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# Detecting Urban Resilience. Foreign Residents' Perceptions and Experiences of Public Services in a Globalising City: A Case Study of Krakow

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*In tennis, the sweet spot on a racket marks the point at which a ball can be hit with the greatest power for the least effort. Public services in the globalising city of Krakow found themselves in precisely such a position before the large-scale forced migration inflows as a result of Russian aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. An analysis of the evaluations of public services by foreign residents in Krakow during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021) reveals, on the one hand, the overall satisfaction of users yet, on the other, significant differences in expectations and experiences amongst categories of foreign residents coming from global core, semi-peripheral and peripheral regions. The findings shed light on the nature of urban resilience in globalising cities like Krakow, which is encountering migration transitions, as well as the uneven nature of globalisation between services that have been internationalised and those which have not. The results expose considerable gaps in the process of the multi-faceted adaptation of city public services to meet the expectations of their dynamically changing population. The findings are particularly significant in the context of intensive forced migration inflows from Ukraine, critically reflecting on the resilience of public services on the eve of major shifts in population flows into the city.*

**Keywords:** globalising city, migration transition, semi-periphery, public services, resilient city, COVID-19

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## Introduction

When thinking about global cities and the intense international migratory flows which fuel and shape them, the image of Krakow, a ‘secondary city’ tucked away in the south of Poland, does not immediately come to mind. In fact, it may not even feature on a conceptual map of nodes and flows, located in what has been termed the Global East (Müller 2020), an elusive in-between space in the global system of movement of goods, capital, services and, importantly, labour. Yet this urban centre, situated on the semi-periphery between the Global North and the Global South, is experiencing a dynamic transformation. In 2017, Krakow ranked eighth in the world of ‘Super Cities’ on the Tholons Services Globalization Index (Tholons 2017); it features prominently among the most popular European tourist and student destinations and, importantly, it is located in a country undergoing an unprecedented migration transition. Since 2016, Poland has been the top destination for non-EU nationals entering the EU, primarily for work reasons (Eurostat 2021). Krakow, like other cities in Poland, has primarily attracted migrants from its neighbourhood – predominantly from Ukraine but also increasingly from Belarus and Russia. Yet it has also seen migratory flows from culturally distant regions such as India, Vietnam, Brazil and the countries of North Africa, as well as migration from the so-called ‘West’ – from EU countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain and France as well as the USA (Pędzwiatr, Stonawski and Brzozowski 2020). This dynamic change is, by all accounts, just the tip of the iceberg of the social transformations that this region will face in the next years on account of the forced migration inflows from the war in Ukraine, coupled with an acute demographic deficit and concomitant labour shortages, low unemployment rates and its positioning at the crossroads of geopolitical instability in the Eastern neighbourhood.

It is thus an urban centre caught in a conceptual paradox: at once a liminal space in the global system of nodes and flows but, at the same time, a key semi-peripheral thoroughfare which supports and links, in Wallerstein’s World Systems analysis (Wallerstein 2004), the global core with the peripheries. This positionality provides for a unique space from which to observe and analyse how Krakow, a city at these crossroads, copes and adapts to increasing demands on its public services and the need to form inclusive policies for an increasingly diverse citizenry, all in the context of the external shock of the COVID-19 pandemic and forced migration inflows as a result of the war in Ukraine.

We analyse this paradox through the lens of the globalising city (Brenner 2019; Marcuse and van Kempen 2000; Ren and Keil 2018), underscoring the processual nature of urbanisation *vis-à-vis* globalisation, whilst critically reflecting on the modernisation theory implicit in global cities research which leads to an illusion of having to ‘catch up’ with the West. We understand the term ‘globalising city’ through a critical lens, highlighting the multi-scalar approach to urban processes wherein the role of state institutions and regional positioning cannot be overlooked and where the aspiration model of global cities is questioned (Robinson 2002). This dynamic, relational conceptual framework allows for a more nuanced analysis of the city’s resilience. The term ‘urban resilience’ has gained remarkable popularity in recent years, making it a paradoxically blurred term (Meerow, Newell and Stults 2016). Referring to the capacity of urban environments to maintain or return to desired functions in the face of disturbances, to adapt to changes and to transform systems that limit current or future adaptive capacity (Meerow *et al.* 2016: 39), resilience frameworks have largely focused on environmental and economic pressures, largely bypassing migration as an important exogenous factor affecting the ability of a city to react and adapt. The exception is Zapata-Barrero’s (2023) attempt to provide a conceptual and analytical framework for researching urban migration governance through the resilience lens. Urban resilience, when applied to migration governance, underscores the proactive, transformative nature of the concept, focusing on issues such as urban justice, the fight against exclusion and the building of liveable and inclusive neighbourhoods (Zapata-Barrero 2023).

In our research, we focus on the perspective of international migrants – key actors in the process of transformation of globalising cities and metaphorical ‘detectors’ of a city’s resilience – who come with different images and expectations of these off-the-map spaces, depending on their geographical, linguistic and cultural proximity and their positioning within the global imaginary of North and South. This is perhaps the most evident in their expectations of public services, seen as the face of the state and its institutions embedded in the urban space. An analysis of the differing expectations and experiences in foreign nationals’ access to public services and their ensuing levels of overall satisfaction with services, gives rise to an image of the city’s urban resilience: its capacity to adapt to its users, its positioning *vis-à-vis* the dynamically changing expectations of its inhabitants and its ability to cope and deliver on these expectations.

Through the lens of the globalising city of Krakow, we analyse and compare the attitudes and experiences of three geographically bound categories of origin of foreign nationals in using public services offered in the city. We aim to diagnose the urban resilience of the city in the face of migratory pressures through migrants’ expectations, the barriers which they face in accessing public services and their overall evaluation of their experiences. The research is based on a mixed-methods approach consisting of a quantitative survey (n = 292) and semi-structured interviews (n = 20) conducted between June 2020 and June 2021. We have taken a citizen-centred approach to assessing access to public services based on three categories of experience: ‘at the gates’, particularly the access to information about public services; ‘through the doors’, experiences of interpersonal exchanges and equal or fair treatment whilst using the services; and ‘at the exit’, looking back at the overall quality of and satisfaction with their experience. Five spheres of public services were considered, ranging from those the most affected by globalisation to those the least affected. These were, respectively, culture, public transportation, public administration, education and health care.

