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Gender equality à la polonaise Dynamic situation of Polish Women in Science



POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCE
PoISCA

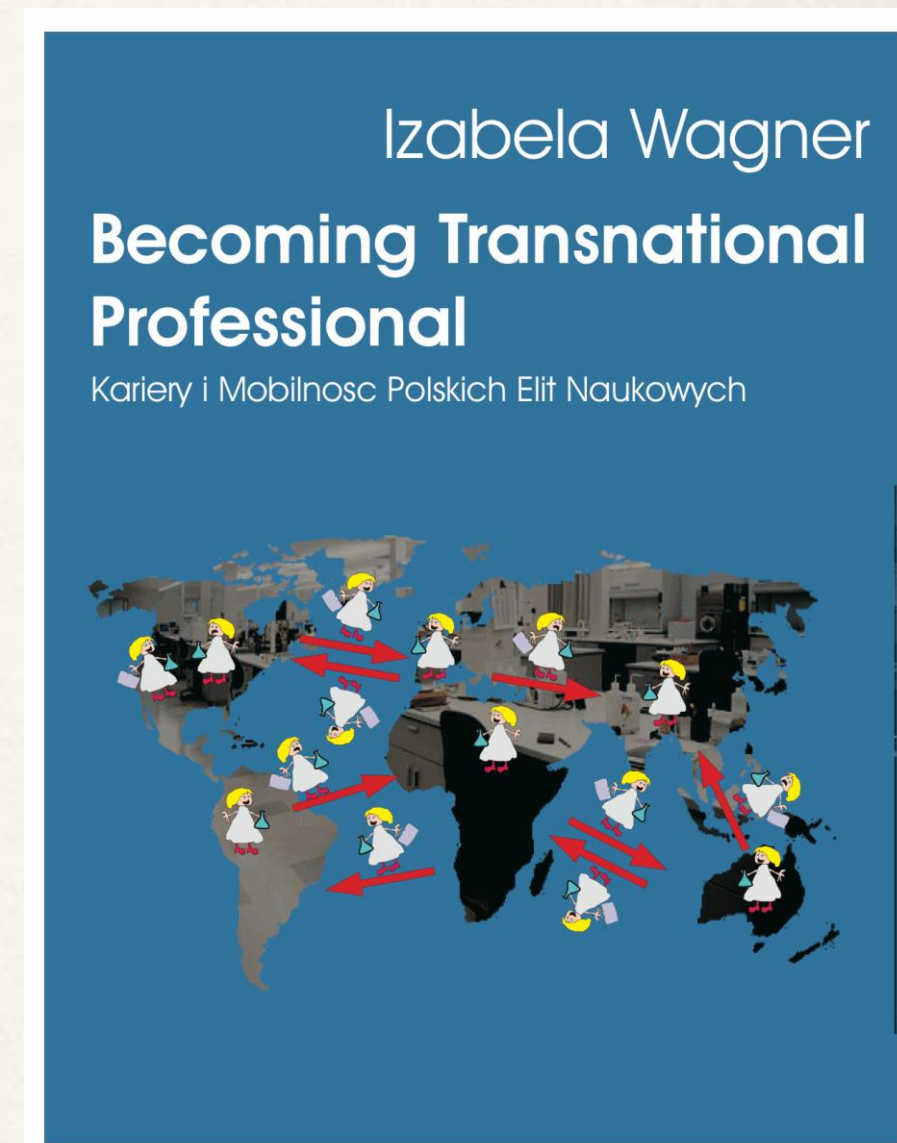
Brussels, 10.04. 2014





Introduction to the field in Poland

- 1. Female sociologists frequently spontaneously speak about their feeling of the discrimination and masculine domination
- 2. Declaration of the equality and the division between good or bad scientists - example of successful women as a prove of the lack of discrimination - data from life-science laboratories
- 3. Women (**life-science**) express that they are **not discriminate**, except 'anecdotes' (Wagner, 2011)
- 4. Data from observation:
 - particularity of the Polish situation
 - generational misunderstanding





