

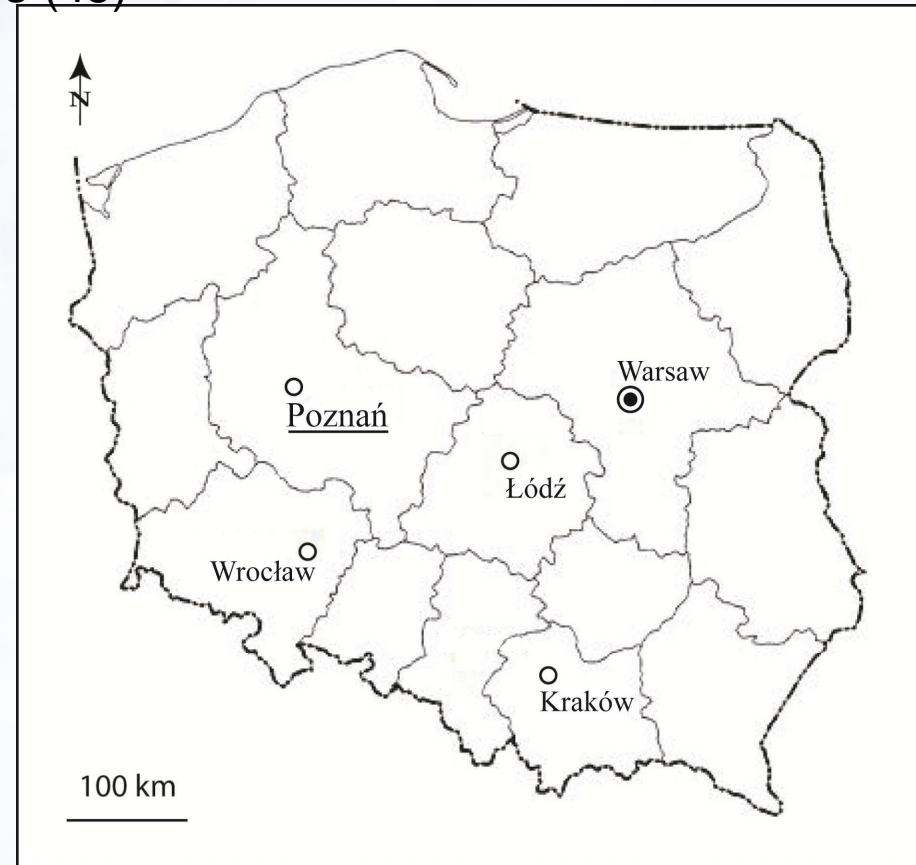
**Advanced Training in Research Methods Conference**  
**30 November 2012**

# **The Ethics of Doing Research with Political Elites**

dr Olga Mausch-Dębowska

## Research topic: 'Local government and civil society in a post-socialist Polish city: a case study of Poznań'

- quantitative research approach – questionnaires (120)
- qualitative research approach – interviews (45)



Location of Poznań on a map of Poland with administrative division to voivodship level including the four other largest cities in Poland

## Interviews – 45 (1h-1.30h)

- Qualitative research was conducted in the form of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions.
- The objective was to learn what pre-selected individuals think about or how they interpret events and developments relevant to democratisation.
- Face-to-face interviews facilitate asking supplementary questions (probes) to clarify or extend the response if needed. Equally it is possible to remind respondents of points that they have not mentioned (prompts).

## Political 'elites'

- 'Elite' refers here not only to the rank of an interviewee but also, if not primarily, to the interviewee's knowledge/competence.
- Elites in a particular institution are subjected to the same interview protocol composed of structured or semi-structured questions (*cf.* Gillham 2000:81)

Gillham, B. (2000) The Research Interview, London: Continuum.



## Political, local elite in my research

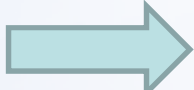

- Local government experts,
- Researchers from the Local Government Research Group of AMU Faculty of Sociology,
- Administration officials at the powiat and voivodship level,
- Official in the Ministry of Interior and Administration,
- 6 Poznań based MPs and Senators elected in the Poznań ward in 2007,
- Mayor of Poznań,
- 16 out of 37 City Councillors,
- Several Estate councillors,
- Local City Hall Officials and representatives of two NGOs,
- Journalists from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poznań Region Supplement

## Example: List of interviewees including their functions and experience

[1]

No.	Affiliation	Name and Surname	Function/Expertise
1	Local government expert	Kulesza, Michał	Former Government Plenipotentiary for the Reform of Public Administration; Professor
2	Local government expert	Regulski, Jerzy	President of the Foundation in Support of Local Democracy 'Chief architect' of local government reform in Poland, Former cabinet minister, Professor
3	MP (PO) Civic Platform	Dzikowski, Waldy	Former Mayor ( <i>Wójt</i> ) of Tarnowo Podgórne Commune Member of parliamentary Commission for Local Government and Regional Policies
4	City Council, Antoninek – Zieliniec-Kobylepole Estate Council	Bielerzewski, Andrzej	Independent, Councillor Deputy Chairman, Municipal Utilities and Housing Policy Commission
5	City Council, Winiary Estate Council	Chudobiecki, Jan	Independent, Councillor Deputy Chairman, Education Commission

# The role of the researcher and Ethics

- The ethical implications to make sure that the *reputation* of academic research and of the University of Glasgow would be treated with *respect* equally with the *good name* of the individuals and communities researched.
- “The interviewer should seem professional and generally knowledgeable, but less knowledgeable than the respondent on the particular topic of the interview.”  
(Leech 2002:665)
- good rapport  trust  responsibility