in Chapter 8, is in sociological perspective often connected to the quality of civil society and the level of social capital. For this reason, it was a good strategy to place this chapter after discussions on thus understood social base for a smooth functioning of democracy assumed in many of its conceptions. Since democracy is a very ambiguous idea, I started the chapter by discussing six conceptions of democracy distinguished by Coppedge and Gerring (2011): electoral; liberal, majoritarian,

participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian. In my presentation of these conceptions I was mostly focusing on how the micro-macro link is problematized in a given conception. One cannot avoid theorization about micro-macro when considering democracy, because it requires some form of a mechanism transforming the wills of individual citizens into a collective action of a macro-actor – state. Then, I discussed the works of scholars who perceived the sociological vacuum as a factor influencing democracy in Poland. The majority of these authors saw the sociological vacuum as a problem. According to them, in a similar way as it is connected with the low level of social capital or engagement in associational life of civil society, the sociological vacuum negatively influences the quality of democracy in Poland. This negative impact is said to occur in two main ways: first is that it is seen as a blockade for the development of institutions allowing proper communication between the masses and elites; second, is that the sociological vacuum, in a similar way in which it limits civil society, is limiting the participation in democratic process. In case of institutions of communication, the sociological vacuum was recognized as negatively influencing the solid party system (Grabowska 2004; Kubiak 1999), which in turn limits the communication between the voters and political leaders. Wasilewski (2006) coined the notion of "political vacuum" to describe the weakness of local political leaders who could be mediating in communication between the voters and state-level political leaders. In case of participation, the sociological vacuum was pointed as one of the factors that contributes to the passivity of civic life in Poland (Szczegóła 2013). Zybała (2015) stated that the condition of the sociological vacuum inhibits the participatory creation of public policies. I am very critical of these statements, because I do not find in them theoretical arguments for linking the thesis on identification with various types of groups, with processes of political communication or participation. In contrast, I consider as interesting and deep the works of Cześnik (2008a; 2008b), who showed that, on the level of political theory, the sociological vacuum should not be considered a problem and, on the empirical level, it does not have any impact on the quality of democracy. Actually, from the perspective of a coherent polity, it is good not to have too strong middle-sized identifications, as it could be disruptive for the unity of the political system. Building on the work of Cześnik (2008a), I claim that the sociological vacuum is irrelevant for some conceptions of democracy, for some it is advantageous (as inhibiting too strong cleavages), and it might be assumed as disadvantageous for the conception of participatory democracy. The latter is valid on the condition that identifications are a driving force for participation in political life. To be sure of that, however, empirical evidence is needed because the evidence available so far are mostly conceptual speculations.

The last, and the shortest, third part of the book entitled "What fills up the sociological vacuum? Empirical illustration" consists of only one chapter – 9 – which served as an empirical illustration, or an appendix, to the book. The majority of my argument is of a conceptual character and I deal with various theories and domains of social sciences. In this chapter, I have decided to confront the research strategy of Nowak with one of the approaches which, in my opinion, is promising in understanding the micro-macro link, namely the research strategy of Granovetter (1995). Another argument for confronting these two strategies was that although they are embedded in very different sociological paradigms, they both use the same tool of sociological survey. Confrontation of Nowak's research strategy with the research scheme designed to study social fields would be totally incomparable. Thus, despite substantial differences (Nowak's paradigm is dispositional and concerned with consciousness, while Granovetter's paradigm is relational and concerned with behaviors), there is an intersection on the level of the employed research tool. I have presented the stream of research on getting a job initiated by Granovetter's study on the strength of weak ties. Then, I have presented the results of my study, which replicated the classic study of Granovetter. In my study, I surveyed people who in one year prior to the interview started a new employment. The results I have obtained revealed that half of the jobs in Poland are acquired through personal contacts, and more than two-thirds of these contacts are weak ties. This result, consistent with similar studies in other countries, points to the fact that relations with others, which are important for the mobilization of resources and social action, are relations of a relatively weak character. Weak ties are easily unnoticed, both by social actors who perceive them as unimportant, and by social scientists who may not have the research tools sensitive for their elusive character. In the same research questionnaire, I asked the same question on identification with social categories, which was the empirical base for the formulation of the thesis on the sociological vacuum. Surprisingly, in my data there was a much lower frequency of respondents pointing to the Polish nation as a category of identification than in the data collected by Nowak's research team in the early 1970s in Kielce and Warsaw. Otherwise, the general hierarchy of identifications remained quite similar. I attempted to find some relation between the declared identifications and behaviors on the labor market – they were nearly no existent: weak ties and strong ties users had very similar profiles of identifications. The inference to be drawn from this finding is that it is very deceptive to state something about relations and behaviors on the basis of data on dispositions and consciousness. My interpretation of this result is that it can be used as a good argument against scholars who wish to see some