Strong myth - the icon of success in science

Maria Skłodowska-Curie 1867-1934

- The first to win Nobel Prize (24/12/2)
- The first to be a Professeure at Sorbonne
- The first to be at Pantheon as a honor persona
- The proud of Polish nation
- Strong symbolic power in young state of Poland 1918-1945 and after



**The Impact of
Eva Curie's book!**

“good” time = “bad” time

- Poland reconstruction after II WW
- “women on the tractors”
- In 1956 the Parliament legalized abortion in cases where the woman was experiencing "difficult living conditions". The interpretation of the change in the law varied from a restrictive interpretation in the late 1950s to one in where abortion was allowed on request in the 1960s and 1970s.
- Equality of salary
- Pre-schools and system of child-care
- Symbolic issue - the women as an active (working) member of Polish society!



“bad” time = “good” time?

- After 1989 - free market - differences in the salary
- Social changes - “liberal” (women as the object)
- Church influence (catechism in schools) - women back at home = a house keeper & child care role
- 1993 - interdiction of abortion
- Diminution of the number of pre-schools
- Increase of the fees on child education and care
- Collapse of the health insurance system - **instauration of RISK SOCIETY**
- Raise of prices especially of real estate (flat for post-doc salary - definitively the past)
- **Necessity for the second salary**
- Increase of social expectation regarding women - “being a good mum in the modern society” - MATKA POLKA (Urbanska, 2008)



MATKA POLKA



Independence or the lack of sensitivity about the gender problems?



- **Disciplinary variety:**
- **Sociologist's** testimony: *"During last conference it was clear. Only men spoken and I was single woman among these guys and I should wait a long time before they allow me to speak. And I had this impression that what I said it was only a 'funny illustration' to their important and serious voice in their debate - I was this funny girl but not at all equal position colleague."*
- **Life-science researcher:**
- *Never expressed the situation of masculine domination or gender discrimination except... account about their own career and mobility -*
- As my results show (Wagner, 2011) the women who get the FNP scholarship and moved for her post-doc with her husband (and sometimes also with children) express the feeling of guiltiness and show their situation as an exceptional fact and wonderful behavior of their partner

