Lud, t. 100, 2016

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REFLECTIONS ON LONGTERM FIELDWORK IN POLAND

First fieldwork, and why Poland?

I went to Poland first in 1977, and most recently in 2016. My relationship with Poland – or with particular Polish places and spaces – has dominated much of my adult life, professionally and personally – in terms of research, academic career, friendship and attachment, kinship and political understanding. I began my fieldwork in Poland in 1977, as a Ph.D. student at the London School of Economics, but the series of events and influences that drew me there went back much further, to my undergraduate studies in Canada in the early 1970s, to my own family history and the political climate in which I grew up.

Like most of the western anthropologists who did research in the eastern bloc in the 1970s and 80s, I was part of a generation that had come of age politically during a very unsettled time, experienced perhaps foremost through the war in Viet Nam, and that had been deeply influenced by the events of the late 1960s – the Prague Spring, the cultural revolution in China, the growth of resistance movements in South America, the rise of black power in the USA and the growth of the new feminist movements.

I began an undergraduate degree in anthropology at the University of British Columbia, Canada, in 1969. I took courses on peasant society and economy which focused on South America – this was the time of conflict and change: Che Guevara had been killed in 1967, but Allende and his socialist party had been elected in Chile. In 1973, the year I graduated, Allende's elected government in Chile was violently overthrown with American backing. The Viet Nam war was raging, with incredible socio-economic, political and emotional consequences, the cold war was unfolding in complicated ways after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, and China was increasingly confusing, a political enigma since the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

Kathleen Gough, the brilliant British anthropologist who had been placed on an FBI watchlist because of her support of Cuba and her outspoken opposition to American involvement in Viet Nam, labelled anthropology the "child of western imperialism". In the early 1970s, when I was an undergraduate, I heard her speak at a meeting of feminist, leftist anthropologists. She called on western anthropologist students to do research in countries in the socialist bloc. I listened, and I thought "I want to do that". At about the same time, papers that were eventually published as the new feminist anthropology collections, Rosaldo and Lamphere's *Woman, Culture, and Society*, and Reiter's *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, were presented at the American Anthropology meetings, and one of my young teachers brought me back Xeroxed copies. I read them and thought – I want to do **that**, too!

I went back to England, where I had been born and lived until I was five, and began a Ph.D. at the London School of Economics. At the LSE, I continued my interest in feminist anthropology, and developed more strongly my interest in Marxist theory. I had applied originally to do a research project on women in peasant society: I wanted to look at the household, labor, and property, in the context of kinship and marriage, in a socialist society. The problem was, I did not know where to do this. I had hoped, as an undergraduate, to work in Allende's Chile, but the American backed coup that resulted in the death of Allende and the fall of his socialist government, put an end to that. I returned to an old interest of mine, dating back to my childhood: eastern central Europe. With Przemek Bogdanowicz, a fellow LSE Anthropology Ph.D. student, I planned to do fieldwork in the Podhale – Przemek wanted to work on village politics and I on women, economy and kinship. I began to learn Polish, and started planning. We went to live in Poland in 1977.

First fieldwork – 1977-1980

In the autumn of 1977, Przemek and I lived in Kraków for three months, while I attended Polish language classes. We translated academic articles into English for local scholars while we waited for permission to live in the countryside.

Western students studying in Poland – and I imagine in other socialist countries at the time – had to be attached to a specific institute and to have a specific supervisor. We were fortunate to be placed under the supervision of Andrzej Paluch, in the Sociology Department of the Jagiellonian University. Andrzej was a sociologist who had succumbed to the influence of British social anthropology – a rather unusual conversion in those days in Poland. He had visited Cambridge, and formed a strong bond with Jack Goody, the professor of anthropology. He was trying very hard, and in a necessarily rather secret way, to bring what he saw as real Malinowskian Anthropology to Kraków.

