Imitating Capitalism and Democracy at a Distance

Identifying with Images in the Polish Transition

HARALD WYDRA

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Imitating Capitalism and Democracy at a Distance
Identifying with Images in the Polish Transition

HARALD WYDRA

BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)

Abstract

This paper examines the imitation of models in the Polish transition. The reconstruction of an economic and political order in 1989 has widely been interpreted as the imitation of capitalism and democracy. This paper conceives of imitation as aiming to overcome the distance to a desired model. By applying Bruno Latour's concept of *action at a distance*, it is argued that institutions and practices of capitalism and democracy were not the principal models of imitation in the Polish transition. Essentially, Poland wanted to shorten the distance to model-like 'islands' in the West and in its own past. Rather than to 'learn' capitalism or democracy as of 1989, Poland sought identification with the image of the West and with the image of the trade union Solidarity.

I. 1989: East Meets West

Taking the case of Poland, this paper is concerned with the imitation of distant models during the breaking point of 1989. Imitation has been widely recognised as one, perhaps the most important, mechanism in post-communist countries to reorganise the social and political order.[1] In this vein, the West has been widely considered to be the provider of models for the rebuilding of order in Eastern Europe. In an essay written in 1983, i.e. before the collapse of communism, Ferenc Feher defined two main constituents of the "West". First, he equalled the West to the emergence of three logics: capitalism, industrialisation, and democracy.[2] At the same time, he argued for the relative independence of these logics from each other.[3] Second, the "West" was distinguished by its universalizing project. By wanting the ´return to Europe´ in 1989 the East, in Feher´s terms, succumbed to the West's universalising project. It wanted to embrace the logics the Soviet-type system lacked[4], democracy and capitalism.

To conceive of the ´West´ in Feher´s lines seems to be adequate because of at least two major reasons. First, the strong desire of Eastern Europe to catch up with the West, to finally achieve the unification with the West in political and economic terms, is commonly acknowledged. In this vein, succumbing to the zeal for a ´jump to the market economy´, the warnings about the risks of the radical economic programme "...drowned in the general demand for the ´return to European civilisation´, that is to political democracy and the market."[5] Second, the principles of democracy and market economy

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[1] "Imitation is ... a powerful device of institutional innovation", see: Offe, Claus (1994), p.37. See also: Morawski, Witold (1994), p.300.

[2] Feher, Ferenc (1995), p.56.

[3] There were several historical types of democracy without capitalism as well as different types of capitalism that were not necessarily linked to a democratic system. Similarly, "several times in history, the capitalist organisation of economic life has appeared and reappeared unaccompanied by industrialization.", see: Feher, Ferenc (1995), p.56.

[4] The third logic, industrialisation, was not among the desired aims to be imitated in 1989, mainly because this logic was the only one of the three mentioned that was inherent in the Soviet-type system. see: Feher, Ferenc (1995), p.61. Desires before and after 1989 certainly were directed towards material goods, i.e. industrial products. Industrialisation, however, was associated in the East with heavy and military industries which did not satisfy the desires of Polish society. Most importantly, the Polish revolution of 1980 was accomplished against communism by the workers, the very core group of communist industrialisation.

[5] Winiecki, Jan (1992), p.813.

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are considered to be the enabling conditions for a normalisation or consolidation of post-communist countries.

Although the communist East lacked the systems and patterns of behaviour constitutive to the West, they were not completely absent. While market principles were ideologically precluded, centrally planned economies were relatively permissive. This is illustrated by the scope of the second economy, and by the rise of 'market socialism' in Hungary since the late 1960s and, to a minor extent, in Poland during the 1970s and 1980s. Similarly, over many decades Poland experienced spaces of freedom which developed into a 'quasi-pluralism' during the late 1980s. The worsening economic conditions in the late 1970s largely contributed to the emergence of Poland's first large-scale democratic movement, the Solidarity trade union in 1980. In its wake, Poland become enchanted with 'democracy'. Thesis 1 of the Solidarity programme demanded "the realisation of a self-managed and democratic reform at all levels of the administration, of a new socio-economic oder, that combines plan, self-management and market."[6]

Accordingly, the East had a taste of the constituents of the West. To put it inversely, market economy and democracy were not entirely unfamiliar to Eastern Europe. Given this ´unofficial´ encounter between the East and the constituents of the West, principal theoretical approaches to communism as theories of modernisation or convergence theory, operated with the assumption that communism could be overcome by a change or institutional reshuffling of the mix between government/state and market. According to Charles Lindblom, all politico-economic systems in the world can be characterised by different mixes of government and market.[7] In a similar vein, in much of the sovietological thinking the "only difference between capitalism and socialism boiled down to different proportions of the same components.[8] With hindsight, there is hardly any doubt that communism was "not a mixed economy but a fused economy."[9] According to this fusion principle, both politics and economics in communism lose the distinctive features characteristic of Western societies. "Everything is politicized, except politics, which is almost completely depoliticized..." and "under state socialism, everything focuses on the economy except economics, which is utterly de-economized, and as a result, is fully politicized."[10] This intertwining became

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[6] Büscher, Barbara (1982), p.300.
[7] See: Lindblom, Charles (1977).
[8] See: Kamiński, Bartłomiej (1991), p.6.
[9] Kamiński, Bartłomiej (1991), p.7.
[10] Kamiński, Bartłomiej (1991), p.4.

pathological in the Poland of the 1980s. This is why, "the *introduction of a market economy in the postsocialist countries is a 'political' project* which has prospect only if it rests on a strong democratic legitimation."(my italics)[11]

This apparent familiarity with the West before 1989 explains a great deal of why the transfer of democracy and capitalism was deemed to be relatively easy to achieve. Despite the unprecedented and experimental character of both the Round Table and the economic shock-therapy, "the catchphrase of the transition from communism was that 'there was nothing new to invent'".[12] Before 1989, the East trusted in the reliability of superior Western-based models of economic and political organisation. Accordingly, the economic policy aims of the 'shock-therapy' in 1989 and the first Solidarity-governments were couched in a language of 'tested models', 'market mechanisms' and 'property structures'.[13] As Marcin Świecicki, the First Minister for Economic Cooperation declared: "In reforming our economy we do not seek experiments. We do not want our economists to invent new systems, but to adopt solutions that work elsewhere. We simply want to construct a market economy like the West's."[14] Regardless of nuances or ideological preferences the revolutions were considered to be accomplished by envisaging objective and coherent systems of thought and practices. Despite the on-going debate between radicals, liberals, gradualists or social-democrats about the shaping of the new order[15], the catchwords of democratisation and marketisation seem to be of uncontestable ascendancy.

Evidently, elements of market economy and democracy were not entirely absent in Eastern Europe. The logics of capitalism and democracy rose as reflected in attempts of marketisation and democratisation in Poland of the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, under conditions of a communist system both projects were rather hazy, since did not rely on real knowledge but on suppositions."The entire history of liberalism in the post-communist countries is nothing else but a number of attempts to transplant solutions that *supposedly* had been 'tested' elsewhere to local soil."(my italics) [16] In turn, these Western logics escaped critical evaluation and a clear meaning. "Democracy was the primordial catchword written on the flags of the

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[11] Offe, Claus (1991), p.881.
[12] Kamiński, Bartłomiej (1994), p.1.
[13] See an overview in Przeworski, Adam (1993), pp.141ff.
[14] In: Libération, 14 February 1990, p.32, cited in Przeworski, Adam (1993), p.142.
[15] See for a recent overview: Crawford, Beverly (1995).
[16] Szacki, Jerzy (1995), p.210.

Solidarity movement and as such it constituted an unquestioned good." [17] "The point is precisely what is meant in operational terms by the only seemingly unequivocal concept of 'capitalism' or 'market economy' ...."[18]

This paper sets out to examine the quality of the distinctive logics of democracy and capitalism in the Polish context before 1989 and their translation in 1989. In Feher's view, all "three tendencies, or "dynamics", or "constituents" have distinct institutions and an institutionalised network which presupposes a *relatively independent learning process in each case*."[19] Despite an alleged familiarity before 1989, capitalist and democratic institutions had to be still introduced on a large scale. Thus, "the designing of new institutions occurs through the replication of old or spatially distant ones."[20] Market economy and democracy were distant from Poland, they had to be translated into this new environment and their application had to be learnt anew.

In fact, since 1989 a myriad of democratic and market institutions has been introduced. The distance between East and West has formally been shortened. However, democratic institutions in Poland are afflicted by volatile and unstable landscape of political parties. "There is a sense of 'old wine, new bottles' as one looks at the landscape of increasing alienation and disillusionment, voter apathy, and *distance* between the leaders and the led in post-communist Poland."(my italics) [21] Trust and confidence in democratic and market institutions is particularly low.[22] The driving force of the changes in 1989, economic and political liberalism, has widely failed in its missionary attempt both politically and economically.[23] Despite positive macroeconomic indicators, the big dilemma of the state's large-scale involvement in the economy has not been resolved. Since 1995, Polish politics and Polish society was anew highly polarised around the historical division lines between (post-)communists and (post-) Solidarity. Moroever, democratic consolidation is supposed to be very lenghty, while capitalism has been recently declared to be enemy number one to an open society in Eastern Europe.[24]

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[17] Kowalski, Sergiusz (1990), p.87.
[18] Offe, Claus (1991), p.880.
[19] Feher, Ferenc (1995), p.56.
[20] Offe, Claus (1996), p.212.
[21] Curry, Jane Leftwich/Fajfer, Laba (1996), p.245.
[22] See: Sztompka, Piotr (1996).
[23] See for the best account: Jerzy Szacki (1995).
[24] See: Soros, George. "Die kapitalistische Bedrohung", *Die ZEIT*, 17 January, pp.25-27.