explanation (or even causal potential) in the sociological vacuum in relation to other social processes. Of course, one needs to be cautious when building large extrapolations based on tiny empirical contributions, such as mine, but was this not the case with the sociological vacuum?

As Janine Wedel (1992b: 10) phrased it, Stefan Nowak "cast a spell" over Polish sociologists. The claim that there is a sociological vacuum in Poland was strong, dramatic, and persuasive. It was legitimized with a seemingly scientific method of survey sociology. Yet, does the data Nowak had in hand allow for this kind of extrapolation? I doubt it. In Chapter 4 I have shown various possible interpretations for the empirical validity of the thesis. The one appealing to me the most is that the result, which is a profile of identifications, does not allow to generalize about social actions and social processes. It is certainly interesting that a certain category of people more willingly expresses their identification with some social groups rather than with others, but this is it. Applying the sociological vacuum in narratives on Solidarność, civil society, social capital, and quality of democracy is, in my opinion, a misunderstanding.

There is another approach to the issue of the sociological vacuum at hand. It might be said that Nowak's thesis might not be valid, but it expressed a certain intuition (Grabowska, Sułek 1992), which is actually confirmed in other empirical data. For example, this is the strategy of Andrzej Zybała (2015), who delivered historical evidence to support his claim about the weak culture of participation in Poland. In that way, the sociological vacuum is detached from Nowak's empirical material and becomes a general and vague notion to describe some obscure deficiencies in social life in Poland. I understand this argument, but I do not accept it. According to me, the explanatory powers of the sociological vacuum are mostly of a rhetorical character.

This book is also a study of Polish sociology. In order to analyze the ways in which the sociological vacuum has been employed in explaining what is going on in Poland I came through of large share of Polish sociological production. Of course, not only Polish authors referred to Nowak's thesis,[83] but it remained a rather local problem of the Polish sociology. It is risky to build generalizations on the whole national sociological field based on the literature selected because of the use of one concept. This is indeed a biased sample. Yet, the picture of the sociological field seen through the lenses of the sociological vacuum application is rather a sad one. What I have seen in many of these works is a theoretical

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83 I have discussed the attempts at exporting the sociological vacuum to other social contexts elsewhere (Pawlak 2016).

shallowness, political engagement, and the urge to build dramatic narratives about social reality. The thesis on the sociological vacuum was used in them without the proper understanding of its definition, often with the shift of its meaning, and with partial implementation. Quite often the sociological vacuum is treated as a thesis about weakness (or even lack) of social structures, and not as a thesis on the low level of identifications with certain social categories. By the same token, quite many authors citing the thesis on the sociological vacuum forgot about its national component (Pawlak 2015).