Andrzej was a brilliant scholar, and a lovely person who died far too young. In the late 1970s he had gathered around him a group of outstanding students – including Jan Kubik, Andrzej and Mariola Flis, Zdzisław Mach, Marian Kempny, and Grażyna Kubica. There were frequent meetings, sometimes in a *kawiarnia* on *ulica* Grodzka near the Institute, sometimes at the flat Andrzej shared with his wife, the journalist Maria Paluch, and their two young daughters. This was Gierek's Poland, dominated by shortages and queues, rumours, political jokes that conveyed the latest genuine news. We would sit into the wee hours in Andrzej's flat, talking, drinking extraordinary amounts of vodka, covering everything from the latest scandal in the university to the latest controversial article in an anthropology journal to the current state of the rather frisky cold war. And swapping political jokes. Always political jokes.

To me at that time, Kraków was a beautiful, haunting and haunted city. The light was always dim. There were frequent electricity outages, but it seemed more than that, as if a grey mist encased the entire city and nothing was ever quite in focus. The buildings were exquisite and tragic, decaying and falling apart in a way which somehow to me at least made them even more enchanting. The queues seemed endless, the shops empty. People went outside to talk about confidential things, even when it was freezing and bitterly cold. It was a strange world and a strange time to observe, and for me, an English Canadian woman in my mid-twenties, often very hard to fathom. But it was endlessly fascinating.

I went to Polish classes, attended mostly by American students who were studying medicine and other subjects, many of whom I privately speculated might be CIA. Przemek and I kept explaining to the university authorities that we really wanted, and intended, to go and live in a village in the Podhale. For weeks we seemed to be getting nowhere. The most common response seemed to be – "But why? Can't you just for the occasional weekend? They won't have washing machines you know. Maybe not even running water". At that time the traditions of ethnological research and rural sociology were very well established in Poland, and a lot of wonderful work done in these areas. But there was no tradition of longterm fieldwork – rather, research trips were short, although often repeated year in and year out, and they often involved quite large groups of researchers, or professors with their students. What we wanted to do was clearly very different, and no one seemed to know quite what to do about it. We persevered, and after several visits to the Podhale – travelling on rather erratic buses in freezing cold snow – we settled on a village, eventually found a couple of rooms we could rent, and we left. I think it was a week or so before Christmas.

I stayed in that village for the next two years (Przemek returned to the UK at the end of the first year). For the next 25 years I returned regularly, sometimes on new research projects, staying for six months or a year, sometimes just visiting old friends, attending weddings, etc. My daughter, born in 1982, accompanied me through her childhood. She was a brilliant fieldworker from the time she could

walk and talk – far less shy than I was, and with none of my outsider adult's awkwardness.

I worked in other regions of Poland – in Łódź and the surrounding areas in the early-mid 1990s, in Lublin in the early-mid 2000s, and I came to love these other areas, and to make strong friendships there, but I think that there is something unique about the place where you first do fieldwork. Or perhaps I was just extraordinarily lucky in my choice of village.

Research topic

My original research proposal was titled "Sex Roles and Social Change in a Polish Village". Concentrating on the household, kinship and gender, I wanted to understand how peasant kinship and divisions of labor were affected by socialist industrial and agricultural policy. I was interested in property and inheritance, in terms of the reproduction of both general socio-economic inequality and gender inequality. I think at a very basic, un-thought out level I wanted to know how, and if, socialism in practice worked.

A strange aside about my original research project title: I was funded by the Social Science Research Council, and in 1980 or 81, there was an enquiry in the House of Commons about public spending, and it looked at SSRC funding. Two projects were selected – one about drinking behaviour in Scotland, and one apparently about sex in Poland – mine. A Labour MP asked what possible relevance sex in Poland could have for the UK. The Director of the SSRC responded by publically disowning my project, which became known in the newspapers as the "Polish Sex Project", and labelling it as unusually abstruse. I was mortified, and also incredibly irritated that no one seemed to know the difference between sex and sex roles. There was a lot of debate in the papers, and some wonderful defenses of the importance of research and knowledge for its own sake by leading social scientists, that cheered me up, but the best bit was that a few months later Solidarność burst onto the scene, and suddenly the same Director was proclaiming how advanced and prescient the SSRC was, as demonstrated by their funding of very important and relevant (and no longer abstruse) anthropological work on Poland!