The research fills a much-needed gap in the literature on globalising cities in the ‘Global East’ which are virtually absent from academic discussions (Müller 2020), particularly in urban studies. It also adds to the currently under-researched sub-field of migration governance through an urban resilience lens (Zapata-Barrero 2023). The unprecedented migration transition in this region – which is arguably at its most dynamic and accelerated stage – provides a propitious moment for analysing the way in which different categories of migrants perceive, experience and evaluate the institutional functioning of the system in the form of public services and the opportunities and challenges this has for municipalities in coping, adapting and positioning themselves *vis-à-vis* their rapidly changing populations.

The unique context of the global COVID-19 pandemic has added to the pertinence of the study by facilitating a more profound consideration of the problems and challenges which have been exposed during the crisis in relation to foreign residents’ access to public services. The observations, experiences and evaluations of foreign nationals in this situation become a sort of litmus test for the ability of the city to adapt to difficult external shocks such as a global pandemic and refugee crisis, while exposing the challenges and opportunities of semi-peripheral cities within core structures like the European Union, attracting migrants mainly from neighbouring peripheries but also lifestyle migration from core regions and skilled and semi-skilled migrants from global semi-peripheries.

### **The global and globalising city in the context of urban resilience**

Global cities form the core of social imaginaries and geographies of accelerated globalisation, the nodes in a system of flows which concentrate on international capital, commodities and labour (Friedmann and Wolff 1982; Sassen [1991] 2002). The term global city has been in use since the early 1980s, a period which saw the capitalist reshaping of the global world order, marked by a new international division of labour and the demise of the post-war Fordist regime of accumulation, encompassing the world’s Global City Archipelagos, such as

New York and London (Brenner 2019). This geo-economic context has, to a great extent, determined the contemporary meaning of the term ‘global city’, quantified by city rankings based on indicators such as economic viability, business climate, real-estate prices and human-capital reserve (Ren and Keil 2018). From this perspective, the global city is primarily a strategic command and control centre for transnational corporations and has significant advantages over other cities – often termed as ‘winner-takes-all cities’ or ‘superstar cities’ (Florida, Mellander and King 2021).

The term ‘globalising city’, on the other hand, is used in contemporary urban studies to underscore the idea that cities are not static structures but are constantly undergoing processes of transformation. This coincides with a ‘scalar turn’ in urban studies in the 1990s which emphasised the urban not as a fixed territory but as a multi-scalar concept. This frame seeks to analyse how cities and urban systems are being (re)integrated into the worldwide division of labour and their positionalities in relation to the local, regional, national and global (Brenner 2019). Globalising cities can also be seen as those cities in the process of gaining ‘globality’ – meaning ‘reflexive globalization, a global everyday experience and consciousness of the global’ (Beck 2002: 21). The nexus between global and globalising cities also lends itself to broader and critical post-coloniality discussions and a reassessment of the world system of core–periphery, placing emphasis on the exclusion of alternative forms of urban development and the hierarchical power relations between global economic ‘performers’ and ‘underperformers’ and critically rethinking global cities as aspiration models and standards for economic dynamism around the world (Robinson 2002; Roy 2016). An increasing interest in alternative cartographies of globalisation in the form of secondary cities (Chen and Kanna 2012) in the context of globalisation and alternative modes of development has given rise to works such as that of Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2018), focusing on the role of migrants and their agency in the urban regeneration of marginal cities.

We use the notion of the globalising city in this research to highlight the positionality of those urban centres in the process of gaining a foothold in the global system of nodes and flows – finding themselves somewhere between global cities or ‘command centres’ and those remaining urban centres which are, instead, the objects of globalisation. From the world-systems theory based on core–periphery models of asymmetrical capitalist production (Wallerstein 2004), these cities are located on the semi-periphery and with regional scales of influence, reflected in the specific structure of their labour market and institutions, even if their labour market is highly internationalised (Skeldon 2012). For the purposes of our study, globalising cities are thus characterised by (i) their semi-peripheral position in the urban global hierarchy, reflected in the specific structure of their labour markets and institutions – even if their labour markets are highly internationalised; (ii) a dynamic transformation of the population in the form of a migration transition; and (iii) an asymmetry in the adaptation of institutional structures and services with patterns of culture characteristic of the ‘banal cosmopolitanism’ (Beck 2002) of the global city. International migrants who are characteristic of such cities – professional elites, labour migrants, students – from increasingly different cultural backgrounds and worldviews, fulfil the role of metaphorical detectors of weaknesses and of catalysts for the adaptation of institutions and patterns of culture to the concept of ‘banal cosmopolitanism’, forging a ‘laboratory of production’ of urban resilience.

The concept of urban resilience has become an important topic in recent years, both at EU policy level (New European Bauhaus) and in the urban policies of particular cities. The most spectacular examples of such policies to strengthen urban resilience are the 15-minute city concept in Paris and the superblock concept in Barcelona. In both cases, in addition to reducing the energy intensity of cities, a key role is to be played by strengthening neighbourhoods through, among other things, the availability of public services within them (Kubicki 2021). In the research on urban resilience in migration governance, studies have underscored the importance of liveable and inclusive neighbourhoods, the fight against exclusion, the fight for access to public resources and urban justice and the right to have rights (Zapata-Barrero 2023). To address the ‘diversity gap’

in public administration jobs in Barcelona, for example, the city has developed strategies to incorporate criteria such as intercultural and language skills as a condition of access to the function of civil servant (Zapata-Barrero 2023). Other research has highlighted the way in which substantive access to public services by foreign nationals is mediated through their interactions with frontline workers (or ‘street-level bureaucrats’), who act as gatekeepers of inclusion or exclusion based on their perceptions of the ‘deservingness’ of access to these services, informed by a client’s behaviour or nationality-based stereotypes (Ratzmann and Sahraoui 2021). In the present study, we likewise focus our analysis on the substantive access to public services of increasingly diverse inhabitants, yet we do this not through the analysis of changes in policy and practices but from the perspective of foreign nationals and their experiences of these services. The capacity of a city’s public services to adapt to new inhabitants, its flexibility *vis-à-vis* the dynamically changing expectations of diverse inhabitants and its ability to cope and deliver on these expectations are key markers of the readiness of the city to respond to migratory and diversity-related pressures. It is through the perceptions and evaluations of foreign nationals in the local population that we seek to understand this resilience.