On these grounds, the question arises whether the shortening of distance in 1989 was at all based on the adoption of democracy and capitalism. The sudden and unexpected encounter between Poland and the West in 1989 rather suggests that democracy and capitalism could not unfold as independent learning processes. As the magic term 'return to Europe' shows, 1989 was rather about a general identification than about complex learning-processes. This opens up for the conjecture that the models of imitation in the void of the communist collapse were different from the logics of democracy and capitalism. Subsequently, this paper develops a theoretical framework to examine the gaining of knowledge over a distance. In doing so, it elaborates upon the dominant models in the Polish transition that are pinpointed as the images of the "West" and as the image of the trade union Solidarity.

I. 1. Imitation as Transfer of Knowledge from 'Elsewhere'

Innovation research in organisations defined innovation as "an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other relevant unit of adoption...If the idea is perceived as new and different to the adopting unit, it is an innovation."[25] According to another definition, innovation "is the work of many people and is related to the adoption of some new invention or discovery on the level of behavior, of action. Innovation involves new behavior, new habits, new interlocking expectations..."[26] What matters in these approaches to learning and knowledge-transfer are the sources of knowledge and their points of destination. The separating space, the distance is not considered to be a major problem. Yet, spatially or temporally distant points, as the East and the West in our case, suggest a basic contextual difference between the original setting and the point of destination. The main concern should thus focus on the enabling conditions for the application of transferred knowledge in a new environment, i.e. the shortening of distance.

The East-West divide has been one of the major paradigms long before communism deepened the distance between the two.[27] Commonly, Eastern Europe was considered to be backward and thus in need of modernisation. The switch from backwardness to modernisation is commonly regarded as a transfer of knowledge that is beneficiary to the point of destination. To modernise means to create or to enhance knowledge. In these lines, after 1989 it was considered to be "...best for the responsible elites...in Eastern

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[25] Rogers, Everett/Rogers, Kim (1985), pp.87 ff.
[26] Deutsch, Karl (1985), p.19f.
[27] See for an overview: Schöpflin, George (1990).

Europe to ´shop around´ for models and implementation of modernization that seem optimal for particular institutions."[28] In a similar vein, the concept of lesson-drawing asserted: "The process of lesson-drawing starts with scanning programmes in effect elsewhere, and ends with the prospective evaluation of what would happen if a programme already in effect elsewhere were transferred here in future." Lesson is defined as "knowledge that is instructive, a conclusion about a subject drawn after the fact from observation or experiences. In its most primitive form, a lesson is the assertion of ´what everyone knows´."[29] One can sense an almost intrinsic linkage between ´what everyone knows´ and ´only game in town´[30] as a symbol for a consolidated democracy.

There is good reason to assume that in spite of great efforts the distance between Poland and the West has not been sufficiently reduced and ´elsewhere´ remains distant. ´Elsewhere´ means distant be it in geographical, temporal and also mental terms. The fascination with ´elsewhere´ in communist countries amounted to an obsessive mystification. It was given a literary monument by Milan Kundera's 'Life is Elsewhere'. First ´elsewhere´ was mystified because a better life was systematically withheld from people. Second, imitation provided for the identification with this distant ´elsewhere´ which was believed to be infinitely better than the bleak reality of communism. How could 'elsewhere' be pulled closer, how could distance be reduced?

I. 2. Pulling 'Elsewhere' Closer - Action at a Distance

In his pioneering work on imitation, the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde defined imitation as action at a distance. In his understanding, this mechanism enables imitations across geographical and temporal distances. "L´imitation.....s´exerce, non seulement de très loin, mais à de grands intervalles de temps. Elle établit un rapport fécond entre un inventeur et un copiste séparés par des milliers d´années, entre Lycurgue et un conventionnel de Paris, entre le peintre romain, qui a peint une fresque de Pompéi et le dessinateur moderne qui s´en inspire.[31] More recently, the French sociologist and philosopher of science Bruno Latour developed the concept of action at a distance by studying the knowledge transfer in the wake of eighteenth-century explorations of distant regions. Latour claimed

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[28] Tiryakian, Edward (1995), p.259.
[29] Rose, Richard (1991), p.7.
[30] See: Linz, Juan (1996).
[31] Tarde, Gabriel (1993/1895), p.37.

that knowledge cannot be defined without understanding what gaining knowledge means. In other words, knowledge is not something that could be described by itself or by opposition to ´ignorant´ or to ´belief´, but only by considering a whole cycle of accumulation.[32] At the centre of Latour´s interest stands the search for the mechanism that allows for the feeding of ´centres of calculation´ which pile up information in order to seize control of the world that is being discovered. Initially, there is the disorientation of navigators who arrive at an unknown island and lack any knowledge or familiarity with it. The repeated effort of going there would be in vain, if it was not backed up by the cumulation of reliable information and knowledge. Only the organised and channeled communication to centres of calculation enabled science to draw reliable knowledge from these explorations.

According to Latour the distance must be overcome, if the knowledge gained in the exploration of a distant island is to be successfully translated into the actual space or situation in which it is supposed to be used. He elaborates three key elements that reply to the question: "how to act at a distance on unfamiliar events, places and people? Answer: by somehow bringing home these events, places and people." This means first: ´Mobility´ is achieved by inventing means that render events, places and people mobile so that they can be brought back; Second: ´Stability´, to keep them stable so that they can be moved back and forth without....additional distortion, corruption or decay; Third, ´Combinability´, so that whatever stuff they are made of, they can be accumulated, aggregated, or shuffled like a pack of cards."[33] Distant places were thus mobilised by *mobiles* (which included knowledge, information, capital, maps, drawings, readings) and brought home to centres of calculation. The reliability of these mobiles made them stable and allowed for combinations with further knowledge that had been collected elsewhere (on different islands) and by different explorers. Consequently, action at a distance is made up by *stable* and *combinable mobiles*. In Latour´s terms, a successful action at a distance leads to the domination of the world. This becomes clear when one looks at how the cartographer came to dominate the world as a consequence of a cycle of accumulating the information provided.

In 1989, a vague familiarity and 'second-hand' knowledge about market economy and democracy as systems of rules and institutions should be replaced by the official adoption of these logics. Taking Latour´s framework,

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[32] Latour, Bruno (1987), p.220ff.
[33] Latour, Bruno (1987), p.223.

the following analysis probes which were the *stable and combinable mobiles* to be translated in the Polish case order to undo the existing distance. A translation in Latour's understanding is a situation or process "in which one actor or force is able to require or count upon a particular way of thinking and acting from another, hence assembling them together into a network not because of legal or institutional ties or dependencies, but because they have come to construe their problem in allied ways and their *fate as in some way bound up with one another*.(my italics)[34] In fact, the common fate of East and West has been a dominant and recurrent theme in Eastern Europe, as the omnipresence of imitation processes proves. "While Soviet societies compete, at the same time, they parasitically co-exist, especially in the technological sense, with the 'West' and develop certain functions in imitation of, and in response to, Western societies."[35] The collapse of communism thus was a consequence of this common fate, "precisely because its utopian project of catching up with the West had not been achieved".[36] In 1989, this common fate which bound up East and West became overwhelming. Unsettled by recurrent crises, Poland had to "turn towards the West, because otherwise a complete catastrophe menaced."[37] The jump to the market economy was induced by the ´economic spirit´ that wanted the ´return to Europe´.[38] Fundamentally, in 1989 Poland wanted to bring something back from which it had been distanced for a long time.

I. 3. The Isolated Islands of the East

It might be objected: The jump from eighteenth century explorations to recent East European transformations which implicate the reconstruction of complex institutions and a whole social order is too audacious. In fact, such an analogy dares to juxtapose the gaining of knowledge in a structurally simple process with a complex relations in a whole society. Yet, the crucial conditions, namely distance and lack of knowledge are met in the void of the communist collapse. What is more, "the post-communist countries were hardly on the verge of the return to Western liberal democracy, from which they were hopelessly far removed not only under the rule of communism but also earlier."[39] Distance from Western modernity ruled Eastern European

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[34] See: Latour, Bruno (1987), p.10.
[35] Feher, Ferenc (1995), p.57.
[36] Brus, Włodzimierz/Laski, Kazimierz (1989), p.33.
[37] Kamiński, Antoni, Strzałkowski, Piotr (1994), p.309.
[38] Sachs, Jeffrey (1994), p.5.
[39] Szacki, Jerzy (1995), p.208.

reality, since "for the last several decades these countries have lived in rather deep isolation, which without completely destroying the feeling of ties with the West nevertheless did rupture many real ties."[40] In turn, the West instinctively fears the East, a consequence of misunderstandings and lack of knowledge which precedes the World War and the imposition of Soviet Communism, as Norman Davies argued. Evoking the Czech crisis in 1938, the author of the most authoritative book on Polish history related the attitude of the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain who referred to Czechoslovakia, Poland's neighbour, as a "distant country about which we know nothing". As Davies stressed, the word "distant" signified not a geographical but an emotional distance.[41]