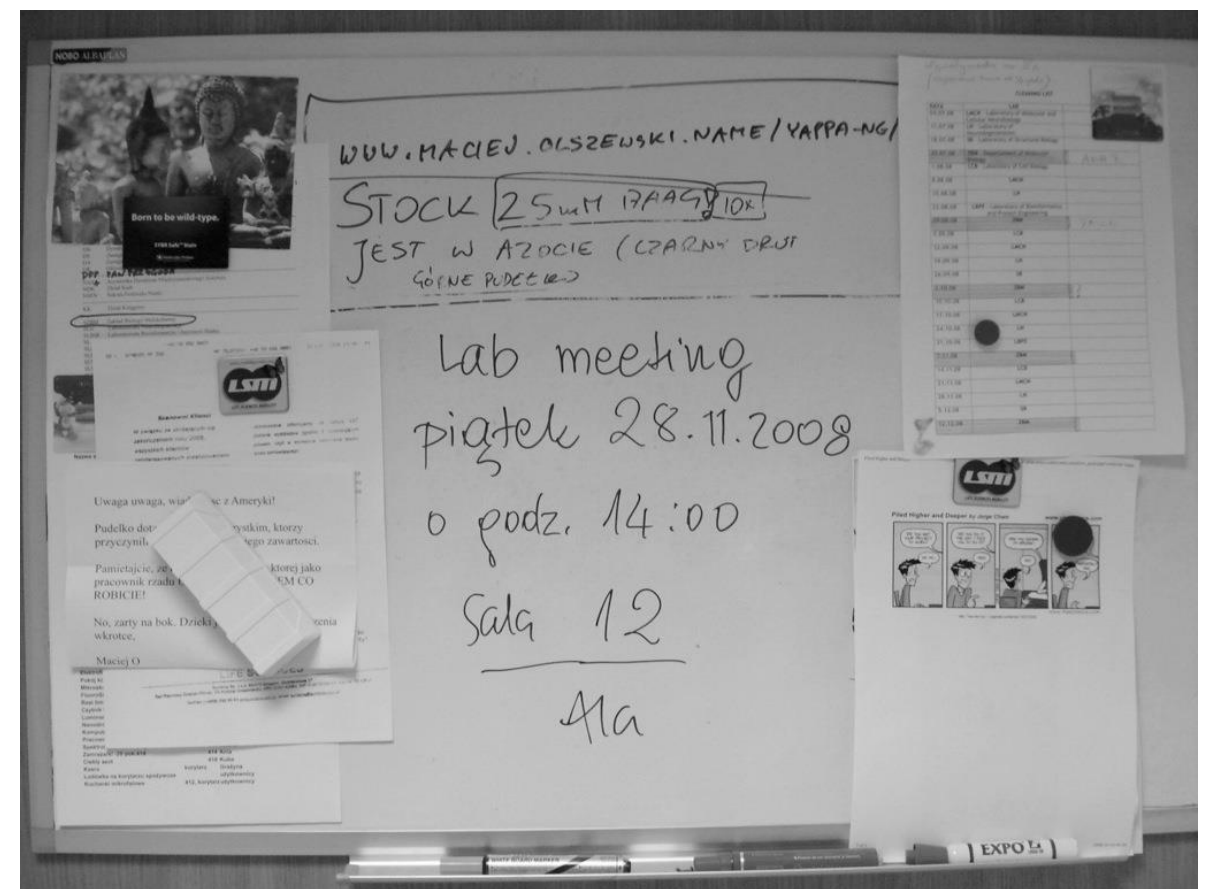
The world upside down

- These successful women - who gave me an account of their post-doc experience said that they are conscious about their **husband's sacrifices**, describing in details how their partner reacted in this exceptional situation. They underlined that despite of the possibility of their post-doc contract prolongation and the quasi necessity of this prolongation for their project - they refused to pursue this **'sad' experience** (sad for their husband) and to expose him to the negative comments of their entourage (family and friends).
- These women (winners) decided to go back and were happy that they could pursue their research during post-doc in such wonderful place during one year.
- **The men - scientists (former post-docs) sometimes said that the career of their wife is important to them, but no one expressed the feeling of guiltiness because their migrant situation which was caused by post-doc contracts lasted several years!**