### *The Global East and the Polish migratory transition*

The urban hierarchy in Europe (centre–periphery relations) has developed in the *longue-durée* process (Rokkan and Urwin 1983; Wallerstein 2004), not having significantly changed over the centuries. As a symbolic example of such dependencies, we can point to the so-called ‘Blue Banana’ – an area comprising London, Amsterdam, Brussels, Dortmund, Frankfurt, Basle, Zurich and Milan – highlighting the European economic urban hubs (Gert 2003). Conspicuously missing from this image are cities in Central and Eastern Europe. As Müller (2020: 736) notes, ‘countries in the East may be on the way northward, but at the same time seem stuck in eternal transition towards an elusive modernity’. This grey area on the map of Europe and Central Asia is conceptualised by Müller as an epistemic space of ‘Global East’ and in Wallerstein’s (2004) world-systems theory, positioned on the semi-periphery. However, this image has been complicated by the fall of the Iron Curtain and by the EU accession of a part of this epistemic geographical space, marking a splintered transformation that places some of these regions at the outer edges of the core of Europe and others in the near periphery on the other side of EU borders.

One of the most important markers of the watershed between global cores and peripheries is migration flows: the semi-periphery becomes a hub linking global flows to command centres and migrants become transnational development agents and significant actors in shaping the dynamics of transformation at the social, cultural, political and institutional levels (Faist 2007). A kind of milestone in migration theories becomes empirically tangible: the migratory transition – or turnaround – occurring as the number of people arriving in a given society exceeds the number leaving it (King 2019; Skeldon 2012).

Poland has become a key case study in this regard, having witnessed a migratory transition throughout the last decade which, in 2016, saw positive net-migration flows for the first time in its modern history. According to official data from the Central Statistical Office in Poland, between 2013 and 2018, migratory inflows increased by 254 per cent from the previous period, highlighting the scale of the transition (Statistics Poland 2018). Between 24 February and the end of April 2022, Poland witnessed an inflow of 2.9 million refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine (UNHCR 2022). Yet it would be somewhat pre-emptive to label Poland as a country of immigration or a long-term refugee destination – the flows are overwhelmingly short-term, suggesting that a shift will take place once migrants start settling down on a large scale (Okólski and Wach 2020). We also maintain a certain wariness in prematurely applying migration transition theory, suggesting that its weakness, as other scholars have pointed out, lies in assuming a modernisation theory approach of linear progress, which would assume a path to becoming a ‘core’ immigration country (de Haas 2010; Skeldon 2012; Zelinsky 1971).

We thus focus on what could be labelled a ‘transition moment’ in the ‘expanding core’ (Skeldon 1997) – a semi-peripheral space between the immigration centre of Western European countries and the migration periphery to the east (Żołędowski 2020).

*Case study: Krakow as a globalising city*

As a globalising city on the semi-periphery of urban centres in the European Union, Krakow offers an interesting and less-studied perspective on the nexus between international migration, urban development and adaptation, the latter seen here as a flexible and dynamic process reliant on multi-scalar interdependencies, of which the national level is paramount. Krakow was cut off from global flows by the Iron Curtain for many decades, followed by the abrupt rite of passage from a socialist to a capitalist city after 1989. Polish cities, like others in the region, ‘suddenly’ became a part of the global free market but their infrastructure (airports, roads, etc.), institutions (public services, universities, cultural industry), patterns of culture and behaviour all remained anchored in legacies of the old system (Pickvance 2002). Polish cities were not seen as attractive to labour or lifestyle migrants during this period – in fact, its open borders after accession to the EU initially stimulated the opposite process, allowing for the mass emigration of Poles to Western countries which, in turn, stimulated the process of social change within the country (White, Grabowska, Kaczmarczyk and Slany 2018).

Yet, by the mid-2010s, Krakow’s attractiveness for international migration had become tangible, with the number of incoming migrants noted in the *voivodship* (region) rising steadily from year to year, even amidst the global pandemic in 2020 (Pędziwiatr *et al.* 2020). In a city of approximately 750,000 inhabitants, foreigners made up an increasingly significant segment of the population – approximately 7 per cent of all inhabitants, according to various official statistics<sup>1</sup> (Pędziwiatr *et al.* 2022). By April 2022, according to some statistics, the number of inhabitants had risen to 957,531, with Ukrainian citizens accounting for 19 per cent of all inhabitants (Wojdat and Cywiński 2022: 26). The dynamic growth of civil-society organisations focused on multicultural activities and migrant integration since the mid-2010s – which formed the backbone of the humanitarian response to the forced migration flows from the onset of Russian aggression on Ukraine in February 2022 – is likewise a symbolic marker of the transformation of Polish society at the local level (Czerska-Shaw, Krzyworzeka-Jelinowska and Mucha 2022).

The migratory inflows are influenced by three main factors particular to Krakow’s positioning as a globalising city: (i) the specific structure of the labour market, dominated by the Shared Services Centres and Business Process Outsourcing (SSC/BPO) sector, (ii) tourism and its associated services; and (iii) higher education and science. These three factors influence the level of education and socio-economic positioning of incoming migrants – in 2019, 68.9 per cent of all migrants in Krakow self-declared as having higher education (Pędziwiatr *et al.* 2020). The migration flows are also characterised by their diverse geographies: while the majority of the migration comes from the near periphery – principally from Ukraine but increasingly also from Belarus, encompassing approximately 60 per cent of immigration to Krakow in 2019 – the second largest group encompasses ‘core’ or command centres within the European Union (approximately 23 per cent) and a small (about 1.5 per cent) amount from North America and Australia. The third, dynamically growing, category of migration flows is noted from what we have termed ‘culturally distant’ centres often located on the global peripheries, from Asia (11 per cent), as well as South America and Africa (together approximately 5 per cent) (Pędziwiatr *et al.* 2020).

While the local receiving population and businesses have quite quickly developed the tools and social capital with which to cater to foreign populations, particularly tourists, institutional setups are slower to develop and adapt. This is not without attempts to introduce public projects – in order to raise the multicultural competencies of frontline public workers – or tolerance and anti-discrimination programmes for teachers and

intercultural assistants in schools. Between 2016 and 2021, Krakow operated a flagship programme of diversity-minded activities called ‘Open Krakow’, including awareness-raising campaigns for tolerance and non-discrimination, the building of trust and solidarity between the city’s ethnically diverse inhabitants and the raising of the intercultural and linguistic competencies of civil servants working in public administration. In 2020, the city launched a public tender to open and operate a multicultural centre in conjunction with an information point for foreigners. It has also dedicated resources for the analysis of migration dynamics and multicultural relations within the urban space – a joint initiative between the city and the Krakow University of Economics in the form of the Multiculturalism and Migration Observatory. Despite these efforts, the city has not yet implemented concrete public policies that would actively seek to break down barriers in the accessing of resources, goods and public services for dynamically changing communities. This is made more complex by the dynamics of metropolitan regionalism, which has shifted from a focus on the efficient delivery of public services in the Fordist-Keynesian period to the contemporary focus on attracting external capital investment and the competitive positioning of city-regions in transnational economic circuits (Brenner 2019).