Distance from the West ruled also Poland's economy.[42] A comparison between Poland's international position in the inter-war period and in 1989 is revealing. Polish National Income per capita in 1938 was approximately seven times lower than in the US, six times lower than in Great Britain, five times lower than in Germany, about 50% lower than in Italy and Finland, and oscillated around the value of Spanish national income. It was somewhat higher than that of Portugal and Greece. Despite the 'socialist' progress under communism a juxtaposition with Poland's economic situation in 1989 shows a considerably larger distance between Poland and the West. In terms of Gross National product per capita, Poland had further fallen behind the richest countries (the GNP in the US was 12 times, in Germany 11 times and in France 10 times higher). Most tangible, however, was the distance between the Polish and other formerly peripherical economies. While Finland, Spain and Italy had nearly been at the Polish level in 1938, in 1989 GNP in Finland was 12 times higher, in Italy 8 times, in Spain 5 times, in Greece 3 times, and in Portugal 2,5 times higher than in Poland. The economic depression played an important role in advocating radical economic solutions to replace the decayed centrally planned economy. In this vein, a common claim held that neo-liberal ideology coined the reasoning of the Solidarity trade union.[43]

A closer look allows to detect that, on the contrary, the lack of concepts and strategies in Solidarity at the end of the 1980s was blatant. Already in 1980 and 1981 Solidarity was prevented from accumulation of knowledge and of social learning by its proper mentality. "The inability to generalize the

[40] Szacki, Jerzy (1995), p.44.
[41] Davies, Norman on the occasion of a lecture entitled "Eastern Europe: myth or reality", held in July 1995 in Warsaw. see: *Rzeczpospolita* 3 July 1995.
[42] See the data in Landau, Zbigniew/Roszkowski, Wojciech (1995), pp.287-289.
[43] Adam, Jan (1993), p.189.

movement´s experience and to put it into an abstract formula created a barrier to the accumulation of knowledge and social learning in Solidarity. In such a situation the personal experience of the movement´s leaders has a double value; the fact that the knowledge gained by the movement´s activists cannot be transferred is a useful rationalization and a half-conscious self-justification for leaders who want to retain their positions as long as possible."[44]

While this inability was conspicuous before the Round Table, it became acute after Solidarity´s triumph in the June-elections of 1989. The very same day Jacek Kuroń declared on TV why Solidarity could not possibly take over power: "We were unprepared, without leadership, without any concept."[45] Similarly, the ascendancy of a well-established ´neo-liberal ideology´ did not stretch over more than very few specialists. In an evaluation of the situation in June 1989, that is right between the closure of the Round Table and the instauration of the Mazowiecki-government, the reality of diffusion of supposed models appeared to be rather imaginary: "...the neo-liberals are very active and popular in Poland. They intend to abolish socialism and take recourse to capitalism in order to cope with the crisis. They come up with solutions à la Friedman and with the example of Chile. One has to take stock of the fact that no analysis of what really happened in Chile has been published either in the press of the liberals, of Solidarity or in the official press."[46] Furthermore, the meaning of economic liberalism before and after 1989 was completely blurred, since its propagation was ruled by ignorance. Rather, naive beliefs in profits without losses and in immediate results was characteristic for its protagonists.[47] One can sense their hazy conception of market economy in the degree of suspicion it evoked among Solidarity-elites: "The project of shock-therapy, introduced half a year later by the first Solidarity-government, still at the outset of 1989 was ideologically and politically unacceptable for usual trade unionists, but also for their leaders."[48]

The foregoing picture affirms: Action (in terms of policies or institution-building) must be brought (back) in by relying on geographically and mentally (historically) distant reference-points. The catchword of the Polish 'revolution from above' in fact underlines the crucial importance of elites in 1989. Quite a similar idea to that of elites as explorers is Arnold Toynbee´s concept of the intelligentsia as liaison-officers between civilisations, recently introduced by

[44] Staniszkis, Jadwiga (1984), p.137.
[45] Kuroń, Jacek in an interview in *Życie Gospodarcze* 23/1991, p.4.
[46] Warszawski, David (1989), p.8.
[47] See: Szacki, Jerzy (1994), p.211.
[48] Skórzyński, Jan (1995), p.223.

Zygmunt Bauman[49] into the discussion on Eastern Europe. Yet, in the Central European context even these elites have their problems in surmounting the existing distance: "...in most countries, practically all modern specialization came into being during the communist rule and the specialists have no collective, institutionalised memory of professional life under any other conditions."[50] Lacking experience in virtually all respects, the Solidarity elites in 1989 were comparable to explorers, just landed or being thrown on the unknown and alien territory of democratisation and marketisation, ignorant of its measures, its dangers, and the tasks to tackle. Contrary to common belief for example, Leszek Balcerowicz the main architect of the shock-therapy, did not seek the mandate so as to apply 'neo-liberal ideology' to Polish economy. After an exhaustive search for candidates he had to be persuaded painstakingly to assume the portfolio of the Minister of Finance.[51] In addition, his own account cast doubts about the conditions for policy-learning and prospective evaluation: "...I did not have - and nobody had - experience in guiding a post-socialist economy in the period of transformation."[52]

In summer 1989, the journalist David Warszawski stated: "For the time being, everybody in Poland is alone on earth, nobody has seen, has read nothing. We start from scratch."[53] Given the ascendancy of distance, Poland under communism itself had become an "island" where the "transmission of ideas had been completely blocked" and many things had to be (re-) invented anew.[54] Such an isolation in terms of knowledge resembles to what Karl Mannheim called ´docility´ in aristocratic-authoritarian regimes and ´self-neutralization´ in democracies. "The former consists in the mass of people being prevented from learning, from acquiring new knowledge." In the latter, "....we often observe failure to think and learn due to the fact that the people let some organization or machinery do their thinking for them."[55] While adequate for democracies, this assertion seems to fit even better when it is inserted into the context of the so-called Peoples´ Democracies with the declared omniscient ruling party machinery.

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[49] Bauman, Zygmunt (1993)
[50] Bauman, Zygmunt (1989), p.85.
[51] See the account in Kuczyński, Waldemar (1992), p.55.
[52] Balcerowicz, Leszek (1995), p.204.
[53] Warszawski, David (1989), p.9.
[54] See: Warszawski, David (1989), p.9.
[55] Mannheim, Karl (1992), p.178.

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I. 4. Shortening the Distance - the ´Islands´ in the West and in the Past

The breaking point of 1989 implied to shorten the distances with models existing elsewhere. In this vein, since the 1980s a couple of foreign models were addressed in political and economic discourse.[56] The Spanish model should be imitated to leave real socialism in an ordered and peaceful way. Finland was often referred to as a possible solution that would give Poland a limited sovereignty and certain independence from the Soviet Union. Already in 1980, Lech Wałçsa equated Poland to a 'second Japan'. This model was associated with quick modern industrialisation and economic growth, but also stressed the role of the state in steering and shaping the economy. The reference to the Swedish or Scandinavian model, rather popular around 1989, stressed the aspects of state intervention in markets and social welfare.[57] While the aforementioned models belonged to the 1980s, a model for Poland in the 1990s could be Turkey. Its model-function is buttressed by a couple of aspects achieved by Turked. First, there is its situation at the crossing between East and West, like Poland. Second, it stresses political stability and NATO-membership. Third, despite deep religious traditions Turkey has become a secular state.

As this overview suggests, the imitating revolutions in Eastern Europe - with Poland as the trailblazer, addressed a virtually infinite number of models. "Although there are many submodels within Western Europe, with distinct versions of the modern welfare state, the Western European economies share a common core of capitalist institutions. It is that common core that should be the aim of the Eastern European reforms. The finer points of choosing between different submodels -the Scandinavian social welfare state, Thatcherism, the German social market - can be put off until later, once the core institutions are firmly in place."[58] The common denominator, however, was the identity with the general cultural, economic, and political model. "Poland wants to be like the states of the European Community."[59]

Yet, imitation over a distance in the Polish context was not limited to geographical or mental distance. It also included the "recapturing of the past". Accordingly, also the past is full of ´islands´, prone to be addressed by action at a distance. Their reality is illustrated by the blurs and distortions of

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[56] A concise overview can be found in Kozłowski, Paweł (1995), pp.125-134.
[57] See: Kowalik, Tadeusz (1993).
[58] Sachs, Jeffrey (1994), p.5.
[59] Sachs, Jeffrey (1994), p.5.

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identities that were constructed after the Second World War on both sides of the iron curtain, though differently for either of them. In Eastern Europe, nothing could "make burst the past that had been frozen into ice" by the Soviet-driven mythologisation of the liberation from Nazi-Germany by the Soviets in the name of equality, fraternity and liberty.[60] In relation to the post-war order of 1945, the reign of a distant past was evident: "...the 1945 settlement....was a colossal feat of political engineering. However, in almost every East European country, it is interpreted as the culmination of a natural historical process, and is constantly rationalized by reference to distant historical events, real or imagined."[61] These various distant reference-points cause that "for East Europeans the past is not simply a different country, but a whole archipel of vulnerable historical territories that must be protected from the attacks and distortions by the inhabitants of the neighbouring island of memory."[62] Accordingly, action at a distance also points to different islands in the past. Contrary to Western Europe, the Eastern part of Europe owns too many pasts, among which Judt enumerates the following reference-points: 1918-1921, 1938, 1939, 1941, 1944, 1945-1948, 1956, 1968 and 1989.