Memories and experiences of fieldwork

My research periods in the Podhale were very different from my later times in Łódź, and both were different again from my research in Lublin. When I first went to the Podhale I had no idea what to expect. Just living in Kraków was totally unlike anything I had experienced – the empty shelves in the shops, the

caution and often distrust, sometimes bordering on paranoia, with which people regarded each other, the assumption that there was always the possibility, or probability, of surveillance, the omnipresent black market and informal economy which contrasted so starkly with the remarkable inefficiency of state banks, shops and enterprises and the barely disguised rudeness and apathy of most of their workers. The other side of that public face of Kraków was the incredible generosity and openness of small, intimate private circles of friends, relatives, colleagues and neighbours to which everyone seemed to belong. I think the term that later was invoked to describe life during socialism, "bipolar", comes close to encompassing these contrasts and tensions. For someone like me, coming in to the city from the outside, without at the beginning much language, it was a bit like going through the looking glass. I was very often puzzled, confused and quite lonely. Life in the village was, from the very first day, quite different from this.

We arrived in the village during a heavy snow storm and took up residence in the house of a slightly sinister sheepskin craftsman and his old father. Almost immediately, several small children came into the kitchen and lined up against the wall, watching my every move, pointing at some things, touching others, giggling when I tried to talk to them. Then the adult started dropping in. Mostly I remember Zośka, the sister-in-law of our landlord, who lived across the road with her husband and four children. A tiny, worn out but still rather beautiful woman some years older than me, she looked me over rather skeptically, turned around and went home, and came back a few minutes later with a basket of potatoes and onions, an enamel pail of milk, a couple of eggs, and a cake pan (she became over the months and years one of my two or three closest female friends in the village, and for the first year my protector and main teacher). After Przemek returned to the UK, I moved across the road, into the house of her next door neighbours. From then on Zośka just included me in all of her family's meals – soup and bread at lunch time, followed by a piece of meat or chicken, or sausage. She would send one of the children to find me, either working in my room or out and about in the village, to summon me for *obiad*. Her generosity and her willingness to open her life to me, share her stories, correct my initially stumbling Polish and take the time, and have the patience, to listen to me carefully and try to work out what I wanted to know, or what I did not understand, was extraordinary. It was mirrored by others who became my friends, with whom I worked in the fields, went to market, sat up drinking on long cold winter nights. I think that was the greatest surprise – I had anticipated struggling to get people to talk to me, struggling to understand, just struggling generally, but what I experienced was quite different. Physically life in the village was very hard. Even though there was more food than there was in Kraków, it was except for weddings and christenings, and Easter and Christmas, rarely plentiful. There were endless shortages of coal, paper, soap, anything which had to be bought because it was not raised, grown or made in the village. The farm work was endless from the beginning of spring

until the end of autumn, and totally exhausting. And I think that **is** more or less what I had anticipated, although I think poverty and hard work imagined are rather different from the fact of them, lived and realised. But what I had **not** expected was the charm and grace of the people in the village, and the kindness and patience with which they treated me. It was a totally different experience from living in the city; in the village I was incorporated, I think as a rather backward younger sister or daughter, into Zośka's family, and then into Jadwiga's, whose house I moved into. As I went about in the village, calling on people, listening to stories about their families, drawing endless maps and kinship diagrams, my friendship circle widened, and I saw events and people from a variety of perspectives, which was endlessly interesting. By the time I left the village at the end of my first fieldwork I had visited every house at least once, had worked in the fields with the families I was closest to, planting and picking potatoes, making hay, threshing, weeding and my respect for these women, particularly, and the strength they displayed quietly in their everyday lives, was limitless. I look back at photographs of that time and I marvel – what on earth did they think had hit them, these poor people? What had they done to deserve this young, ignorant girl from another world being thrust on them? And yet they rallied – they taught me to speak their language, and laughed when after two years strangers would think I too was a *Góralka*. They taught me to farm, totally failed to teach me to knit although they tried, taught me to sell with them at the market, included me in all of the weddings, funerals, christenings that took place in the village, told me what to do, what to see, what to photograph, whom to avoid. It was an education. You do not expect to become a child again, or suddenly to be an apprentice. But that is what happens.

I think a lot has changed in the past 30 years in fieldwork training, and our students talk about all of these things, and have seminars about them, and think about them in detail, before they go to the field. I tell my own students now something I learned from a close friend, the Canadian anthropologist Julie Cruikshank: that the most important thing in fieldwork is to learn to listen **for** (in terms of intended meanings, nuance, metaphor, etc.) rather than listen **to** (explicit words). And I tell them that they have to be prepared to be surprised, and to be open to that uncertainty and to the messiness of real life. I think that is what I loved most about my early fieldwork.