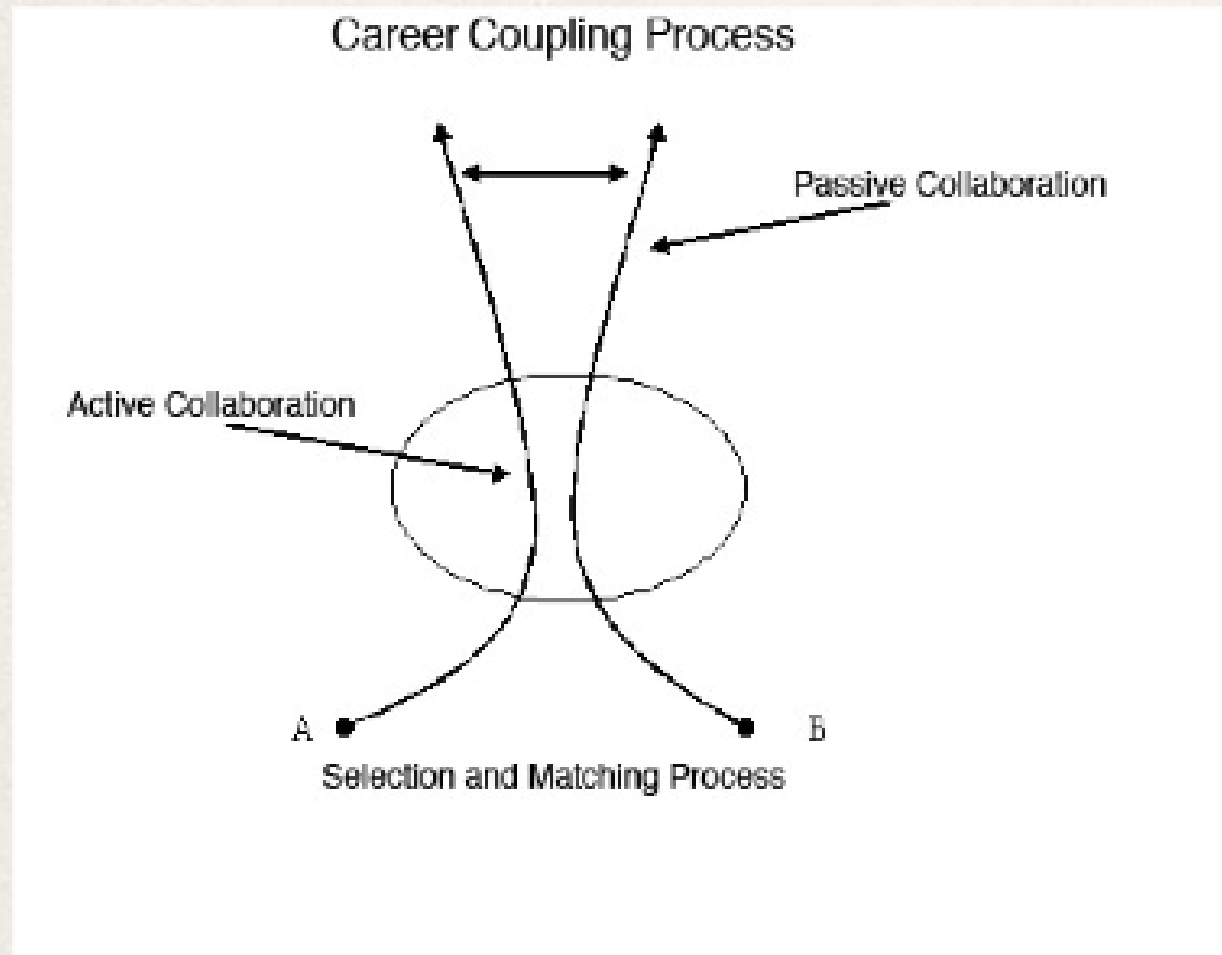
Researcher-women in the laboratory - actual competitive context

- 1. Important career **or** family life = a difficult choice
- 2. Situation of young PI with small children
- 3. PhD students and the health insurance and pregnancy - difficult Polish context



- 5. **Mobility obligation** and **life-calendar** (time for pregnancy)
- 6. The women [of a] researcher situation
- **dual career/hidden career or coupling career**

3 Stages of Career Coupling



3. Passive Collaboration

2. Fusion - Active Collaboration

1. Selection and Matching Process

Vampirisation Process



reading
writing
speaking
advising
discussing
organizing
counseling
THINKING

HIDDEN CAREER

Polish solutions to.... the “woman’s problem(s)”

Traditional family and large support of the grand parents

Men’s contribution to the family care - new
model of familial division of tasks

Small size of family (maximum two children)

Dual career difficult challenge

Absence of state support (no financial help)

Absence of institutional support (no day-care)