It is striking that Tony Judt omitted the emergence of the Solidarity trade union in 1980 as perhaps the most incisive crisis both for an Eastern European society and for a communist regime. It was in Poland of this epoch where hope soared the highest and where, 16 months later, the despair was deepest. Most importantly, it is in this 'island of the past', where the germs of democratisation in the Polish case are located. Although they became largely obsolete in 1989, there were crucial links between Solidarity in 1981 and Solidarity in 1988/89. One could refer to this linkage as action at a temporal distance.

This linkage over a temporal distance should be illustrated by one example. A comparison of data as regards the two National Congresses of Solidarity in 1981 and in 1990, gives the following results. Whereas the average age of delegates was 36 years in 1981, it amounted to 42 in 1990.[63] Only 36 of the 487 delegates to the Congress of April 1990 had participated in 1981. More important is the proportion concerning the members of the National Commission (*Komisja Krajowa*), the highest directive board of the

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[60] Judt, Tony (1993), p.103
[61] Davies, Norman (1981), p.517.
[62] Judt, Tony (1993), p.103.
[63] *Tygodnik Solidarność*, 22 April 1990, p.24 and *Congress Post*, Gdansk 6 September 1981, cited after: Strobel, Günther. "NSZZ Solidarnosc", in Bingen, Dieter (ed.). 1985. Polen *1980-84. Dauerkrise oder Stabilisierung ?*, p.64.

Solidarity trade union, elected in September 1981. Out of the 107 members - made up of 69 elected by the National Congress, and the chairmen of 38 regional guiding boards, only 20 came as delegates to the Congress in April 1990.[64] Hence, 20 of the 36 delegates who participated in both Congresses were members of the National Commission. The provided data indicate two apparently opposite developments. Taking its leading circles, at the end of the 1980s Solidarity was an aging organisation. On the one hand, the continuity of the National Commission between 1981 and 1990 was relatively low which indicates a high loss of union leaders during the underground. On the other hand, those who remained in 1990, belonged mainly to the National Commission. Accordingly, there was a generational distance with a relatively high stability of a core of leading figures. It is in line with Gabriel Tarde´s concept of imitation as action at a distance: *L´imitation est une génération à distance.*[65] The top-ranks of Solidarity in 1988/89 were essentially the same as in 1980/81, whereas the active basis at the shop-floor level was made up by the new generation. Essentially, there were relatively few central individual figures to serve as a linkage between the Solidarity I and Solidarity II.[66]

Drawing on the foregoing, a fourth aspect of distance comes to the fore. In slogans like ´revolution from above´ or ´transformation as an elite-bargain´ the idea of liaison-officers touches upon the "...enormous distance between elites and publics, politics and economics, on the one hand, and the social base, on the other ..."[67] Subsequently, the quality of translatable mobiles should be tested also for the congruity between the two distant spheres of acting elites and passive society.

Summing up, one can safely argue that 1989 can be analysed in the light of a double impact of the island-effect. On the one hand, in 1989 Poland was equivalent to an isolated island that lacked expert knowledge and experience with the Western logics of democracy and capitalism. All of a sudden, this island opened up in 1989 and had to be fed with all the things that had been witheld from it earlier, say knowledge, ideas, information. On the other hand,

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[64] "Co się stało z naszą klasą?" (What happened to our class?"), *Tygodnik Gdański*, 22 April 1990, pp. 25-27.

[65] Tarde, Gabriel (1993), p.37.

[66] Solidarity I refers to the whole of experiences and associates related to the first period of Solidarity in 1980 and 1981, while Solidarity II refers to the period of the late 1980s when Solidarity emerged from the underground and took up first opposition and then government-activities.

[67] Staniszkis, Jadwiga (1991), p.184.

knowledge was supposed to be gathered, to be accumulated by drawing it from various distant islands in order to bring it to the own country. Having located the wider area of islands, where knowledge was supposed to be drawn from, we can set out to examine the basis for imitation, namely the providing islands of the West and of the Solidarity-past. In the following section the concept of action at a distance will be applied to the Polish situation in 1989. By this, it will refer both to the context of the Round Table in early 1989 and to the adoption of the economic shock-therapy by the first Solidarity-government in late 1989.

II. Adopting Distant Mobiles: 'Market' and 'Trade Union'
II. 1. Market socialism and Democratisation before 1989

Before applying Latour´s concept of *stable and combinable mobiles* to the Polish situation in 1989, the 'career' of capitalism and democracy in the Polish context of the 1970s and 1980s should be briefly reviewed. At the latest since the early 1970s, the attraction of the Western world could be sensed in a twofold way. First, there was Edward Gierek´s bid for building a "second Poland" in the early 1970s. Gierek's economic policy opened up Poland towards the West in order to profit from the blessings of the market by means of a credits-financed consumerist boom. The drive towards an other, say better, organisation of the economy was also urged by the decay of the Polish economy.[68] Second, after the proclamation of martial law in 1981 and under conditions of deep economic crisis, the Jaruzelski-regime opted for an economic reform that aimed at somehow restoring its damaged political legitimacy. In a two stages-reform (the first part in 1982, the second in 1987) it was envisaged to regulate a competitive market by central plan. It is important to consider that "the overall objective of the second stage reform was the introduction of a viable combination of planning and effective ´self-regulatory market mechanism...´"[69] On the whole, the purpose of ´market´ reforms in the understanding of the communist regime lay in the corrective capacity the ´market´ could have on the havoc caused by a centrally planned economy. A communist state aims to control directly all economic activities, the process of economic growth, and the allocation of assets. Its political aspiration is to extend its rule over all domains of public life and to suppress group and individual interests. In turn, "...fusion determines the political and

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[68] See:Landau, Zbigniew/Roszkowski, Wojciech (1995), p.262.
[69] Kamiński, Bartłomiej (1991), p.58.

economic logic of state socialism." [70] Not by chance, the construction of Polish market socialism in the late 1980s was termed ´political capitalism´.[71] This concept hinted at the guiding role of the Nomenklatura in the fledgling process of privatisation at the end of the 1980s. Intertwining the processes of democratisation and marketisation, this communist-driven opening up was rightly called a "technique of *Westernisation* in Eastern Europe".(my italics)[72]

Summing up Kamiński's points, it can be argued that the distance from market is constitutive to the existence of a communist system. In fact, several studies of state socialist economies unanimously stressed the fundamental ´otherness´ of market economies to centrally planned economies.[73] Similarly, it was shown that during the 1980s the introduction of the ´market´ was desired by a rising number of Polish people.[74] In addition, under conditions of economic crisis the traditionally tight links of Poles with their Western neighbours in terms of temporary work-activities in Western countries translated into a high rate of willingness to take up a job in the West.[75] At the end of the 1980s, it was all about pulling closer the distinct other: the market.

Like market principles, democratic institutions were distant from the communist system and thus their potential introduction was very much advocated. Howevers, the notions ´democracy´ and ´democratic´ were abused of in the sense "that they become synonomous with all which is good and absent from the world governed by the system. Under conditions of lack of democracy every thing or value that would have been perceived as a desired element of social life would be fitted in the meaning of democracy. As a slogan of political emancipation the term democracy becomes too broad, absorbing the whole of collective aspiration and desire. The differentiation of conscious and justified usages of the term from a ritualistic and masked usages can thus be sometimes made difficult."[76]

This notwithstanding, for quite a few advocates of democratic reconstruction the underground-Solidarity[77] appeared to be sufficiently

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[70] Kamiński, Bartłomiej (1991), p.24.

[71] Staniszkis, Jadwiga (1991).

[72] Staniszkis, Jadwiga (1991), p.128.

[73] Next to Kamiński´s study, see: Dembinski, Paweł (1991) and Kornai, Janos (1992).

[74] See the studies by Witold Morawski (1994), Aleksander Borkowski (1994) and Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (1990, 1994).

[75] Such a desire was expressed by nearly sixty percent of the inquired population, see: Mason, David/Nelson, Daniel/Szlarski, Bogdan (1991), p.216.

[76] Kowalski, Sergiusz (1990), p.88.

[77] This term refers to Solidarity after its crushing in December 1981.

prepared and ideologically equipped to tackle the task of democratisation. Both scholars and activists attributed to the underground-Solidarity a stability in terms of strategy and staff. Thus, it was assumed that Solidarity "by 1986 ...was almost entirely a movement for systemic reform..."[78] Solidarity was also characterised as an "...elite that cohered, and even in its current divided and divisive state offers Poland something more important than either marketization or civil society: an ´established´ leadership."[79] In a summary of the underground-period Janusz Pałubicki, the Solidarity-chairman in Poznań, held that Solidarity union leaders had been sufficiently retrained before 1989 in order to tackle the tasks that they were expected to fulfill.[80]

The presumed prepardness of the underground-Solidarity as an organisation for democratisation was challenged by the assessment of the Paris-based periodical of the opposition "Kultura" that drew a bleak picture: "Without organisational projects, without a programme that could replace the nostalgic reclamation of the Gdansk-accords, the national executive board of Solidarity in its current shape has become a rudimentary remainder from another epoch, incapable of elaborating a policy that would be adequate to the presence and directed towards the future."[81] In 1988, Solidarity was caught off-hand by the communist party´s sudden readiness to negotiate. "Despite the many years they had passed dreaming of this chance, the opposition-leaders were not - either as regards expert knowledge or psychologically - at all ready to tackle this game."[82] Before the communists signalled their willingness to sit at the Round Table, the programmatic guidelines of the underground period (the ´Long March´ and the general strike) were superseded. The first document since 1981, by which Solidarity in August 1988 addressed the communist regime spoke about Solidarity´s support for economic reforms in exchange for the legalisation of Solidarity. The draft declaration on behalf of the inaugural agreement with the regime still contained the proposal of "establishing relations towards approaching elections on the basis of a constructive relationship of broad societal support, including Solidarity." During the three following days, however, Solidarity´s declarations were considerably softened. The final version, apart from omitting to mention the ´anti-crisis pact´ just limited itself to the formula of a

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[78] Ost, David (1990), p.25.
[79] Jowitt, Ken (1992), p.295.
[80] Pałubicki, Janusz. "Długi Marsz" (Long March), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 April 1990.
[81] In Kultura, No.6, 1988, p.40 cited in Skórzyński, Jan (1995), p.68.
[82] Skórzyński, Jan (1995), p.91.