## **Methodology**

The main aim of this study was to understand the city’s resilience to migration pressures by analysing the attitudes of foreign residents in the city towards public services offered in Krakow, to diagnose the most important barriers faced by foreigners when using these services and whether they themselves create alternative self-help information networks to mitigate the challenges faced. For the purposes of this research, we defined foreign residents as those who identify with being a foreign inhabitant in Poland – who may or may not have Polish citizenship but who have spent a significant amount of time outside of the country and who use public services from the perspective of a foreigner. Foreign residents aged 18 or over who had lived in Krakow for at least three months were eligible for the study – for both the survey and the interviews. In the survey we noted five respondents with dual citizenship (Polish-Ukrainian; Polish-French; Polish-American, Polish-Belarusian-Italian) and two Polish nationals who had spent a significant amount of time outside of the country (who had come to Poland as adults). None of the interviewees had Polish citizenship. We use the term migrant in the article when referring to general trends or statistics and foreign residents when referring specifically to our target study group. The research gained approval from the appropriate institutional ethics committee – assuring the anonymisation and coding of respondents’ data and their proper storage and use – as well as the informed consent of participants in the research.

The research covered five key areas of public services affecting the quality of life and the process of integration of foreigners living in Krakow: health care, public administration, public education, public transport and culture. While not all of these services are in the remit of municipal authorities (health care and education are the jurisdiction of the state, as are some public administration services – and cultural offers vary), all of these spheres were accessed at the local level by foreign-inhabitant users.

For the purposes of the study, we have categorised three regions from where we drew our interview participants, purposefully relying on social constructions of East–West and cultural proximity/distance divides, using the world-systems theory core–periphery divide as a framework. The first and most significant in terms of migration flows is the ‘culturally proximate’ region of Eastern Europe beyond the limits of the European Union (Ukraine, Belarus and other post-Soviet states and Slavic language speakers). The second we have categorised as ‘culturally distant’ regions beyond Europe, largely from the Global South and developing regions in Asia – chiefly India – and countries of South America and the Middle East among them. The last region is largely an imagined categorisation of ‘Western countries’, including EU member states and North America, which we may term the Global North.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the research: a quantitative computer-assisted survey (n = 291) and qualitative semi-structured online interviews (n = 20) were adapted to the social-distancing regulations of the COVID-19 pandemic. The online survey, disseminated in the first phase of the research and which was available in English, Russian, Polish and Ukrainian, was distributed among various migrant networks and through online forums and social media used by foreign nationals living in Krakow. Respondents who completed the survey came from a total of 56 countries spanning four continents. Of our respondents, 51 per cent belong to the ‘culturally proximate’ category, 32.6 per cent the ‘Western’ category and another 16.3 per cent the ‘culturally distant’ category. These percentages may be considered approximate to the distribution of the immigrant population in Krakow, whilst noting an over-representation of the ‘Western’ category (by 7 per cent) and the same under-representation of the ‘culturally proximate’ category. Yet we are aware that this is a limited sample, therefore we do not make claims about the representativeness of the research nor can we generalise our findings beyond the context of the given research at a specific moment in time.

The selection of participants for interviews, made as a follow-up to the online survey, was based on quota sampling. It took into account the representation of several characteristics, wherein the three geographical regions were the mostly evenly represented (6–7 foreign residents per category) and the amount of time spent in Krakow (both short- and long-term residents) were assessed, as were gender, age range and a variety of professions from different socio-economic categories. For the purposes of this article, we limit the variables analysed, focusing on geographical region of origin. A mix of snowball sampling and online recruitment was used to obtain the data sample, which was then coded. In the interviews, we sought respondents’ narrations of their experiences of the different types of public service, eliciting both positive and negative evaluations based on their previous experiences of these services in other countries. We asked our participants to share their recommendations for the improvement of these services by assessing the barriers and/or advantages that they experienced as users coming from particular national backgrounds. As we focused only on the evaluation of public services and not the experience of privatised parallel ones (particularly education and health care), the first question in each of the sections (divided into five service categories) was related to the frequency of use of these services. If the participant replied that he or she did not use the service or only very infrequently (once a year or less), a follow-up question was posed to investigate the reasons for the lack of use. Further questions on their experiences were excluded from the survey or the interview scenario. The most frequent answer for the lack of use was that the respondent was in the privatised system.

The citizen-centric approach adopted in this study assumes that policy-makers should be aware of the needs of users (citizens) in order to better understand their expectations, as well as to identify different types of user and the barriers they face in accessing public services. This approach, developed in a World Bank report (2018) entitled *Indicators of Citizen-Centric Public Service Delivery*, was key to formulating the quantitative survey in our research, wherein we identified three spheres which help in the evaluation of public-service delivery from the point of view of the user-citizen-foreigner. Firstly, we analysed perceptions ‘at the gates’, particularly the access to information about a given public service. In this case the questions in the survey regarded the clarity and accessibility of information about a given public service, as well as the ease of making an appointment and the accessibility of a given institution (for example its opening times).

Secondly, we explored experiences ‘through the doors’, which refers to the situation once inside a given institution, generally understood as customer service. The questions in the survey focused on the user’s satisfaction based on interpersonal interactions: contact with personnel, whether his or her individual situation was taken into consideration, the feeling of safety and comfort, professionalism and empathy of the personnel, as well as equal and fair treatment. In seeking to understand the respondents’ subjective understanding of ‘equal and fair treatment’ from front-line public-sector workers, we purposefully did not use the term ‘discrimination’ in the quantitative survey or interview questions, as we are not seeking to make claims that

the treatment of our respondents was indeed discriminatory. We may define discrimination as the inequitable treatment of certain individuals or social groups using particular personal traits as an excuse, based on grounds prohibited by law (Bouchard and Taylor 2008: 219). Instead, we framed the questions through a lens of perceptions of biased treatment, using characteristic grounds for discrimination as a guide. This was formulated in the following manner: 'In using public services in the city of Krakow, have you ever experienced any of the following: (1) unfavourable treatment based on skin colour, (2) unfavourable treatment based on ethnicity/nationality, (3) unfavourable treatment based on religion, (4) unfavourable treatment based on a perceived lack of language competencies, (5) unfavourable treatment based on perceived cultural differences – with the option of ticking (6), I have not experienced any form of unfavourable treatment'. In a last stage, 'at the exit' seeks to assess the overall level of satisfaction after having used a given public service, here analysed by the overall perception of the quality of services. The three spheres of evaluation were repeated in the interviews, informing the structure of the findings presented below.