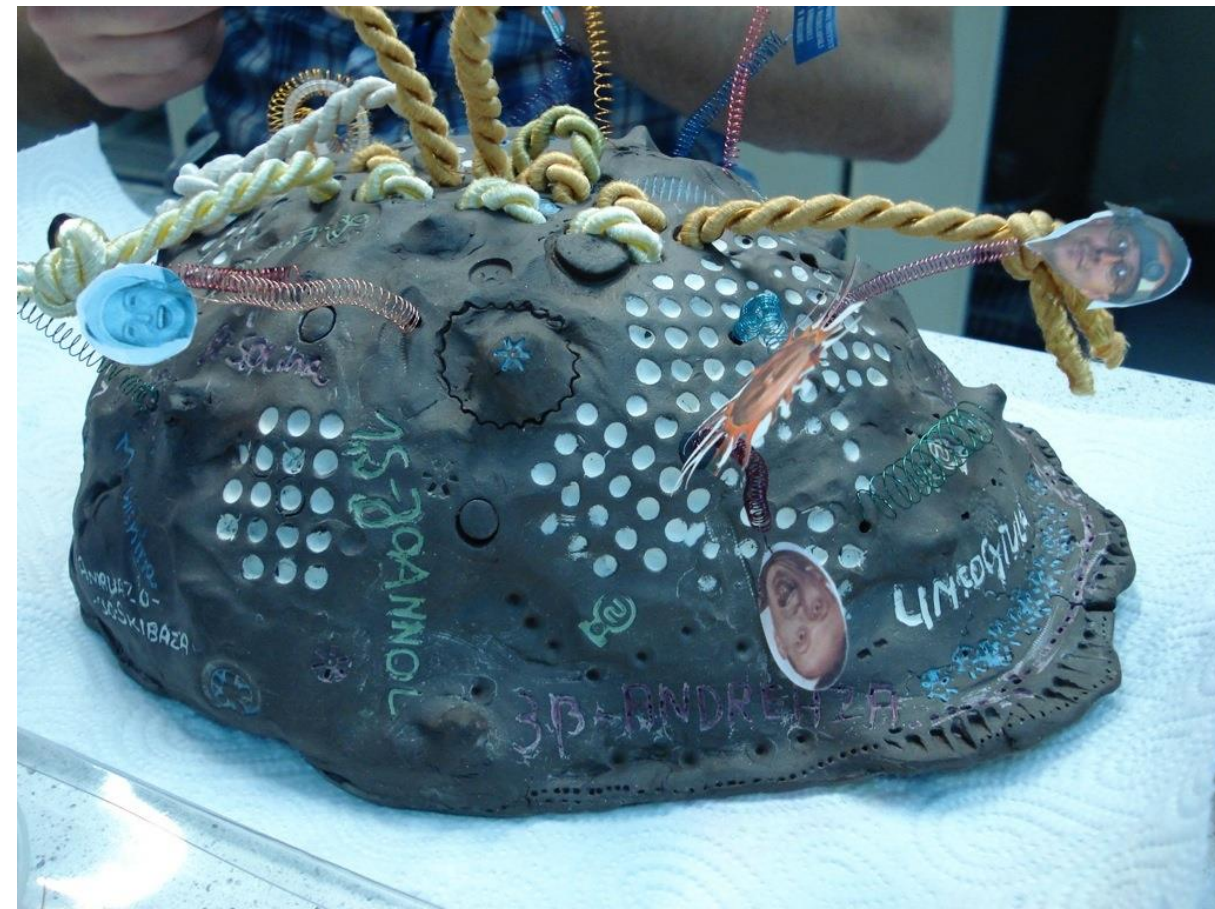
Huge problem of housing

The situation determined by the financial
situation of parents and their social class



Career negotiations

- Lacking the support of a peer group
- Weak support of mentors
- Not enough of networking
- Family support of mobility (When both scientists? When children have their right to decide?)



“casse tête”

- Equilibrating career path of both scientists under pressure of mobility (matching post-doc places - development of career - getting two positions - **rare dual position in Europe**)
- Career supporting measures (fellowship) based on **male career** calendar - **high expectations form EU**
- very low salaries - **less than 1.000E per month**

Before sum up - The future ???

