



Seminar

## SLAWOMIR KAPRALSKI

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*The Holocaust: Commemorated but Not Remembered?  
The Social Construction of the Holocaust Memory in Poland*

Tuesday, 18 October, 11:15 a.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall  
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala  
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#### ABOUT SLAWOMIR KAPRALSKI

Slawomir Kapralski graduated from the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, where he also received his Ph.D. in Sociology. He was a teaching assistant at the Jagiellonian University, a tutor, lecturer, assistant and then associate professor at the Central European University in Prague and Warsaw, and Recurrent Visiting Professor at the Central European University in Budapest. In 2014, he was appointed Professor of Sociology at the Pedagogical University of Cracow. He has been a GFPS Fellow at Universität Bielefeld, a MacArthur Fellow at the University of Chicago, a Mellon Fellow at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna, and a Senior Fellow at the Wiener Wiesenthal Institut für Holocaust-Studien.

Kapralski's publications include *Wartości a poznanie socjologiczne* [Values and Sociological Knowledge] (1995); *Roma in Auschwitz* (with M. Martyniak and J. Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, 2011); and *Naród z popiołów: Pamięć zagłady a tożsamość Romów* [A Nation from the Ashes: The Memory of Genocide and Roma Identity] (2012). He has edited six collections of essays: *The Jews in Poland* (1999); *Reformulations: Markets, Policies and Identities in Central and Eastern Europe* (with S. C. Pearce, 2000); *Democracies, Markets, Institutions: Global Tendencies in Local Contexts* (with P. V. Smith, 2002); *Pamięć, przestrzeń tożsamość* [Memory, Space, Identity] (2010); *Peryferie i pogranicza: o potrzebie różnorodności* [Periphery and Borderlands: On the Need for Diversity] (with B. Jałowiecki, 2011); and *Spoleczny wymiar kryzysu* [The Social Dimension of Crisis] (with B. Jałowiecki, 2012).

During his stay at SCAS, Kapralski will work on Jews and the Holocaust in the social memory of Poland in the transition period of the 1990s.

#### ABSTRACT

The argument focuses on the reception of the globalized narrative of the Holocaust in Poland. It is argued that this narrative has not been successfully integrated into the local memory, partly because of the narrative's own deficiencies and partly due to the specific nature of the way in which local memories have been produced. Instead, it has contributed to the split of collective and social memories as well as to further fragmentation of each of these two kinds of memory. In result we may say that in post-communist Poland the Holocaust has been *commemorated* on the level of official institutions, rituals of memory, and elitist discourses, but not necessarily *remembered* on the level of social memory. It is claimed that to understand this phenomenon we should put the remembrance and commemoration of the Holocaust in the context of the post-communist transformation, in which the memory of the Holocaust has been constructed rather than retrieved in the process of re-composition of identities that faced existential insecurity. The non-Jewish Poles, who in the 1990s experienced the structural trauma of transformation, turned to the past not to learn the truth but to strengthen the group's sense of continuity in time. In this process many of them perceived the cosmopolitan Holocaust narrative as an instrument of the economic/cultural colonization of Eastern Europe in which the historical suffering of the non-Jewish East Europeans is not properly recognized. Thus the elitist efforts to reconnect with the European discourse and to critically examine one's own identity has clashed with the mainstream's politics of mnemonic security as part of the strategy of collective immortalization that contributed to the development of antagonistic memories and deepened social cleavage.