"cooperation for the democratic concern." As Skórzynski rightly stated, this could mean everything and nothing.[83]

Contrary to the expectations, the tasks and strategies of Solidarity did not mature. As illustrated in inquiries among the delegates to the Second National Congress of Solidarity in April 1990 the first priority was to "realise democracy, because there is too little", while the second priority was "to combat communism, because there is too much."[84] Although Solidarity envisaged objectives like "freedom", an "anti-crisis pact" (later on: free elections), these objectives were subordinated to the overarching desire to resuscitate Solidarity as a trade union.

II. 2. The Mobile 'Market'

The absence of markets and the common belief of communists and Solidarity-opposition in the remedying effect of the ´market´ on the economic crisis can be expressed in the frame of action at a distance: ´market´ was the mobile, in Latour´s terms, to be pulled closer from a distance. 'Market' supposedly combined the thrust towards the archipel of islands, denoted the West, without divisions into independent logics claimed by Feher. As a reviewer of Paul Berman's 'A Tale of Two Utopias' put it, "East Central Europe's love affair with 'the market' was no doubt partly a simple matter of deprived people hankering for a properity they had glimpsed at a distance."[85]

'Market' was mobilised so as to resolve or at least to mitigate the economic crisis. Following Latour's thread of logic, the question arises: How stable was this mobile? To what extent the mobile 'market' could be adopted without, to use Latour's terms, distortions, corruption or decay? The first thing to puzzle us in this respect is the incoherence of the statements in public opinion polls before and after 1989. While market-type solutions (the introduction of private property, wage-differentiation, privatisation of state enterprises, dismissal of workers) encountered increasing support among the polled population, a high proportion of Polish society declared to stick to the achievements of state socialism, highlighting employment security, state price controls and social services.[86] In other words, the desire towards ´market´ rose in Polish society as highly combined with crucial characteristics of a communist economy. The discrepancy or incoherence as to the expectations

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[83] Skórzyński, Jan (1995), pp.87-88.
[84] See: Kuczyński, Pawel/Nowotny, Sławomir (1994), p.249.
[85] Ryan, Alan. *The New York Review of Books*, Vol.43, No.16, October 17, 1996, p.39.
[86] See the studies of Borkowski, Aleksander (1994) and Morawski, Witold (1994).

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about 'market economy' points to the existence of a 'myth of the market' in the Poland of the 1980s.[87]

In this context, there is a striking similarity between the 'myth of economic reform', so fundamental to the communist attempts of redressing the economic crisis, and the 'myth of the market'. 'Market' as the central mobile embraced a whole range of conceptions associated with this term. The *mobile* 'market' was mainly based on myths and, therefore, not stable. This instability is confirmed by its high combinability. In the pre-1989 context, 'market' could amount to a garbage can. Adam Michnik reflected upon the blur of meanings: "We agree that a market is necessary, but what kind of market? A ruthless market according to Milton Friedman and the Chicago boys, or, perhaps a market with a human face that will not, in its ideological consequences, be an apology for egotism, brutality and the Roman maxim *Homo homini lupus*? A market in which mercy rather than ruthlessness will pay, because only this kind of market will allow the redistribution of goods needed to save our country from violent upheavals of social discontent?"[88] A remarkable study of the translatability of five key words (among which *market*-ing) in the business and management vocabulary from English into Polish language called attention to the deep differences between the meanings, current usages and associates key terms like 'market' could imply. Thus, "....the transition to a market economy is less a matter of knowledge transfer, but more one of meaning transfer, and that the western side has grossly underestimated the difficulties involved."[89]

In spite of, or rather, because of its unclear meaning, 'market' was the most articulate and perhaps most definite "other" to be detected in pre-1989 Poland. 'Market' had been, above all, distant from communist societies. It was there - at a distance or elsewhere - from where it should be pulled closer. As argued above, the proclaimed belief in the otherness of market and in its superiority made up for the stability of the *mobile* 'market'. All the efforts of communist power and of oppositional elites aspired to bring in any form of 'market'. Of course, different ideological camps pursued different aims. For such an assumption speaks also the set-up of the anti-crisis pact of 1987. Taking the failed referendum on the economic reform in 1987 as a starting point, the Solidarity opposition saw a potential for negotiations only

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[87] See: Kolarska-Bobińska, Lena (1990), p.161.
[88] Cited in Szacki, Jerzy (1995), p.140, footnote 74.
[89] Jankowicz, A.D. (1994), p.503.

in the economic field.[90] By contrast, moves towards democratic liberalisation, i.e. political agreements were excluded until the very eve of the Round Table negotiations. After the end of the Round Table it was widely taken as a surprise that substantial progress - against the expectations - had been achieved in democratic institution-building and not in economic matters.[91]

The meaning of market was double-edged and so were the expectations associated with it. Under ´market socialism´, it was hoped to shift some of the caring responsibilities of the state on the market.[92] In communist reasoning, the mobilisation of market-principles was directed to remedy the crisis of communism. On the other hand, for non-communist economic reformers the introduction of the market aimed at dismantling state socialism as deeply and as quickly as possible. This tendency reached its peak in the adoption of the economic shock-therapy in late 1989, most notably reflected in the zeal for profound stabilisation, liberalisation and broad-scale privatisation. Given the unstable meaning and the almost infinite combinability of 'market' as a concept, it is no surprise that between the plan of reform, proposed by the last communist prime minister Rakowski and the Balcerowicz plan, "...there was little difference the eye of an economist could spot."[93] Be it for the purpose of ´market socialism´, for ´political capitalism´, or for the ´shock-therapy´, it was always ´market´ that was mobilised. While material goods, as well as privatisation, freedom and economic reform played an important role, all these dynamics hinged on the magic attraction exerted by ´market´. 'Market' was used as a panacea by all political currents, while its meaning was, to speak in Latour's terms, arbitrarily "shuffled like a pack of cards".

II. 3. The Mobile 'Trade Union'

The establishment of an independent, self-governing trade union in 1980 in connection with the programmatic key-point of a self-governing republic amounted to the ´identity-card´ of Solidarity in 1980/81. Consequently, in 1989 "only the recognition of Solidarity´s right to legal existence would mean to cancel the military dictatorship and to open up a political path to democratic transformation."[94] While the political ´strategy´ of the Solidarity-opposition was shaping "according to on-going events...the stable point in

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[90] See: Skórzyński, Jan (1995), p.202.
[91] See: Skórzyński, Jan (1995), p.203.
[92] Bauman, Zygmunt (1994), pp.20/21.
[93] Bauman, Zygmunt (1993), p.142.
[94] Michnik, Adam (1995), pp. 162/163.

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it....was the postulate of the relegalisation of the union."[95] This was the only clearly formulated and steadfastily pursued demand for the negotiations at the Round Table. In terms of action at a distance, 'trade union' was the *mobile* by which Solidarity´s claims for democratisation could become viable and authoritative.

To bring the trade union back in constituted the central *mobile*, the central reference-point for the Solidarity-explorers in the Round Table negotiations. The particular impact of imitation in the process of bringing the trade union back is mirrored in a symbolical event of mediating a conflict. During the May strikes in 1988 the Catholic Church with the consent of the communists induced the mediation of the conflict. To this purpose, three mediatiors were chosen: Andrzej Stelmachowski, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and Andrzej Wielowieyski. These three intellectuals were those who mediated between the fledgling Solidarity and the regime in August 1980. One can perceive the zeal to turn back time and to transplant a distant event into the present. Calling it an anachronism, Skórzynski assessed that "it essentially was ə step backwards, a significant setback."[96]

If a *mobile* is assumed to be stable, to follow Latour's point, the meaning associated with it has to be shared by its advocates in order to avoid distortions. The question then is: Who and what sustained the *mobile* 'trade union'? It is well known that the aim of relegalising Solidarity at the end of the 1980s was not only pursued by the Solidarity elites, as implied in the catchword of "revolution from above". Quite the contrary, it was the spontaneous strike waves of young workers in May and August 1988 that prepared Solidarity´s reemergence from the underground. These strikes were staged by young union leaders of the new generation whose first concern was expressed in the demands of Inter-enterprise strike committees: trade union pluralism and the legalisation of Solidarity.[97] Therefore, the absolute preference for the relegalisation of Solidarity as a trade union also reflected the mood at the broad shop-floor level. Yet, either of the two - the striking new generation and the old generation assembled in the civic committee at Lech Wałçsa[98] - conceived of trade union in a different way. This generation at a distance, to use Gabriel Tarde's term, shared the *mobile* with the new generation. However, between the two generations another distance was

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[95] Skórzyński, Jan (1995), p.141.
[96] Skórzyński, Jan (1995), p.68.
[97] Holzer, Jerzy/Leski, Krzysztof (1990), p.154.
[98] This civic committee was founded in May 1987.

shaping up. For the new generation, trade union meant, most generally, the defense of workers´ interests in enterprises and the workplace. The trade unionist tendency grew stronger, while the majority of workers did not intend to sacrifice their interests and wage demands in the name of an illusory political victory.[99] By contrast, for the Solidarity elites around Lech Wałęsa the revival of the trade union was synonymous to reclaiming its role as the only opposition force in Poland.