It was very easy for me to bury myself in the village, to work and listen to stories and spend endless hours in kitchens drinking tea and talking. But I also had to engage a bit with the outside world. Every few months I was expected to go to Kraków, to Andrzej's seminars. I had to pay a visit to the local police every few weeks, to confirm that I was still there, still living where I was registered, etc. I worked in the archives in Nowy Targ, and occasionally in Kraków and Warszawa, looking at old land records, wills and court cases; I spent hours in the parish church in Klikuszowa, reading, transcribing and photographing parish records of births, marriages and deaths, which went back to the 1770s, and which were

often intriguingly annotated with comments written decades or centuries later, in the margins "That was not the real father", "she went to Chicago but she came back", etc. I pored over the interview transcripts and household survey materials from government surveys which the Institute of Rural Sociology in Warszawa had compiled and put these pieces of information together with other data from the land records and the parish records, and from the life stories and kinship maps I was myself gathering. Jadźka became interested as well, and we would look at what I brought home after a day in the archives, and try to piece it all together.

Afterwards, people both in Poland and in the UK used to ask me: "But didn't the authorities stop you or make it difficult for you?". I do not remember anybody trying to stop me from doing anything. Quite the reverse. The parish priest clearly did not like me much, but he was polite and helpful, and he instructed his wonderful *gospodyni* (a very beautiful middle aged woman whom the villagers assured me was a witch) to give me any assistance I needed. The local archivists were delighted that anyone wanted to look at old records, and were incredibly helpful.

I think I was lucky that I looked very young, my language made me clearly foreign but also childlike, and I was working on women and kinship. I do not think it crossed anyone's mind that women and kinship could be in any way a threatening subject to the state (or the church, for that matter). And as a result no one really bothered to be very careful or guarded around me. I talked to Andrzej Paluch about this years later, and he said that he had been expected to keep a close eye on Chris Hann, who was working on issues related to ethnicity and identity in the east, quite near the Soviet border, and on Przemek, who not only was working on politics but also had Polish family in Warszawa and some quite active in politics; but never on me.

The irony of all of this, which brings me to the next thing which surprised me, or which I had not anticipated, was that my research probably even more than that of the others ended up being about the ambiguities of politics and economics. Almost everybody, or at least every house, in the entire village was involved in ambiguous or grey activities, *na lewo*, and most of these were located in the house, usually organised by the women, and developed through kinship networks. People produced things for private markets – crafts, knitting, cheese and meat, leather goods, etc. – and market women sold them from their houses, in the local Nowy Targ market, or as far afield as Warszawa or Gdańsk. People, usually women, travelled to Czechoslovakia or Hungary, and allegedly sometimes as far as Istanbul, buying and selling as they moved, leaving with cheap Polish products and produce, returning with foreign goods and currency, and gold. Men dealt in horses locally and across borders, slaughtered livestock beyond their quotas and sold the meat privately, vastly exceeded the number of sheepskin coats (then extremely expensive) that they were entitled to make under license and sold them privately, and dealt in money. I realised very quickly that everyone except possibly the small children and very old people were far better informed about the

day to day exchange rates for the dollar, deutschmark and pound than I was. All of this made life very interesting, but difficult to write about – a great deal of my ethnographic material recorded things which, during the socialist period, I felt could not be published without jeopardising particular people[1].