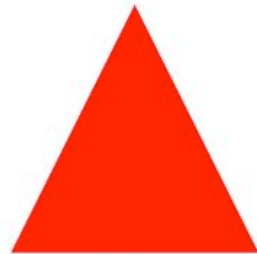
- Positive effects of European politics (research programs - positive discrimination - specific measures not sufficient)
- **GENERATIONAL MISUNDERSTANDING**
- **REFUSAL OF THE PARITY PRACTICES**
- **MEN's DOMINATION in Academia**
- Negative effects of competitive context (pushing toward mobility as the core mechanism of the career of researcher) - also pressure on publications and effectiveness
- Negative effects of societal changes - women as the “objects” in liberal cultures and as an exemplary mother
- Negative effects of religion-orthodox orientation - women at home



Conclusion

- Glass ceiling???
- **Triple**

c) Institution



a) Society

b) Partner

Competitive context makes negotiation difficult....

Necessity of adapted tools of inquiry - career as a collective process - which will be helpful in understanding the situations of scientists and which will bring us to the elaboration of solutions

HARDWOOD UNIVERSITY Newsletter

The HU neighborhood is booming with new businesses catering to the single hard-working scholar.



and do not forget that

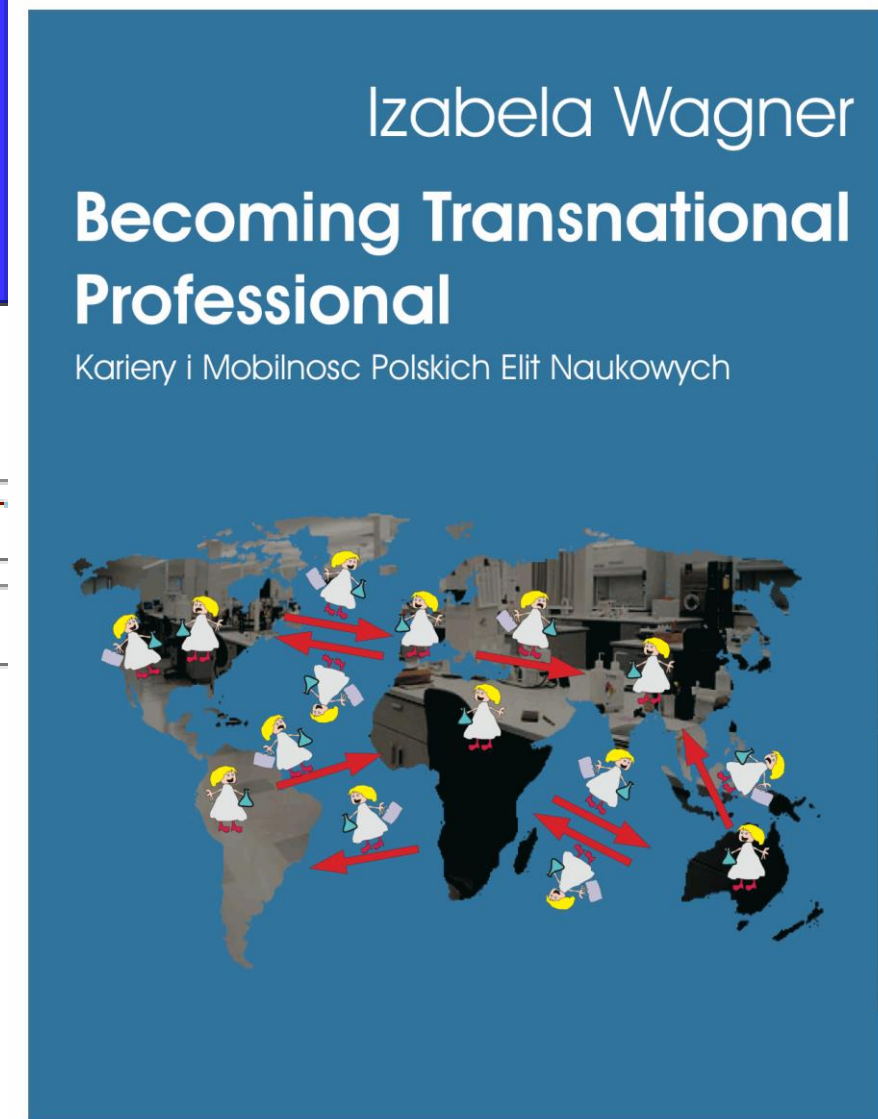
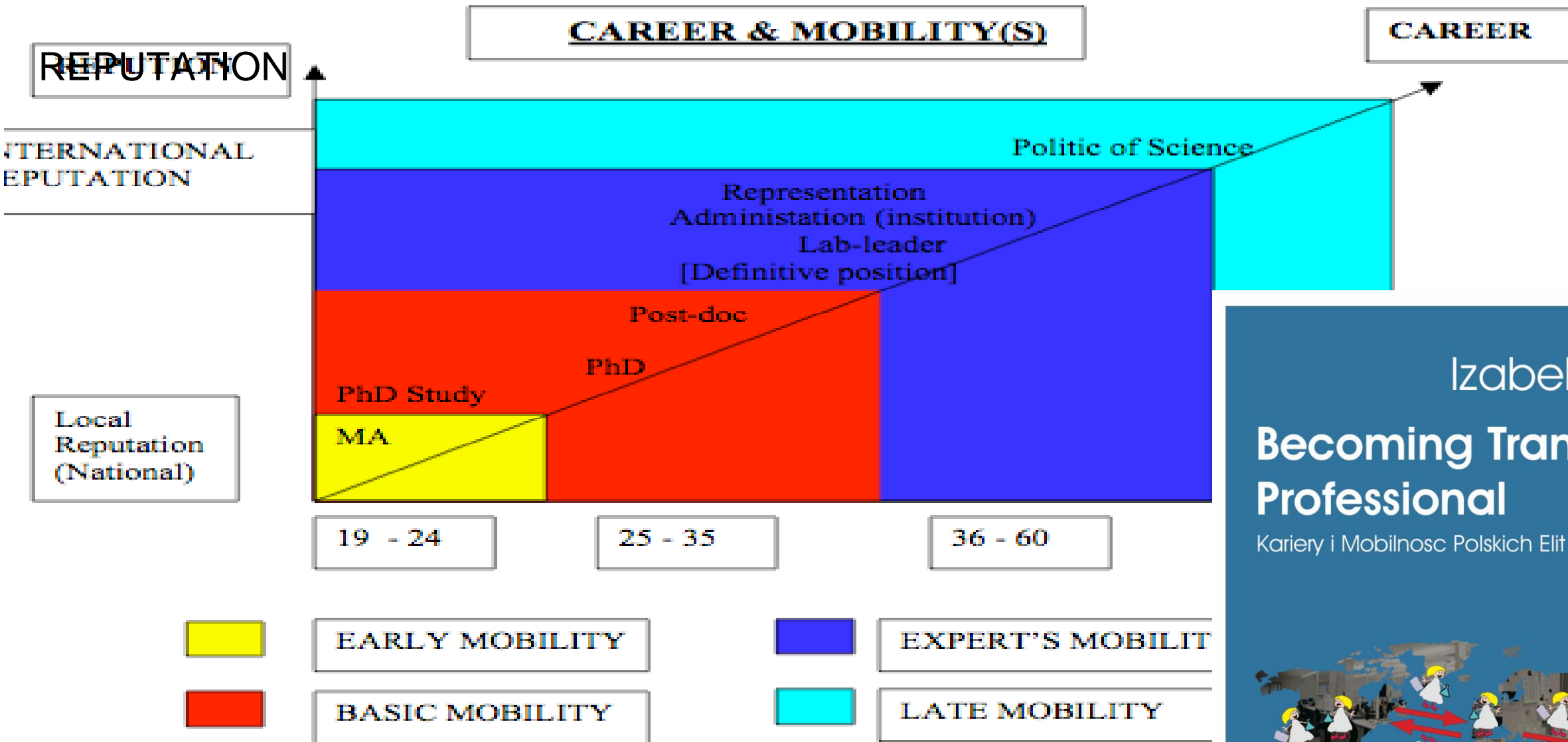
Walking is not always going straight right, sometimes it is step back...