Common to both currents was the belief in the power of the ´general strike´, whose potential had been the most powerful instrument of Solidarity I. At the end of the 1980s, however, this instrument had completely vanished.[100] Lech Wałęsa´s speech before the Second National Congress of Solidarity in April 1990 was revealing in this respect. Voicing harsh criticism against the deviating ´trade-unionist´ trade union Solidarity 80, he scorned the strictly trade-unionist model of a trade union -espoused by Solidarity 80 - because in that case "we must proclaim the general strike immediately."[101] What is more, Solidarity´s relegalisation after the Round Table was achieved in exchange for the recognition of the Law on Trade Unions of 1982. This law virtually made strike activity impossible. A further incoherence was the ´protective umbrella´, by which the first Solidarity government should be given peace on the trade union front. It was proposed by Lech Wałęsa in autumn 1989 and meant suspending Solidarity´s strike-action and trade union demands as much as possible in order to support the rigid economic programme introduced by the Mazowiecki-government. As such, it implied an indirect negation of, and opposition to the model of a trade union. In addition, the actual role of Solidarity as a trade union in enterprises, as viewed by workers, gives account of the fragile stability of this mobile. Furthermore, survey data from 1991 and 1993 support the weakness of trade unions.[102]

After its relegalisation in April 1989 and its victory in the June elections in June 1989, Solidarity formed a parliamentary representation and came into power in autumn 1989. All of a sudden trade-unionist tasks had to be combined with parliamentary work and, some months later, with governmental responsibility. How was the *mobile* 'trade union' combined in view of these different tasks? Although Solidarity did not renounce on its organisational core of a trade union, it has lingered so far over a definition of

[99] Kuczyński, Paweł/Nowotny, Sławomir (1994), pp.249/50.

[100] See in particular: Smolar, Aleksander (1989), pp.16-18.

[101] See: Klimczak, Edward. "Koniec Etosu", in Pogląd, May 1990. II National Congress of NSZZ Solidarity, p.8.

[102] See Gąciarz, Barbara (1994), p.272.

its identity. The Second National Congress in April 1990 failed in this respect, when it declared Solidarity "both a trade union and a social movement" which wants to participate "in the transformation of political and economic order." It explicitly rejected the foundation of a political party, but did not exclude the "creation of an own trade-unionist representation in parliament and in the organs of territorial self-administration."[103] In the meantime, Solidarity has spawned more than a dozen political parties or movements. This notwithstanding, the union leadership pretended to stick to an outstanding political role. Most clamorously it did so in spring 1993, when the parliamentary group of the Solidarity union initiated a successful vote of non-confidence against the last Solidarity-government of the then prime minister Hanna Suchocka. The drop-out of conservative parties from the Sejm after the elections of September 1993 has indeed strengthened Solidarity´s role as a political force. The presidential elections of October 1995 showed a revival of the spirit of Solidarity in Polish society. In its wake, the VII National Congress in June 1996 decided that "the trade union participates in the forthcoming elections to the Sejm and the Senate in the frame of the ´Election Action Solidarity´ *(Akcja Wyborcza Solidarności)*[104]. Thus, seven years after 1989, the Solidarity trade union has become the hinge of a broad coalition of centre-right parties. Since 1996, opinion polls have ranked the 'Solidarity-coalition' - although it is not a political party- very high in preferences with regard to potential elections to the *Sejm*.[105]

During the underground period, Solidarity was deprived of its central trade union attributes. In David Ost´s words: "And so, Solidarity´s dirty little secret: it was not a union at all, it was a myth."[106] Starting from its very relegalisation up to the present day, Solidarity has claimed to be a trade union in defense of workers´ interests. Disentangling imitation by the concept of action at a distance suggests that Solidarity has never ceased to strive for the catch-all aspirations that were associated with the meaning of the Solidarity

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[103] See the programme passed by the II National Congress of 25 April 1990, point I. 4.

[104] *Rzeczpospolita*, 1 July 1996, p.3. This coalition embraces around 25 smaller and bigger political parties of a conservative-nationalist-catholic kind, amongst which there is the KPN (Confederation for an Independent Poland) and ZchN (Christian-National Alliance).

[105] At the outset of 1996 the governing SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) still enjoyed a considerably higher support in the polls (29-34%) while Solidarity oscillated around 17%, see: *Rzeczpospolita*, 1 April 1996. Since then, Solidarity's Electoral Action (AWS) has caught up (between November 1996 and January 1997: SLD: 28-29%, AWS 27-29%, see: *Rzeczpospolita*, 24 January 1997.

[106] Ost, David (1990), p.208.

trade union in 1981. In the mid-1990s, its crucial role in Polish politics is rather strenghtened by its hazy and undefined competences and ambitions.

So far, one can argue that the unexperienced explorers of democratisation and marketisation in Poland could not learn and implement democracy and capitalism separately. Rather, they operationalised the *mobiles* ´trade union´ and ´market´ as principal objects of imitation. Likewise, it has been shown that the translation of the central *mobiles* in 1989 casts doubts about democracy and capitalism as independent logics that would be transferred by independent learning process. Their stability depended widely on myths and images, either drawn from distant models in the West or from distant models in the past. Thus, both market and trade union rather appeared as panaceas that wanted to touch upon and resolve any kind of problem. Subsequently, it will be outlined which sources nurtured the broad scale of meaning associated with the *mobiles*.

III. The Models of Imitation: the 'West' and Solidarity
III. 1. The Image of the West

The convergence of both the communists and the Solidarity elites on the main objects, namely the market and its deriving institutional principles, allows for the conjecture that there was a common inducement for both. In this vein, it was argued that the dissolution and rejection of the communist model was followed by "the acceptance of an external image of success and creativity: the West."[107] Ralf Dahrendorf denied such a fixation on the West claiming that "the countries of East-Central Europe have not shed their communist system in order to embrace the capitalist system - whatever it is. They have shed a closed system in order to create an open society."[108] However, this argument hardly stands an examination of the coining effect of the West on Eastern Europe and seems to be ahistorical.

In his book "Three Europes", the Hungarian historian Jenö Szücs[109] came up with the thesis that Central Europe makes up an in-between stage between the West and the East, always prone to imitations of Western models because of its (pretended) geographical and socio-cultural closeness. At the outset, i.e. from the 9th to the 11th century, the lands of Central Europe adopted the Western model as regards the organisation of relations between nobelmen and vassals. The late Middle Ages were characterised by particular

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[107] Thibaud, Paul (1992), p.112.
[108] Dahrendorf, Ralf (1990), p.36.
[109] Szücs, Jenö (1994).

efforts to join Western civilisation. A unified peasantry, the development of towns and cities, the unfolding of a nobility, knight culture and the advent of universities nurtured this process. On the other hand, the negative effects of a high-numbered nobility, endowed with far-reaching political rights and a weak development of towns, and not least the Mongolian raids deepened the civilisatory differences between East Central Europe and the West. Thus, the unfolding of a civil society after a Western model was hampered. This line of thought joins up with István Bibó´s divison of Hungary´s history into three parts. While across the first five hundred years of this millenium Hungary shared fundamental roots of social structure with the West, the 16th century brought about a split with Western tradition and forced Hungary to develop conformable to the Eastern European model. This was the time of a "stagnation in the relations of power", a time of "deadlocks" and hopeless trials to return to the Western model. As Bibó saw it, in 1945 there was the possiblity to leave the impasse and to jump on the "Western way of societal development."[110] Such an assessment squares with Jerzy Szacki´s critique of the notion "return to Europe" in the Polish context. In his account, while communism was responsible for preventing Eastern Europe from catching up with the West after the Second World War, it did not cause the split with the West.[111]

In contrast to this reasoning, it was argued that it is "unfounded and misleading to describe Soviet societies as the embodiment of ´backwardness´ as against the West, alias modernity."[112] Yet, not only over the recent history of East Central Europe, the West has widely been considered to be superior. Moreover, this superiority was constantly named. Thus, in his essay on the Bolshevik revolution, Marcel Mauss unmasked the alleged sociological Bolshevik ´experiment´ as a repetitive and destructive form of imitation in the wake of the collapse of the likewise tyrannical Tsarist order.[113] A look at Lenin´s positions shortly after the achieved Bolshevik revolution clearly testifies to the superiority of Western capitalist countries and the need to imitate them in order to stabilise the newly born Soviet Union.[114] In this respect, it is striking that after the Second World War, the Soviet bloc´s self-image rejected the option of being Eastern and, rather regarded itself as "the

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[110] Szücs, Jenö (1994), p.26. Introduction.
[111] See: Szacki, Jerzy (1995), p.208.
[112] Feher, Ferenc (1995), p.61.
[113] Mauss, Marcel (1924-5), p.174.
[114] See: Lenin, Wladimir I. (1918).

most developed...Western stage of our civilisation."[115] In addition, imitation (of the West) persisted as a defining pattern of communism. Its role as underpinning the system of the centrally planned economy was stressed by Paweł Dembinski who argued that "imitation is one of the classic features of the System, and is particularly evident in the economic field."[116]

The West was both the supposed enemy and the desired destination point with which the East wanted to catch up. One can rightly assume, following Jenö Szücs's thesis, that the drive towards the West was also motivated, perhaps even boosted, by the zeal for becoming detached from the East (Soviet Russia). Such an argument explains more profoundly the so-called international constraint of Poland. Commonly, it is argued that in summer 1989 Solidarity stuck, at least partly, to the Round Table agreements because of a potential Soviet menace. At the end of 1989, the shock-therapy wanted to establish radical *faits accomplis* so as to economically distance Poland as much as possible from Soviet Russia. In this respect, action at a distance was not only targeted by shortening distance (towards the West and the Solidarity past) but also to increase the distance to Soviet Russia.