## Findings

An overview of satisfaction with the public-services sector in Krakow shows that our participants' overall assessment was quite positive, highlighting an advantageous positionality of Krakow *vis-à-vis* the categories of foreign residents whom it hosts. However, this general assessment needs to be put into context and nuanced in relation to the different origins of users and their positioning *vis-à-vis* the semi-peripheral location of the city, together with other mediating factors such as skin colour, religion and ethnicity. As Van Ryzin and Immerwahr (2004) point out, satisfaction in some models is measured as the difference between expectations and the experience of the given service, therefore a high assessment may be the result of quite low expectations. Additionally, some elements considered to be important by our respondents in the surveys and interviews may not have had a significant effect on their overall evaluation of services (for example, a respondent may highlight the problem of chaotic information about a given service but s/he will nevertheless assess the service positively). When we seek out the nuances in the assessment, based on the stages of experience (at the gates, through the doors, at the exit) and mediating factors such as regions of origin, skin colour and language skills, we are exposed to important differences in both expectations, treatment and socio-cultural perceptions.

### *At the gates*

*Where can I download the application? It's there. It's just getting there, it's not easy. So people always require the experience of another person. (...) It's about accessibility. It's just the design, the user experience, the design of the website, because the websites are there. The tools are there (D/M/16).<sup>2</sup>*

The above quote encapsulates the confusion felt by our respondents who were trying to access and navigate information about public services – the information is there but it is often incomplete or outdated and it is not clear how to use or interpret it. This first stage of experience was given the worst evaluation by our respondents, although there were significant differences between services: public transportation and culture were very well evaluated, whereas public health care and administrative services were not. These differences are interesting examples of the transition moment of the globalising city. Spheres such as public transportation and culture, critical for the development of the tourist industry, had undergone internationalisation much earlier than other spheres. Additionally, these spheres have partnerships with the private sectors (in the case of public transportation, the popular application 'Jakdojade', through which one can easily check schedules and buy tickets, makes navigating the city very foreigner-friendly). In this case the scale and the framework of reference

are quite global, whereas the other spheres – namely health, education and public administration – have largely remained dominated by the national scale and framework of reference. This is particularly evident in the linguistic aspect, which is a major barrier ‘at the gates’, as we discuss below. Culture and public transportation are also largely uncontroversial, whereas health and administration are typically services to which citizens go when they have problems – sometimes of a legal or life-threatening nature – and where expectations may be heightened and vulnerabilities exposed. Additionally, language misunderstandings have far fewer consequences in culture and public transport than in public administration and health care.

Differences in perceptions of the clarity and accessibility of information were noted in the results of the survey, chiefly along the lines of respondents’ regions of origin. By way of example, 26 per cent of all respondents from culturally distant regions declared a lack of information on how to use the health-care system, in comparison to 19.5 per cent of respondents from ‘Western countries’, while only 10 per cent of culturally proximate respondents deemed this to be a problem. Similar results were found elsewhere, for example 20 per cent of culturally distant respondents assessed the access to information on administrative issues as good or very good, in comparison to 28 per cent of those from Western countries and a significant 58 per cent from culturally proximate countries.

Language is a critical barrier to accessing information about public services and may account for some of the differences in perceptions amongst the culturally proximate respondents, who are better equipped linguistically to navigate the Polish language. However, Russian and Ukrainian-speaking respondents also noted language difficulties in official settings, particularly in the spheres of health and public administration, due to difficult technocratic terminology wherein even marginal linguistic mistakes can have far-reaching consequences. This highlights a common assumption that Slavic languages are easily decipherable to speakers of the same language group, which may paradoxically lead to prejudice when those members do not speak the language as well as expected.

For respondents from Western countries, a more-often-cited barrier was the lack of instructions and planning; knowledge about what to do and in what order to do it. While documents may be available, the system in which they operate, together with the thick institutional culture that follows its own logic, remain largely indecipherable to those who are not familiar with them. Navigation through the system is therefore largely privatised, in the form of informal group support networks like online forums, privately hired assistants in bureaucratic matters or private health and educational care or the use of Polish friends and neighbours – the latter who, paradoxically, help to stimulate anchoring processes through the building of social ties.

*Even when you find the right document, you need extra help in order to fill it out. First you need to understand the whole bureaucratic system and then apply it to your situation, but you know that, even then, you will get stuck and you’ll need someone to help you (W/M/9).*

### *Through the doors*

Once through the doors of public institutions, the evaluation of service turns to interpersonal encounters, the subjective feeling of safety and comfort and the perception of equal and fair treatment – or the lack thereof. During the pandemic, this was limited largely to health emergencies, telephone consultations and contact with teachers through online learning. While a number of our respondents had contact with public services at this time, the majority of responses spoke of their experiences before the start of the pandemic.

*The waiting list is really long. And then when I had the opportunity to submit my application, it was rejected. Because the format is old. And I downloaded the format from their website, like, two days before submitting*

*and she just refused to take it. And I was like, okay, maybe I can bring the new one and give it to you today. She said 'No, no, no, make a new appointment'. That's three months from now. So I had to do it again. And then, when I did it again, it was also rejected for some weird reason. And here's the funny thing, because I asked my friend to give me some insight: What did you do? How did it go? There is no consistency. My documents get rejected and his were accepted. And I don't know where I went wrong. It's just total confusion (D/M/7).*

As this quote from a respondent from the culturally distant category suggests, there is a perception of chaos in the information given and arbitrariness in the procedures that follow, which were similarly felt amongst culturally distant and Western country respondents. This follows from the *ad hoc* and unclear nature of information given 'at the gates', which then plays out in interpersonal interactions on site. The difference between respondents from Western countries and those from culturally distant countries, particularly visible minorities, were their perceptions and experiences of unfair treatment. The former attributed this different treatment to the arbitrariness of the system itself and largely to language issues, while the latter cited unfavourable treatment due to religion, skin colour and cultural differences. Interestingly, over 25 per cent of respondents from culturally proximate backgrounds indicated unfair treatment due to language barriers and perceptions of unfair treatment due to ethnicity/nationality were the same amongst culturally close and Western respondents (20 per cent), whereas culturally distant respondents noted higher rates of unfavourable treatment based on ethnicity, at 34.8 per cent.