I would like to thank all my participants for collaboration

- Members of Photosynthesis Laboratory in CEA Saclay - France
- Members of IIMCB - Warsaw - Poland
- Members of Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics (MPI-CBG) - Dresden - Germany
- Members of Department of Biomedical Science and Technology, University of Cagliari - Sardinia - Italy
- Members of two Harvard University laboratories (Department of Biology and Harvard Medical School)
- Marta Jankowska for amazing pictures of researchers
- Maciej Zwieniecki for cartoons “from Hardwood”
- As well as other researchers who helped me in understanding their and mine professional world
- FNP - Polish Foundation for Science - for support - contract research “Polish Researchers - Careers and Mobility”, 2008/2009
- Kosciuszko Foundation for their support of the project Polish Scientists in America
- PolSCA for the invitation
- **Thank you for your attention!**



TRANSMOBILITY



Kariera naukowa
w Polsce

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE



The power of “Polish women”

perspective

Italian post-
doc
working in
Poland

French
post-doc

“It is true that the Polish scientists are very feminine, not such in Occident: a lot of them dress as women, wear a make up - you know, such as in the office. But they are very man-acting. This is the women who decide here. And even, you know, the spouses of my colleagues - they call them all the time and manage them - and at 4.30PM they should go out from laboratory because the family obligation.”

“Here this is incredible - the women act as a men - they order all and the men here (in Poland) listen to them. This is impossible in my country such think even in Germany. Here even a PhD student - women has much more power than PhD men. OK, except perhaps lab leader. But in our lab the boss is frequently missing, so the girls decide for each detail - and about organization too, and about my own work too! This is incredible. The men do their work according to their prescriptions. And no one dare to show that he is in opposition! They are all together and they are very powerful. This is exceptional, nowhere I saw that.”

Qualitative Methods in...

Numbers



- 6 laboratories observed, 2003 start of research
- 3 deep ethnographies = start in a photosynthesis laboratory & 4 years in a molecular biology laboratory + 5 months in Harvard's laboratories
- 4 + 4 countries - France, Poland, Germany, USA, (Canada, GB, Czech Republic, Italy - punctually)
- almost 400 recorded semi-structured interviews = multipart interviews + 6 interviews with 'Nobelizable' researchers
- 115 interviews with various discipline specialists - the elite of Polish science (FNP)
- 2 collaborators (official)- young researchers (the sociologist and the biologist - since 2009)
- 4 languages - English, Polish, French, Russian
- 5 international conferences + 2 International Competitions - IGEM in MIT Cambridge (MA)
- 1 rejected interview
- 3 Research contracts = FNP (Polish Fulbright) + PMHE&S n.3670/B/H03/2009/37 + Kosciuszko Foundation Project
- 10 seminars for life-science scientists
- 5 month of participation to the struggle for the right of the PhD's students - Public Sociology
- A 17 and 11 year friendship with two privileged informers + friendship with other KI
- 6 observed weddings and several parties (life science)
- ∞ = "m/0" hours of informal interviews about the professional and private life of researchers focusing on the careers of specialists of biology, genetics, bio-chemistry, physics, chemistry, bio-physics, physico-bio-chemistry etc...

Participant Observation

- Myths

&

Reality
roles:

- friend
- negotiant
- “Umbrella”
- coffee maker
- journal selector
- informant
- consultant
- expert



Long-lasting process
ethnography = power of context