To sum up, there is enough evidence to claim without exaggeration that "Westernism, the proclaimed belief in the superiority of the West, was thus the final legacy of communism to the societies of Eastern Europe."[117] As such, "...on the left as on the right, the West is not just a place on the map where democracy and industrial capitalism emerged, it is also an *empire of the mind*, imposing belief in an essential form of human society emerging from a progressive pattern of history, including the modern tradition of revolutionary democracy...." (my italics)[118] With the dissolution of identities, values, and institutions in 1989 the power of the image of the West increased, signifying both a saving anchor and the promised land. "People yearned for Western political institutions, a Western standard of living, Western freedom, etc. but not for capitalism..."[119]

III. 2. The Image of Solidarity I

It has been poined out that the introduction of market institutions and the reconstitution of the Solidarity trade union, enjoyed a broad support among the Solidarity-elites and in Polish society in general. Prior to democratic

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[115] Feher, Ferenc (1995), p.64.
[116] Dembinski, Pawel (1991), p.196.
[117] Thibaud, Paul (1995), p.111.
[118] Joravsky, David (1994), p.844.
[119] Szacki, Jerzy (1995), p.120.

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institution-building, the *mobile* ´trade union´ was targeted at the identity-features and central aims of Solidarity I. Having claimed that Solidarity as an organisation was bruised, stripped of its human potential and of its identity, how can it be explained that its image survived?

Despite the complex political situation, the dominant image ruling in Solidarity took into account only two forces: ´us´ and ´them´. Jadwiga Staniszkis argued for the one-dimensionality of Solidarity self-image in 1980 and 1981 as one of the crucial features of Solidarity´s mentality.[120] By which means was this collective identity carried towards the end of the 1980s? The underground situation of Solidarity between 1981 and 1989 entailed the virtual suspension of experiences of collective identity. The huge strike potential vanished away and the myth of the general strike crumbled. Before December 1981 the contrast between we (Solidarity/society) and them (communist state) had been constitutive. This dichotomy changed after the implementation of martial law. As a survey among workers in Lublin and Warsaw during 1983 and 1984 showed, the we-image of we-society, we-workers or we-Solidarity evaporated into a broad image of maximum generalisation like "we the Poles".[121] The existence of a broad counter-public that relied on a number of underground publishers, journals and books could be considered to be the "most permanent and most stable structure of the underground."[122] Although the lifting of martial law in the mid-1980s opened up spaces for a ´parallel culture´, the decisive backlash after 1981 was the loss of oppositional consciousness on a broad scale of society. As Kamiński put it, "because of mild measures instituted during martial law, the fear quickly vanished while the humiliation persisted. This was the result of the society´s perception being forcefully transformed from a subject to object of politics."[123]

A series of nation-wide polls displayed a considerable drop in the number of people who identified themselves as having belonged to Solidarity, from 37% in 1981 to 22% in autumn 1985.[124] While during 1980 and 1981, collective identity of the Solidarity-opposition had been expressed by mass protests, strike-actions, and broad activity in enterprises, under martial law and also after the general amnesty of 1986 its persistance was rendered virtually impossible. While in its heyday, Solidarity had its stronghold in the

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[120] Staniszkis, Jadwiga (1984), pp.145/146.
[121] Kuczyński, Paweł (1994), p.230.
[122] Smolar, Aleksander (1988), p.19.
[123] Kamiński, Bartłomiej (1991), p.137.
[124] Mason, David/Nelson, Daniel/Szklarski, Bohdan (1991), p.208.

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big factories, its plant-basis had vanished in 1989. And yet, Solidarity managed to raise its rate of approval from less than 25 percent in May 1988 to over 75 percent in March 1989. In the same time-span the perception of Solidarity as an institution beneficial to society rose from 18 to 67 percent.[125] The elections in June 1989 amounted to an anti-communist referendum, elevating the Solidarity-opposition to the height of public approval.

How did the "monolithic collective subject", as labelled by Szacki, translate into the situation of 1988 and 1989? How could the myth of unity be nourished and, finally, be reactivated? To understand this properly, a look at the social pillars that formed Solidarity, is needed. In the following the connection between individuals and the collective subject shall be examined by taking recourse to Norbert Elias and to Max Weber. Elias claimed that "habitus and identification, being related to group membership, are always - in the modern world where people belong to groups within groups - multi-layered."[126] Following on that, one can claim that "individual self-images and group we-images are not separate things. Or, as Elias put it, "the individual bears in himself or herself the habitus of the group, and..., it is this habitus that he or she individualises to a greater or lesser extent."[127] Hence, processes of habitus- and identity-formation over long periods must be seen by "changes in the We-I balance."[128]

The works on Solidarity by Roman Laba and Lawrence Goodwyn regarded Solidarity as rooted in a socio-economic class. This class was seen as mainly formed by workers. However, the concept of class is hardly applicable to a communist system. First, because economic criteria that usually account for class cleavages were insignificant. Second, because Solidarity was much too heterogenous an organisation to clearly make distinctions other than between generalised social groups, like workers, intellegentsia, farmers. Thus, Kubik tried to revise Laba's and Goodwyn's assumptions by denoting Solidarity an outcome of a cultural-political class. According to him, "This cultural political class was made up not of workers or intellectuals but of all those who subscribed to a system of principles and values,...,who visualized the social structure as strongly polarized between ´us´ (society, people) and ´them´ (authorities, communists).[129] Moreover,

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[125] See the data in Mason, David/Nelson, Daniel/Szklarski, Bohdan (1991), pp.209/210.
[126] Mennell, Stephen (1992), p. 177.
[127] Elias, Norbert (1991) The Sociology of Individuals, p.182/183.
[128] See: Mennell, Stephen (1992), p.194.
[129] Kubik, Jan (1994), p.446.

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taking the cue from Max Weber, Kubik and Staniszkis refer to "Solidarity" as a status (or cultural) group.[130]

The definition proposed by Kubik is - although pointing into the right direction - not entirely to the point. The crucial passage in Weber says: *"Inhaltlich findet die ständische Ehre ihren Ausdruck normalerweise vor allem in der Zumutung einer spezifisch gearteten Lebensführung an jeden, der dem Kreise angehören will"*.... *"Sobald nicht eine bloß individuelle und sozial irrelevante Nachahmung fremder Lebensführung, sondern ein einverständliches Gemeinschaftshandeln dieses Charakters vorliegt, ist die 'ständische ' Entwicklung im Gang."*[131] In Weber´s definition, *Stand*[132] is determined by social estimation of honour. Life conduct *(Lebensführung)* played a crucial role during the legal activities of Solidarity, but it grew in importance in the underground. This should be briefly illustrated. First, the underground-Solidarity stuck to its ethic of non-violence. Despite some temptation to strike back against martial law by violent action[133], this was clearly rejected by the underground-leader Zbigniew Bujak. The most significant symbol of the self-limiting opposition in the underground was perhaps the award of the peace Nobel prize for Lech Wałęsa in 1983. Second, a central experience of martial law was the arrest of Solidarity activists and its leaders.[134] Virtually all central figures that played an important role in 1980/81 and would resume a leading position in 1988/1989 served a sentence of several years.[135] Third, the Catholic Church as the focal point of an oppositional life-conduct acquired crucial importance. While the Church had been an ally of Solidarity before martial law was proclaimed, it became its shelter in the underground. The manifestation of oppositional ethos was to a large extent limited to the safeguard of the Church. Thus, individual profession of sharing common, collective values was promoted.

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[130] Kubik, Jan (1994), p.447, see also: Staniszkis, Jadwiga (1984), p.146.

[131] Weber, Max (1980), p. 535.

[132] To avoid misunderstandings, especially frequent with the English term "status", I keep on using the German original.

[133] See Jacek Kuroń's pamphlet of 1982 whose significance he reassessed in Kuroń, Jacek/Żakowski, Jacek (1995).

[134] When martial law was proclaimed, 425 persons were arrested. Of the 107 members of Solidarity´s National commission almost all were arrested, with the exception of Bujak, Kosmowski, Frasyniuk and Janas. During 1982 3616 persons were arrested, of which at the outset of 1983 still 1500 were in jail. These data draw on information provided by Holzer, Jerzy/Leski, Krzysztof (1990), p.9 and 65 and Staniszkis, Jadwiga (1984), p.319 Anm. 3.

