

FROM THE EDITORS

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An Invitation to Debates

This issue of the *Polish Sociological Review* is primarily a self-presentation of Indian sociologists and their recent theoretical and empirical research achievements. The suggestion to prepare this issue came from the Indian Sociological Society with which the Polish Sociological Association cooperates. Except for two articles by Polish diplomats and academics, who specialize in the cultural and political problems of India, this entire issue was conceived by Ishwar Modi, a sociologist of international renown and *spiritus movens* of several valuable publishing endeavours.

The issue includes essays, expert opinions and articles by sociologists from various research centres in India. Selected as markers of the most important fields of research in contemporary Indian sociology and testimonies of significant contributions to the development of our discipline.

Not only does this issue of the *Polish Sociological Review* attest to the successful cooperation between our two sociological associations, it also attests to the well-meaning of Asian sociologists and their interest in sociological institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, recently dubbed “The Younger Europe.”

I am happy that our Editorial Board applauded the initiative of the Indian sociologists and that the “Indian issue” of our journal could go on. In the name of the Editorial Board I wish to thank our colleagues in India and hope that I can also speak on behalf of our readers when expressing my gratitude to them for offering both a very heterogeneous picture of contemporary Indian society and a multidimensional picture of Indian sociology, its role and place in the structure of science and scientific institutions, and in the public sphere of a society which is moving toward democracy, spurred on by many external and internal factors.

The first “editorial reading” of this issue of the *Polish Sociological Review* suggests that European readers have received a significant intellectual proposal. Rather than painting a celebratory portrait of “the largest and most populated democracy in the world” and “a serious partner in new global geopolitics,” the contributions offer several insightful and mutually complementary diagnoses of what Indian sociologists have identified as the most important issues for various types of social communities, issues which stimulate the most intense emotions and cognitive interest.

First and foremost this issue is a cultural gift, an attempt to create a space for intellectual contact with what is going on in the Indian modernization and—more

generally—social change in Asiatic context with its economic, social and political mechanisms and its mental and technological dimensions. We have been given an opportunity to take a closer look at new social diversities, new social movements, mass consumption, and the legacy of colonialism. This is also a space in which we find significant clashes between ancient Indian religious and philosophical traditions, and the universality and rationality of modern technology.

The articles, written by specialists in various fields of sociology, variously engaged in public life, not only create an opportunity for diagnosis, as mentioned earlier. Not only can they help us to reproduce the idiomatic interpretation of modernization in the colonial, and above all postcolonial, context. Last but not least, they offer a convenient point of departure for reflection on Western Europe and its international role-modelling function. Thanks to these articles we can take a different look at Western Europe which perceives itself in many grand narratives of capitalist transformation as the primary source and model of modernization in Eastern Europe and the world. In other words, the articles collected in this issue expose the intellectual strength and weakness of Western Europe, encompassed in sociology, with its assumptions of historicism, nationalism or individualism, its categories of time, rationality, sovereignty or gender. They pave the way for debate on the patterns of capitalist modernization in Western and non-Western Europe and the so-called Third World as relicts, for discussions on the transition to capitalism in the post-colonial and post-communist era, for the analysis of this transition which civilization underdevelopment has automatically rendered incomplete or deformed. I think that this issue may inspire us to come to terms with the European language of modernism, with its weaknesses and ingenuity expressed in sociological categories pertaining to the market, democracy and the nation state.

These articles deserve to be read carefully, not only because they provide an excellent review of universality, rationality and diversity in post-colonial India but also because they show that it makes sense to translate the western world of modernization into the categories and images of Indian capitalist modernization. By approaching the determinants, mechanisms and consequences of this translation in contemporary India so comprehensively and insightfully, they direct our attention toward European modernization rationale and help us to take reliable stock of European sociological achievements.

Also—and this is particularly valuable for Polish sociology and Polish sociologists—they help us to get a better view of our Western-European case of translation of capitalist models of transformation vis-à-vis the European context and the global context. When Polish sociologists focused on the issues of political and economic transformation “in the Polish mode,” seeking its uniqueness in Polish history rather than analyzing its Eastern or Western European contexts, new research options were uncovered. They were created by e.g. the theories of multiculturalism, globalization and post-colonialism. These languages, I assure you, took root in social sciences in India a long time ago so we can count on the support of “these sciences” in the formation of the Polish contribution to the debate on the future of Europe after globalization. Indian research pursuits could greatly help to further our understanding of Poland’s

place in Europe or the place of post-communist Europe in the world-wide modernization process. Could it perhaps help us to revise our visions of social transformation? Or inspire us to take a different perspective on the legacy of Marxism, official and unofficial, for the Polish transformation, and above all encourage us to reconstruct the role of Solidarity as a self-organizing, peaceful social and cultural revolution? To conclude, I wish to thank our colleagues from India for their inspiration and for their interesting suggestions concerning the cultural and social interpretation of Poland and Europe.

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