Overall, more than 40 per cent of foreigners living in Krakow experienced some form of unfavourable treatment while using public services. In the majority of cases (34.8 per cent), this had to do with unfair treatment based on language, particularly the lack of Polish language competence amongst respondents. What is significant is that while, overall, only 6.6 per cent of respondents indicated unfair treatment because of skin colour, this percentage rises to 32.6 per cent amongst those from culturally different backgrounds, most often from visible minorities.

As interpersonal exchanges are relational, based on the interpretation of cultural codes as well as relations of power, the positioning and cultural capital of both social actors – the user and the public-service provider – are important in how these encounters are evaluated. In the case of public administration, 80 per cent of culturally close respondents considered the personnel to be polite and helpful, whereas this percentage drops by almost half to 48 per cent amongst Western and culturally distant respondents. There was a particular emphasis placed on the impoliteness of those at reception, including security guards and those who unwittingly become the first points of contact at institutional entrances. As one respondent noted:

*I heard from some Brazilian and Argentinian employees that there was this discussion with the lady at the reception, who said 'If you can't speak Polish, why are you living here? What can you expect of a foreigner who came to Poland two months ago?' The man at the reception didn't want to speak in English either, so the employees of our company asked if someone from work could come with them (P/F/5).*

Such instances highlight a number of issues: firstly, the lack of training and intercultural competence of frontline staff, whose positions are often undermined, badly paid and low-qualified; their lack of language competence is not a choice but, rather, a condition. Secondly, the modes of behaviour and asymmetries of power within these institutions are often perceived negatively by foreign nationals, particularly from Western and culturally distant spheres, who may not share the institutional knowledge of post-communist systems and who come with different expectations of service provision.

In the in-depth interviews, respondents from Western and culturally distant regions often noted what they perceived to be abuses of power on the part of administrative personnel and frontline reception workers in the health service. The sensitivity to the perceived abuse of institutional power seemed particularly relevant to those respondents who came from ‘customer knows best’ cultures institutionalised by Western countries.

*Sometimes it feels a little bit like they're almost abusing their power, just because they can ask for something, they do. Because you don't really know why it is important. So maybe they just ask for them just to be difficult. And to make your life difficult. That might not be the case. But that's how it feels like a bit sometimes if there is no proper justification of why you need to provide those documents (W/F/9).*

Some Western respondents suggested that neo-colonial relations prevailed in the sphere of public services. In their view, the fact that they were treated very well was because they came from a particular region and had a certain appearance, implicitly more civilised and better developed. This asymmetrical advantage typically caused feelings of discomfort in our respondents, who were quick to underscore the disadvantageous position of other non-Western migrants and keen to emphasise their satisfaction with services – possibly in order not to fall into the asymmetric power-relations trap set out for them.

*As a young white German woman with good Polish, I was usually treated very well by officials, who were not so kind to non-EU immigrants. I found the experience of the public administration especially positive in comparison with the German bureaucracy (W/F/1-5).*

According to the quantitative results of the study, the perception of politeness of service-providers further declines over time spent in the city, which may be surprising from an integration point of view as, with time, one builds up cultural and linguistic competencies that may mediate these barriers. One interpretation of this result could be attributed to the fact that, with time, one has to frequent more and different public services, especially those which have been the least internationalised. Another interpretation points to the consistently higher expectations of users, particularly those from systems closer to the global centre, in which Poland and Krakow are in a position of needing to ‘catch up’ with expectations. After the honeymoon period of cultural curiosity is over, higher expectations may come to the fore.

It is worth highlighting that the positive experiences that some respondents noted, particularly in the interviews, were the consequence of systemic and institutional gaps in catering to foreign nationals. In their responses, our interviewees often noted that they ‘had been lost’ in the system and that someone from the personnel ‘took pity on them’ or ‘rescued them’ from a difficult situation, on a completely *ad hoc* and accidental basis. They would do this in their own time, ‘outside of the system’. One respondent tells of his experience:

*She was like ‘You should speak Polish’. And she refused to help me. I sat down and thought ‘So what happens now?’ And then her friend, colleague, finished her work. And then she said, ‘Okay, I speak English. What's going on?’ And she kind of saved me (D/M/7).*

This may be seen as a luxury for a globalising city – the relatively small scale of foreigners seeking to use public services allows for an unsystematised approach to support, based on pockets of personnel with heightened intercultural awareness and competencies. These pockets of luck may also have a significant impact on a person's overall evaluation of a service, which makes him or her feel unique and particularly catered to, even though (or because) that care has not been systematised.

### *At the exit*

This stage was quite well evaluated by our respondents: general satisfaction with the quality of services across all sectors was higher than 55 per cent, although there were significant differences between sectors. The health-care services were the lowest ranked (56 per cent positive reviews), whereas public transportation was the highest at 90 per cent satisfaction. As noted earlier, the expectations of users of public services are contextual: satisfaction is measured as the distance between expectations and experience, therefore a high rate of satisfaction may be the result of lower expectations. Additionally, certain aspects that were underscored as important in the survey and interviews turned out not to have a significant impact on the overall satisfaction. For example, respondents often noted the *ad hoc* nature of information given and incomprehensible logic of the system but because, in the end, they attained their goal and completed their bureaucratic matters, even though it may have been with the help of a Polish friend, they evaluated the service positively.