[135] See: "The Jail Doors open, but just a Crack", *Newsweek*, 8 August 1983.

During the two visits of Pope John Paul II. to Poland in 1983 and 1987, Solidarity displayed its presence and was able to keep alive its symbolic repertory, the relics of Solidarity.[136] Moreover, the Church´s tutelary function extended from religious welfare for workers to the provision of places for seminars, lectures and sales of underground-publications.

Let us finally come back to Elias´s claim for a change in the we-I balance. By the concept of life-conduct one can show how Solidarity survived as a we-image, although it had lost its organisational features and the means that had formally made up Solidarity's collective identity. Accordingly, the we-image was preserved, by the shift of identity-preserving life-conduct to the individual level. It was the I-image - dispersed among individuals sticking to Solidarity-ideals in their life-conduct - that accounted for the survival of Solidarity. The link between individual destiny and collective identity was clearly expressed by Adam Michnik, whose letter to General Kiszczak - responsible for the implementation of martial law - said: "For me General, prison is not such a painful punishment. On that December night it was not I who was condemned but freedom: it is not I who am being held prisoner but Poland."[137] The individual I-image, formed and maintained by the leaders of Solidarity remained the guarantors of the preservation of Solidarity´s suspended we-image.

III. 3. Action at a Distance in 1989- The Identification with Distant Images

What are the consequences of these findings for the unfolding of democracy and capitalism in Poland? By applying Latour's concept of action at a distance, it was asked whether the logics of democracy and capitalism were transferred as *stable and combinable mobiles*. The translation of knowledge hinges, in Latour's terms, on the fate of two actors or forces bound up with one another. In fact, the fate of East and West in 1989 was bound together by the drive to translate the logics of democracy and capitalism from the West (and from the past) to the East. However, as argued in this paper, 1989 did not initiate a learning process of institutional ties and processes which would have introduced independent logics of democracy and

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[136] Smolar, Aleksander (1988), p.31 *"Unübersehbar ist die symbolische Präsenz der Gewerkschaftsbewegung: die ´Reliquien´ der ´Solidarnosc´´, die Erinnerungstafeln, Fahnen und Losungen, die typischen Schriftzüge, die Blumenkreuze und stilisierten Weihnachtskrippen als Symbole des Leidens, des Todes und der erwarteten Auferstehung der ´Solidarnosc´".*

[137] Michnik, Adam (1985), p.68.

capitalism. Above all, 1989 was about the quick shortening of distance by identification with images.

How influence of any sort can be effective over a distance, was already thematised by Max Weber in his Sociology of Religion. Traditionally, the quality of local deities did not lead to monotheism, but rather reinforced religious particularism. On the contrary, the Jewish Yahweh evolved as the universal and omnipotent God, given his specificity as a God that ruled "as a God from afar" *(aus der Ferne)* and who approached "only when the military need of his people required his presence and participation."[138] It is this "effective influence from afar" *(Fernwirkung)* which presumably was a factor that partook in the evolution of the concept of Yahweh as the universal and omnipotent God. Such a relationship towards a worshiped divinity can be detected also in Eastern Europe. In Joravsky's terms this is the case, "...when the highest officials of the chief communist system adopted the dissident accusation and started the radical reforms, only to suffer a collapse of ideological self-confidence and conversion to a new dream of a utopian leap out of history, this time through worship of "the market".[139] The 'market' was, as shown in this paper, 'elsewhere' in the West.

This comes close to what Adam Przeworski termed the 'Eastern European syllogism'. Its major premise holds that "if it were not for communism, we would have been like the West", while the minor premise is "Now communism is gone". The conclusion not only asserts that Eastern Europe should and will now embrace a Western-style economy but also promises that this economy will generate the glitter and glamour of developed capitalism."[140] In this vein, a literal swamp of images of the West invaded Poland in the early 1970s.[141] Gierek's attempt to build a 'second Poland' was heralded by a massive visualisation of Western goods and travel sites. The function of West-Berlin as the show-case of the West is a telling metaphor in this respect. Its entirely positive connotations mediated a wonderful image of the future in the arms of the West.

Similarly, two important events in 1988 and 1989 illustrate the power of images. First, when the preparatory talks for the Round Table negotiations seemed to be in a deadlock, the television debate between OPZZ-chairman Alfred Miodowicz and Solidarity chairman Lech Wałçsa changed things

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[138] Weber, Max (1980), p.254.
[139] Joravsky, David (1994), p.848.
[140] See: Przeworski, Adam (1993), p.141.
[141] See: Kuroń, Jacek/Żakowski, Jacek (1995), pp.139ff.

entirely. To see the mythical leader of Solidarity on TV screens literally revived the image of Solidarity I and pulled it closer from a distant but not forgotten past. "...for the first time a mass of spectators could hear and see the chairman of the subversive underground organisation - until not long ago a 10-million people trade union - which for the huge majority was nothing but a distant rememberance."[142] The semi-free elections in June 1989 proved for a second time the importance of the image of the charismatic Solidarity leader. Every candidate running for Solidarity under the auspices of the civic committees made a photo with Wałęsa that was diffused on thousands of posters across the country. "...Wałęsa, next to the symbol of Solidarity became our sign of identification."[143] It seems to be only conclusive that the only Solidarity candidate not to be elected had not made a photo together with Wałęsa.[144]

The foregoing analysis has shown that imitation of democracy and capitalism in pre- and post-1989 Poland reveals a distorted cycle of accumulation of knowledge. Marketisation and democratisation were embodied by the mobiles 'market' and ' trade union'. These *mobiles* were not stable, they represented all-encompassing images based on persistent myths. As a consequence, their combinability became boundless. Bearing on the foregoing considerations, the universalising project of the West, in Feher's argument, did not follow the lines of two independent logics. By aspiring at the whole of the image of the West (and the image of Solidarity), the acutal object was lost out of sight.

The image West exerted an overall and undifferentiated attraction. Capitalism was synonymous to ´non-socialism´, thus boiling down to the West. Therefore, "into the bag called ´capitalist world´ simultaneously were crammed Switzerland and Sweden, as well as Haiti, Iran and Madagaskar. Capitalist were both 18th century England and present Germany."[145] If such an approach is, as Zieliński asserts, a popular simplification and a fundamental error, then this only underlines its widespread usage and the significance of the undifferentiated image. Because of constraints of time and transferability but also due to bruised identities, political and social learning was suspended and replaced by identifications with images. Elemér Hankiss

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[142] Skórzyński, Jan (1995), p.133.
[143] Kuroń, Jacek/Żakowski, Jacek (1995), p.269.
[144] Kuroń, Jacek/Żakowski, Jacek (1995), p.269.
[145] Zieliński, Michał (1994), p.34.

put it perhaps most clearly: "the West shone in the distance, the light of hope in a world of defeat and despair."[146]

Similarly, the image of Solidarity I ruled the 'democratisation' by and in Solidarity. An assessment of the immediate post 1989 period by Adam Michnik is illuminating: "Solidarity continually lived at this time by the myth of its power. It wanted to take over power everywhere, where it was possible, wanted to dictate the government personnel politics....One thing the leaders of *Solidarity did not want to do: to reflect upon, which should be the formula of a trade union* in a democratic state of law in an epoch of transformation to the market." (my italics)[147] In 1990 people began to ask themselves: "How is it that Solidarity can at the same time be the government, a trade union, the nation, me?"[148] Solidarity II was everything because it identified itself with Solidarity I. At the end of the 1980s, "the world was different,..., Poland was different, and *Solidarity wanted to be the same.*"(my italics)[149]

In 1989, Poland's objective was to tighten bonds with images (West/Solidarity) to which it inherently belonged, but of which it had been deprived or alienated by geographical, mental, and temporal distances. As such, action at a distance stands for the reversal of alienation, namely the identification with something. Karl Mannheim described "social ´distantiation´ as "akin to, but not identical with, ´alienation´. The latter consists in the cooling off of emotional relationships. When we become ´alienated´ from someone, we undo ties of identification that formerly had bound us together. Similarly, we may become ´alienated´ from places or groups in which we had once felt at home."[150] Taking the cue from Mannheim, Poland was never really alienated from democracy and capitalism as systems of practices and behaviour. The familiarity with market and democratic institutions was, at best, ephimeral. Poland was rather alienated from the source of these supposed models and potential benefits, the West. "The ongoing delegitimation of the Soviet model entailed the growing identification with the West as a counter-model."[151] And it was alienated from the spirit of Solidarity which in 1980 achieved the 'subjectivisation' of Polish society. "The identification with Solidarity led to a loss of *distance*

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[146] Hankiss, Elemér (1994), p.118.
[147] Michnik, Adam (1995), p.341.
[148] Kolarska-Bobińska, Lena (1994), p.68.
[149] Michnik, Adam/Tischner, József/Żakowski, Jacek (1995), p.572.
[150] Mannheim, Karl (1992), p.207.
[151] Arnason, Johan (1993), p.194.

towards it."(my italics)[152] Thus in 1989, Poland did not learn the logics of democracy and capitalism, but it imitated the image of the West and of Solidarity I.

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[152] Holzer, Jerzy. "Dekada Solidarnośći" (Solidarity's decade), *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 2 September 1990.

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