In a funny way, in the Podhale during this late socialist period, the final years of the Gierek regime, socialism was conspicuous by its absence. I spent a lot of my time with very old villagers, sitting stripping feathers or peeling potatoes with old women and listening to their life stories, talking to the old men about theirs. Many of them remembered the last days of tythe labour, and the brutality of some of the estate owners and lords of the manors. Their stories were often chilling. One particularly brutal *pan*, I was told on several occasions, was finally taken up to the top of the hill by a group of village men who tied a rope around each of his wrists and ankles, tied the other end to a horse, and with a sharp smack sent each horse off in an opposed direction. Nasty. I have absolutely no idea whether and to what extent these and other similar stories were based in real events – what I do know is that they were told to talk about a **bad** past, which socialism had put to rest. But these same old people would tell stories of a **good** past, of neighbourliness and strong kinship, of honest work on the land, of safety and security. Socialism was distrusted, primarily because it was seen as an attempt to take away the land of the house, and because it was seen as anti-Catholic. But it was also recognised as a force which had mitigated some of the worst atrocities of the pre-war ruling classes. I think for the younger people, those now running the farms, the picture was equally messy. Almost all of them professed to be "Catholic and not Communist", and were scathing about socialism, the Soviet Union, and the Polish party at all levels, from local to central. But they were all involved in the agricultural cooperatives and many of them were (rather inactive) party members. And most people were just as scathing about the Church and its priesthood, except the local village priest, of whom they were very fond, and the Cardinal who of course then became "our" (*nasz*) Pope.

Like my contemporaries who had gone to do research in the eastern bloc with very strong leftist sympathies, I was confused by the "actually existing socialism" I observed in the late 1970s. For me, the most problematic aspects (apart from the practicalities of no food in the shops, no contraception, no sanitary towels or tampons, very limited medicines including antibiotics, very limited books or freedom of press) concerned the pervasiveness of corruption, the continuing prejudices – class, obviously, but also anti-Semitism in a country where there were no longer many Jews. And women: the lack of reproductive choice – a socialist country where abortion is the main form of birth control (???); the levels of domestic violence and the tolerance of it or silence around it; the sheer brunt of work that women had to do. All of these things shook my ideals, and made me

[1] I tried to get around this by writing rather obliquely: see for instance Pine 1993, 1996.

far more critical and less naive in my assessments and understandings of politics, a process I think was shared by most of my colleagues working in the socialist states at that time.

Working in a Podhale village was in a strange way reminiscent of a classic village study, the kind which my generation, and even more following generations, of anthropologists distrusted. I was there in the village, most of the people I wanted to talk to were there too, and I turned up and tagged along in their lives. It was possible to visit every house in the village, it was not hard to make contacts, to make arrangements, to find time to talk to people and for them to find time for you, and it was not hard to map the spaces and the temporalities. When you live and work with people month in and month out, your world merges with theirs, and it is easy to feel that you might possibly understand a lot of what is going on, and how it all connects. From that core, you can follow out strands to other villages, to cities and countries further away, but the structural (spatial) centre provides a particular kind of practical framework. Research in cities, based around questions like employment and unemployment, factory work, benefit systems, etc., is very different. You work through networks, not places, and you spend hours and days trying to arrange things, waiting for meetings, phoning people who had been interested but are suddenly uninterested and too busy. When the socialist state fell in 1989, I had just finished a research project in the Podhale on family structure and inheritance, and legitimacy and illegitimacy. It was a strongly historical project, building on my previous work in the archives, and my daughter (who was then 6 to 8) and I spent several months each year in the Podhale – Ania attended the village school with Zośka's granddaughter, also Ania, and I went off to the archives; otherwise we stayed in the village as we always had before, working in the fields, going to market, visiting, talking. Of course, outside events intervened fairly frequently: I was in the village when Solidarność was looking far too powerful and there were rumours of an approaching Russian invasion – my friends told me to go to Warszawa and wait to see what happened, and I remember being unable to get a train ticket at all, and going on a jam packed bus which kept being diverted, and looking out the window at impressive cavalcades of army trucks and tanks taking up most of the road. There were a lot of uncertain times, particularly during martial law.

After the socialist government fell, I went back to the village for a few months, and I realised, talking to villagers, that in their view it was all too little too late, and nothing was really going to change. I was in Poland when Mazowiecki formed the first postsocialist government in September 1989, and like everyone there at that time I witnessed the initial euphoria and was moved by it. By 1990 however I was appalled by the speed and the severity of restructuring. The UK was just emerging from the draconian Thatcher years, and what was happening in eastern Europe, and particularly in Poland with the Balcerowicz Plan, seemed even more extreme. I began to plan to do research in a different region.