In terms of overall satisfaction with administrative services, 74 per cent of culturally proximate respondents claimed to be very satisfied or satisfied with the services, whereas this percentage drops to 39.5 per cent in the case of Western regions and 36.6 per cent for culturally distant respondents. These differences were often repeated in interviews, where it transpired that one of the most important expectations of culturally close respondents was a lack of corruption in public administration. As this expectation was fulfilled, the general satisfaction was high. This factor was not mentioned at all by Western respondents, pointing to the differences in expectations between these two groups. A topic of discussion amongst respondents from Western countries was the cultural differences that influenced their evaluation of the given services. As a citizen from the 'Western' category explained:

*Overall, the administrative services are good, professional. But cultural differences are felt in the details. My first experience with registering my stay was my surprise at the number of documents I had to fill out and the person who was attending to me wasn't very helpful, a totally different experience than with doctors. There was some kind of unwillingness to help, which was hard for me to understand. (...) In the UK, the procedures are simple and, if they're complicated, someone will always explain exactly what you have to do. Whereas here you have to ask for it especially, which was strange to me (W/M/7).*

Interestingly, we noted somewhat lower levels of satisfaction amongst culturally proximate respondents *vis-à-vis* the health-care system in comparison to culturally distant and Western regions. While these evaluations are highly contextual and based on personal experience and level of health and emergency, a point made in the interviews sheds light on the anomaly in the responses from culturally close interviewees. Health-care systems in these countries are more intensively privatised than in Poland and this may have an effect on the expectations thereof.

In the public-education sector, the overall satisfaction was quite positive: more than 60 per cent were satisfied with the provision, wherein issues of safety came out very positively, although the level of teaching was clearly the lowest point, as was also criticised in the in-depth interviews. On the one hand there was a sense that children are given too much work and not enough play and, on the other, that the curriculum was not adequate enough to provide tools with which to tackle contemporary global challenges. This opinion was expressed by a respondent from the Western sphere:

*In my opinion kids spend too long at school, they have too much homework and too many exams. I have the feeling that kids are really tired by the end of the week and this is not that healthy for them. Added to that, kids need to learn a lot of useless facts, which they do not analyse; there is a lack of a more critical*

*approach, for example, when it comes to history – they learn about dates and facts instead of learning about the processes (W/M/7).*

The typical distinction between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ notions of education come out here, whereby Western curricula are perceived to be more critical and analytical and based on learning through games and creativity, whereas Eastern systems are thought to involve more learning by rote and be more passive and highly disciplined. Expectations clearly differed here amongst respondents and were a significant deciding factor in whether or not children would be sent to private schools.

In the case of the sphere of public education, we also observe an interesting correlation. The system of public education in Poland has a dual character. The curriculum is prepared at the state level (Ministry of Education), whereas organisational aspects such as the employment of teachers etc. are the responsibility of the local government. Educational reforms since 2015 have not managed to break away from the traditional forms of teaching and learning, putting special attention on ethnic and religious homogeneity in the curriculum, which does not meet the requirements of a multicultural and globalising city. Our respondents often criticised the curriculum while praising the quite respectful, individual approaches of teachers and schools. By way of example, a respondent from Turkey, whose son is the only Muslim in his primary school, noted:

*When my son was in the first grade we informed [the school] that we are Muslims and that he doesn't eat pork and it is always respected, he is always informed which food contains pork and which does not and he can eat it. So this is very good (D/F/7).*

Finally, it is worth noting the overwhelmingly positive evaluation of public transport in Krakow by all respondents, with little to no differences between regions of origin. Additionally, Krakow is a beneficiary of EU structural funds, its infrastructure having been consistently updated and internationalised – and priority lanes for buses make public transport attractive and efficient. As one respondent from the culturally distant category exclaimed:

*Yeah, it is a cultural shock. It's like, wow, this is great. What time is it [the bus] supposed to be here? 7:26. It's 7:25 and counting and the bus is about to arrive to the bus stop. That's pretty amazing (D/M/16).*

## Discussion

Krakow on the eve of the large-scale refugee flows from Ukraine – a regional metropolis, ‘second city’ (Hodos 2007) and major European outsourcing centre, as well as a hub for students, culture and tourism – could be considered a city in the phase of a ‘sweet spot’ of globalisation on the semi-peripheries of European centres. This means the lower expectations of foreign residents, an unsaturated and attractive labour market and a relatively high quality of public services. The migration transition that has occurred since the mid-2010s has dynamically transformed the urban fabric, attracting a majority of highly skilled professionals as well as low- and semi-skilled labour and students from the non-EU ‘culturally proximate’ neighbourhood (primarily Ukraine), high-skilled migrants from ‘Western countries’, as well as highly and semi-skilled migrants from semi-peripheral regions categorised here as ‘culturally distant’. This provides the backdrop to the challenge of building a new urban resilience in the face of the dynamic challenges facing the city on account of the unprecedented forced migration flows after February 2022.

The differing expectations and perceptions of public services and the evaluation of these experiences may shed some light on the gaps in service provision and institutional frameworks catering to international users which are

exposed in the process of ‘gaining globality’. It also allows us to analyse the shifting positionality of Krakow *vis-à-vis* its migrant populations, the diverse expectations that need to be taken into account in public-service provision and the privatised support systems that build up alongside it. What emerges is a multi-faceted view of the dynamics of the globalising city on the semi-periphery, as shaped and negotiated by migrant populations from proximate and distant semi-peripheries, as well as from ‘core’ regions with high symbolic capital.

Firstly, we gain a view from the ‘West’ – so-called expats: highly skilled workers, students mostly from Western Europe including some from North America, small entrepreneurs and those working in the creative sector. In this group of respondents we noted the presence of ‘lifestyle’ migration, tied to lowered professional expectations but the active seeking of human-sized cities that offer cultural outlets and community structures aimed at a ‘work–life’ balance lifestyle (Benson and O’Reilly 2009). For this group, the quality of interpersonal exchanges in public-service provision became a key to this experience: expectations of customer service and ‘pleasantness’ were high, as well as easy-to-access and clear instructions – also in English and other languages – regarding public services. In both these spheres, the evaluation of experiences was low, revealing the expectations–reality gap and institutional cultures that significantly differ from practices in ‘Western’ systems. The emblematic question of ‘Why don’t they just smile a bit more?’ reflects the vision of ‘greyness’ that has been long connected to the stereotype of Eastern Europe as ‘a grey place’ (Müller 2020).

Yet the overall evaluation of public services was modestly positive, which may be due to the high rates of privatisation amongst this group – particularly in health care and education – and the relatively positive attitudes towards Western migrants amongst the Polish population and their privileged status coming from the ‘core’, which allows for a feeling of preferential treatment and the interpretation of Polish bureaucracy as something of a cultural curiosity. As this migration is often selective and the result of family or friendship ties, the support of cultural translators was often cited as present and exploited. ‘No one does it by themselves’ also means that this category of foreign resident was characterised by high social capital in the form of Polish or ‘local’ friends and family. This becomes an important factor stimulating the process of anchoring migrants in local neighbourhoods: in order to understand the system culturally, it is necessary to have access to cultural translators – or so-called ‘natives’.