For this reason, I claim that the vacuum is not in the society but, as the direct reading of the label suggests, it is a vacuum in sociology. It is easy to blame the society for lacking something, but it is often the sociology which lacks the theoretical and methodological tools to see what is in-between. For this reason, this book is not only about the sociological vacuum or Polish sociology, but the problem of the micro-macro link in sociological theory as well. I believe it is still worth to discuss various approaches at reconciling, or integrating, micro-level sociology focusing on individuals, small groups, interactions, relations, and situations, with macro-level sociology focusing on large social groups, social classes, nations, and societies. The debate on the meso-level of analysis or mechanism linking micro and macro is not just an implementation of an unnecessary nuance. As I have shown in the first part of the book, the problems of individual-society, micro-macro, and agency-structure have been present in sociological theory from its very beginning. The story of the sociological vacuum presented in the second part of the book is an illustration of the kind of problems sociologists might find themselves in when analyzing social reality without the proper understanding of the micro-macro link.

If we apply theoretical frames allowing to notice the micro-macro links, we will see what fills up the sociological vacuum. Of course, to say that the vacuum is filled up is to shift the original meaning of the thesis. Keeping rigorously to its original formulation, the filling up would occur when the declarations of identification with middle-sized groups would become more frequent. Yet, when we decide to shift the paradigm and consider social processes in more relational terms, we see that the vacuum is allegorically filled up with structures such as networks of weak ties or social fields.

I do not intend to say here that the entire body of work of social sciences which considered the thesis on the sociological vacuum is wrong or not worthy of reading. On the contrary, many of the works in which the authors referred to the sociological vacuum, are great. The power of reification of this statement was so tremendous in the Polish sociological field that many authors took the lack of

something in the middle between the small groups and the society for granted. The ones who like Paweł Starosta (1995) in his study on inhabitants of small towns and villages, or Mikołaj Cześnik (2008a; 2008b) in his studies on democracy treated Nowak's thesis seriously and discussed it in detail, demonstrated its limited validity.

I hope that the one of the contributions of this book will be that scholars will become more cautious when using the thesis on the sociological vacuum in order to build sociological explanations. This is, of course, a very limited objective. There are many notions which, similarly to the sociological vacuum, turned into buzz-words in sociological discourse. The sociological vacuum in Poland earned the largest popularity but terms like "amoral familism," "homo sovieticus," or "learned helplessness" would also be interesting subjects of studies similar to mine. The sociological vacuum thesis was coined during communist rule in Poland. The past events or conditions are often used to explain the present. Yet, we already know that path-dependency-like explanations were also used in studies of Poland with much exaggeration (Pawlak, Sadowski 2017). I hope that this book will serve as a warning against the use of buzz-words and dramatized narratives in sociology.

We need more studies of the less visible aspects of social reality. In this book I have highlighted the usefulness of the field theory and social network analysis. Both of them are now in the mainstream of international sociology and have also gained growing attention in Poland. We know more and more about social networks and the role of ties (of various strength). Surely, the confrontation of knowledge about behaviors embedded in networks of relations with traditionally gathered data on consciousness will extend knowledge about social processes in Poland. For example, in the traditionally strong field of political sociology in Poland, we need more studies on relational aspects of forming political opinions and the influence of social networks on electoral behavior. We have a growing number of studies conducted on the level of social fields and I hope that sociologists in Poland will be using also other accounts on social fields than the one created by Bourdieu. The organizational field (DiMaggio, Powell 1983) conception developed by the new institutionalists, or the strategic action fields theory (Fligstein, McAdam 2012), bring the attention to the relations between organizational actors which, in my opinion, are under-researched by Polish sociologists.

The outcomes of studies conducted on the field level will be a great material for future macro-synthesis of the knowledge on social processes in Poland. For a long time, sociologists in Poland were focused on macro-processes. Their ambition was to describe the whole Polish society. This was the case of Stefan Nowak

(1979b), who coined the notion of the "sociological vacuum" in an essay on the system of values of Polish society. I think that this research strategy was fallacious. By applying the bottom-up strategy of synthesizing the existing knowledge about the meso-level social orders, more interesting insights into macro-processes will become available.

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Index

265

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