The textile industry, centred in Łódź, had been very badly hit, and female unemployment in the city and the surrounding region had rocketed out of control. From 1990 to 1994 that region became my central research focus. It was very different research. My daughter and I lived first in Łódź, with an affinal aunt, and then the next year, and the one after, we stayed in a village outside Pabianice, with friends of my closest friends in the Podhale. I went to precarious factories that were about to close down, and to others which had received a respite through foreign (usually German) buy-out, and I talked to managers and union officials and workers; I was allowed to tour the shop floors and to speak to workers during their breaks, although my movements were actually more controlled and regulated than they had been during socialism. But mainly I worked in other sites, primarily in the newly formed unemployment centres, the Biuro Pracy. This was very different work from what I was used to in the Podhale; first of all, I worked with research assistants, an M.A. student from the Łódź Sociology Department, and then with a young friend from the Podhale, and then later still with her mother, my friend Jadźka. We interviewed women who were registering as unemployed or were claiming benefit, first in Łódź itself, and later in Pabianice, Aleksandrów, and a couple of other smaller textile towns. I had expected it to be difficult to persuade people to talk to us, particularly because we were sitting in what were actually government offices, but many of the women we spoke to poured out their life histories, and described in detail the trauma of losing their work, and of their disappointment in postsocialist reality – not the capitalism they had expected. Some of these long conversations – testimonies, really – were incredibly moving, and very revealing in their raw honesty.

In 1991, I think, on the back of this ongoing project, I received funding to work with CBOS on a survey on women's experiences in the new economy. I worked closely with Lena Kolarska-Bobińska and her team to plan the survey questions, and its results revealed, among other things, some devastating statistics on the frequency of domestic violence to women throughout Poland (apparently regardless of class, education, age or region). This material was then used to push the Polish parliament to move on initiating protective legislation and setting up women's refuges – the famous *Bo zupa była za słona* (Because the soup was too salty) campaign, which plastered posters of a badly beaten woman's face all over Warszawa trams and buses, emerged during this period. For me that collaboration with CBOS was so important, because it actually had a tangible and fairly immediate impact.

The women and unemployment project ended in 1996, and was followed by a Volkswagen Foundation funded project, hosted at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, which Deema Kaneff and I developed together – a comparative study of networks and connections and emerging inequalities in Poland, about to join the EU, and Bulgaria, still trying to qualify for accession. This project took me to Lublin, and the countryside around it. Nastka Pili-

chowska, a sociology graduate from Łódź, was attached to the project as a Ph.D. student, doing a study of a small farming village economy in the Lubelskie region, and I concentrated primarily although not exclusively on the city of Lublin itself. I worked again with research assistants, Kinga Sekerdej and Ania Witeska. They were an amazing team, and I loved working with them. In the Biuro Pracy I interviewed people – men as well as women this time – perched on the corner of a desk in an incredibly crowded office in the city centre. Kinga and Ania and I went to factories in the city, to NGOs, to Church organisations and homeless centres. Again, it amazed me how willing people were to talk openly about their lives, their hardship, their dreams and expectations.

One of the themes that has run through all of my research in Poland, beginning in the Podhale in the 1970s, is migration. The links Podhale villagers maintain with the USA, particularly with Chicago, are well known, and even at the time I began my research, which was still very much the socialist period of intensive passport and visa controls, almost every house in the village had someone in Chicago, or about to go, or just come back. Something that surprised me during the research in Łódź was that people did **not** want to or plan to migrate, at that time, even though female unemployment was well over 50% and the economy was clearly going to be stagnant for some time. I wrote a lot about these differences, about senses of place and the ties and networks that bind people in different ways (see Pine 1998, 2002). In Lublin at the time of EU accession what was so striking was that everyone we interviewed and all the people we spoke to casually, or made longer term relationships with, planned to go abroad, usually to the UK, had already gone and just returned, or had children or parents there or about to leave. This has fuelled the research I have been carrying out over the past few years, very informally, about eastern Europe migration in the UK, and what it looks like in rural areas particularly. An ongoing project, even more important now that we are trying to fathom the implications and consequences of the vote to leave the EU.