The second view which we are afforded is from culturally proximate ‘neighbours’ from the (outer) periphery – notably Ukrainian migrants (accounting for approximately 60 per cent of all migration to Krakow before the outbreak of war in Ukraine), as well as Belarusians and, to a lesser extent, Georgians, Russians and those from other Eastern European countries. This group was characterised by their relative linguistic and cultural proximity as well as their experience and understanding of post-communist institutional systems. However, the latter carries with it a legacy of low trust in institutions, which is somewhat characteristic of post-communist regions (Sztompka 1999), which also brings with it negative attitudes and lowered expectations. This was evident in the responses from our interviewees, who most often cited the lack of corruption as the most important marker of their satisfaction. This low threshold of expectations allowed for a higher overall satisfaction amongst this group, although experiences of prejudiced attitudes come to the fore. The experiences and attitudes of and towards this particular category of migrants – both forced and voluntary – will invariably see dynamic changes in the years to come. This is due to the rapidly increased population of this group and its internal systems of support, as well as the differentiated access to public services experienced by those Ukrainian nationals who came before the war and those who came after the outbreak – the latter who may be perceived as experiencing preferential treatment due to their protected status.

Finally, the view from the least-known but rapidly increasing category of migrants from ‘culturally distant’ regions, such as India, Turkey, Vietnam, Brazil and Mexico – employees of multinational corporations, small-scale entrepreneurs and students – brings to light the distance between their expectations and the realities in institutional practices and set-ups. Our respondents often had no prior imaginary of Poland and therefore

mostly a total absence of expectations, aligning with the positionality of the East as the ‘unknowable’, an absence of imaginary on the global map (Müller 2020). In many cases this led to pleasant surprises – uncovering public services that work, are mostly efficient and are often better equipped than those of their countries of origin. However, the overall satisfaction was largely tempered by the significant percentage (almost 40 per cent) of people from this category who experienced some form of unfavourable treatment whilst using public services, most notably based on skin colour, ethnicity and religion. Respondents in this category were the only ones to perceive unfair treatment based on cultural differences, which accounts for the thick cultural interpretation necessary to navigate public services. What is interesting about this category is that they sought the help of Polish friends just as readily as other categories of migrants.

In fact, 47.4 per cent of all respondents sought information about public services from Polish friends or neighbours. This figure is 10 percentage points higher than that of those who looked to other foreigners for support, which suggests that bridging social capital – the strength of networks between different ethno-cultural groups – is stronger in this group of respondents than bonding social capital (the strength of networks within a particular group). A factor that is undoubtedly important here is social positioning and level of education, which were generally higher than average amongst our respondents (88 per cent in comparison to 68.9 per cent in the foreign population). This issue was often highlighted in interviews, wherein participants noted the help which they received from Polish friends in accessing information and navigating public services in the city.

## Conclusions

As a globalising city, Krakow has undergone profound social and cultural changes as a consequence of its inclusion in the global space of flows in recent years. Our study aimed to highlight the important role of international migrants in the process of detecting and shaping the resilience of the city, influenced by their own positionality in the global structure of core–periphery and by exerting pressures on and highlighting institutional gaps in public-service provision based on differing expectations and experiences of these services. All three categories of respondents noted low levels of satisfaction across the board with access to information ‘at the gates’, reflecting often contradictory sources and *ad hoc* barriers to accessing public services. The treatment and experience of services once ‘through the doors’ were largely contingent on the category of respondent. In this paper we highlighted the differences in treatment based on geographical provenance and the treatment of foreign nationals based on their language competence: those culturally distant respondents noted significantly higher rates of unfair treatment based on ethnicity, religion or skin colour, whereas culturally close respondents paradoxically noted higher levels of unfair treatment based on their lack of language competence. This may be explained by frontline workers’ attitudes of ‘deservingness’: those from culturally close categories ought to know the language therefore, if they do not, they are deemed to be ‘undeserving’ of positive treatment. Lastly, the evaluation ‘at the exit’ was moderately positive across all categories of respondents, which may be explained by the relatively small expectations–reality gap that existed in the access to public services at the time. Yet these findings remain at the level of primary diagnosis for future research, particularly the nuanced differences between the various groups of respondents and the lack of analysis of additional variables such as gender, profession and socio-economic positioning, due to the small sample size and dynamically changing character of the positionality of ethno-cultural groups in the present context.

Finally, we have aimed to highlight the uneven transformation and adjustment of five spheres of public service based on these differing expectations – some spheres have undergone a high degree of internationalisation and, to a great extent, meet the requirements of a resilient city, particularly those affected early by the tourist boom (culture) and the injection of EU structural funds (public transportation and, to some

extent, public administration). Some spheres, on the other hand, are dominated by the national scale and framework of reference (health care) or are caught between two scales of influence – namely the national and the municipal frames of reference (public administration, education) – where the gap between expectations and experiences is notably higher. Interestingly, we note a trend towards the development of bottom-up internationalisation, wherein local authorities, in conjunction with or alongside civil society – and increasingly vocal foreign nationals amongst them – are pro-actively undertaking measures to adjust and adapt to the growing expectations and demands on public services by foreign nationals, as well as the opening of the public sphere to diversity in general. This includes funding research and civil-society organisations focused on the inclusion of minorities, which may shed light on other forms of exclusion, including those that are cross-sectional in nature – such as, *inter alia*, ethnic belonging and class, religion and gender. However, further research in this field is required to assess the extent and impact of the changes that are taking place with the intensive activation of civil society and rights-based claims on behalf of migrant communities, which have seen a radical transformation in the face of the humanitarian response after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

## Notes

1. Estimating the total number of foreigners living in Krakow is notoriously difficult. Firstly, we are dealing with a very dynamic phenomenon, which is also significantly determined by the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, the official data on foreigners living in Krakow differs significantly from one database to another. According to data from the City Hall, 14,300 foreigners were registered in the city in 2020 whereas, according to the Social Insurance Institution, 35,400 foreigners paid social insurance in Krakow in the same year. Finally, according to the Malopolska Regional Office, 41,100 foreigners resided in Krakow in 2020 (see Pędziwiatr *et al.* 2020).
2. The interview data are coded as follows: geographical category (W = ‘Western’, P = culturally proximate, D = culturally distant) / male (M) or female (F) / number of years in Krakow – for example W/M/2.

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