Contacts with Polish colleagues

When I was doing my first fieldwork my main contacts with Polish academia were through Andrzej Paluch, about which I have written above, in Kraków, and with Bogusław Gałęski in Warszawa. Gałęski had the greatest academic or intellectual impact on me I think. He was an extraordinary man, and he was interested in my project from the beginning. We became friends, and, as Andrzej and I did, remained friends until his death, although I saw much less of him after the 1990s when he lived in the USA. But we remade contact again when I was teaching a course on Kinship and Gender, in Warszawa, in about 2005, and he had recently returned. One of my fondest memories of him is an occasion when he came to stay in the Podhale with us, during the first winter of fieldwork in 1977. I was ill,

with some really nasty bug, and while the others went to the Nowy Targ market for the day, Gałęski stayed at home with me, feeding me rice and grated apple that he had made, and telling me all about Chayanov. I still have a Xerox copy of his Chayanov volume, and I still rate both of them, Gałęski and Chayanov, as the top scholars of eastern European peasant households.

I have kept in touch, on and off, with the others from Andrzej Paluch's circle. Jan Kubik and I both spoke on the opening plenary of the EASA in Kraków in 2000, organised by Zdzisław Mach. The third member of that panel was Michał Buchowski, whom I had met in Cambridge where I was a post-doctoral fellow in the late 1980s, and he was a visiting scholar. We have remained in fairly regular contact ever since – in fact Michał just made a presentation at the panel colleagues and I organised at the last EASA in Milan. Jan Kubik is now in London, as the Director of the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies, and we see each other from time to time. Marian Kempny, another brilliant person who died far too soon, and I kept vaguely in touch through the 1980s and 90s, and he came to Cambridge a few times when I was there. I learned, and continue to learn, a great deal from my contact and friendship with members of that old Kraków circle. More recently, I have had a lot of contact with the new generation of anthropologists in Poland. I met Agnieszka Kościańska in Halle, when she gave a paper at the conference "On the Margins of Religion" which João de Pina-Cabral and I organised. She and I have remained closely in touch; she arranged a series of lectures on kinship and on gender, which I gave in Warszawa about 10 years ago, and most recently I gave a seminar there in the series she was co-ordinating this spring. Through her, and through my work at Max Planck, I have made contact with other young anthropologists – as I said, Ania Witeska and Kinga Sekerdej were my research assistants, and Ania's parents became close friends of mine, and definite fieldwork angels, in Lublin. Ania did her Ph.D. at UCL in London, and a fair portion of it was written in my house. I taught Agnieszka Halemba in Cambridge, and later we were colleagues at Max Planck. What impresses me so much about this generation is that they have built a new kind of anthropology in Poland, drawing on western work certainly, but also remaining very true to their own heritage. Magda Buchczyk, a recent Ph.D. at Goldsmiths, did wonderful work on heritage, space and place in Katowice, where she grew up, and went on to look at similar question in Romania.

It seems to me that now anthropology is under threat everywhere – it is a discipline which does not lend itself easily to neo-liberal accounting. It is also increasingly under fire as a colonial/postcolonial discipline, and we have all seen how those debates have entered discussions of "western" versus indigenous researchers in the postsocialist states. I do not find these particularly useful, but I do think that really outstanding work is being done in central eastern Europe now, by this impressive cohort of young(ish) scholars and increasingly by the people **they** are teaching, and I love watching what is emerging.

Polish anthropology

It still takes me a long time to read Polish academic writings. So, often I have been lazy and read English translations. For my Ph.D. research I read, in both English and Polish, Wierzbicki and Dobrowolski. I love Dobrowolski's work particularly. Obviously, I also read Paluch and Gałęski; and I read the work of Kubik, Buchowski and Mach. And I read anything I find on the Podhale, on women, etc. More recently Elżbieta Tarkowska's outstanding work on poverty has influenced me. I love the work of Agnieszka Kościańska, Ania Witeska, and Karolina Follis, and I give it to my students to read. I still re-read Thomas and Znaniecki, partly because, although the language is different, so little has really changed.

Future research plans

I cannot imagine **not** doing research in Poland. The work I am concentrating on now concerns Polish migrants in the UK, because I think this it is a really important issue (see Pine 2014). But I was in Poland, in Warszawa and Lublin, a few months ago, after a long absence, and everywhere I looked I saw things I wanted to research, and everyone I spoke to made me want to work with them, so I suppose, like most things, it is all still up in the air, but likely to continue.

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