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TRANSNATIONALISM REVISITED – MIGRATION BETWEEN POLAND AND UNITED KINGDOM. INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

In a paper on the state of the art of research on Polish migration published in 2007, the authors note one peculiarity of academic paradigms in Poland in that field. Krystyna Iglicka, one of the authors points out:

> *It might be argued that migration research in Poland after 1989 has been influenced by certain national paradigms and 'hidden' national agendas on the one hand, and 'hidden' international agendas supported by the foreign financial aid on the other hand. The national paradigms have been shaped by a long history of Poland as a country of emigration. Therefore the stress on national political and research agendas was put on relations with Polish diaspora and repatriation of the fellow countrymen or their reintegration in the society. In turn 'hidden' international agendas were created ad hoc after 1989 in many minds of western politicians who feared hordes (to quote the media parlance of those times) of ex-Soviet citizens to flood western European countries (2007: 12).*

As she argues, the result was a peculiar methodological and epistemological split between the studies of the past with its assumptions of stability and community and on the other hand, studies focusing just on mobility, movement and flows. Although the main reason behind this is the fact that during communist period most of research was confined to historical analysis (since in official propaganda, no one wished to emigrate from socialist 'paradise') it seems also to reflect some deeper aspects of the 'national agendas', or, anthropological assumptions about the cultural, political and social significance of human mobility as constructed by various strata of Polish society throughout history. The split between the past and present, between research on mobility and settled communities of Poles abroad reflects something much more intriguing and it would be a-sociological not to think that the origins of these assumptions go beyond the mere fact that during communism collecting data on contemporary emigrants was something done by the security apparatus rather than demographers and economists.

Poland is a society, which is torn between its strong peasant rooted cultural significance of the territory, the land (Kłoskowska 2005; Chałasiński 1968) and the fact that throughout last 200 years Polish state borders were shifting, disappearing, reappearing and shifting back and forth again. Consequently, it is not surprising that mobility evokes and re-enacts deep cultural traits and symbolic meanings and that movement across space is culturally also a movement back in time since it connects the imagined communities of the living to these of the dead. Elsewhere (Garapich 2010) I point out the strange similarity between what elites in 19th century Warsaw thought of emigrants like Józef Korzeniowski (Joseph Conrad to those across the Channel) and what some members of the Warsaw elites thought of migration movements in the wake of EU enlargement in 2004. The taboo on Polish citizens emigrating during the communist regime demonstrates the powerful meanings associated with place and space defined through human mobility. International migration, in Polish culture is thus a political act, which defines individual's relationship to the socially constructed wider whole, or as Mary Erdmans puts it '*a moral issue* which confronts, articulates and symbolizes inherit tension between the group and its individual members, between the obligations to the collective and rewards to the individual' (Erdmans 1992). Without firm structural boundaries controlling movement, without the state which has the monopoly on legitimate human mobility, the creation of boundaries is shifted into the domain of the cultural, the symbolic, and the 'soft' domain of meanings. As scholars note (Davies 1981, Burrell 2009) the Polish romantic era of poets/prophets was constructed around the notion of exile, diaspora and loss. After all, the Polish national anthem repeats the notion of return migration, evoking the nationalist idea of the hope that one day - in an idealized future - the nation will be again reintegrated within the 'container' of a territory guarded by the administrative structures of the nation-state.

One of the numerous outcomes of that discourse has been the distinction present in academic terminology and public debates but also popular parlance between settled, and rooted, integrated *Polonian* communities and the (by contrast) chaotic, messy movement of individual migrants. I will never forget a professor of sociology whom I interviewed back in Italy in 2004, who invested all his theoretical vocabulary to passionately explain why *Polonia* is so different from '*these migrants*' and why they still need to learn a lot if they wish to become *Polonia* – which for this scholar was a natural sequence of events. For that scholar the firm and absolute boundary between settled 'community' and 'migrants' was just a version of the boundary between the host society and immigrants, who are essentially a threat to given stability and *status quo* (more on that: Garapich 2009). In a way there are many similarities between this approach and that other paradigm of the 'hidden' international agenda of the Western scholarship which

Iglicka writes about. It is much more politically straightforward, since for the Western states and their labour markets it has become an increasingly urgent need to be able to assess the migratory potential of their Eastern neighbours. In this paradigm it was the movement, the mobility, the migration strategy that remained the dominant questions driving research agendas. Yet it was still a mobility of aliens - of those that did not belong - as if, metaphorically, movement excluded settlement and mobility was contradictory to belonging.

Times change, of course. Although the cultural critique of Polish scholarship on migration is yet to be written, I think the fast growing and expanding research in that area is a sign of the inadequacy and ideological bias of previous paradigms and the still ripe need to develop new conceptual and methodological tools to be able to better capture this fast changing reality. Adrian Favell's and Tim Elrick's special issue of the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies (Favell, Elrick 2008), Kathy Burrell's edited volume on Polish migration (Burrell 2009) as well as Anne White's monograph on Polish families (2010) and a special issue of *Social Identities* edited by Marta Rabikowska (Rabikowska (2010) paved the way in this respect by bringing rich data to the foreground. I hope that this Special Issue of *Studia Migracyjne - Przeglad Polonijny* is an analogical sign of the changing paradigms and merging theoretical frameworks which link scholars from various places in the UK and Poland.

Crucially, these academic conversations are carried out not only across geographical space but also across generational and cultural boundaries and I feel this Special Issue is a strong invitation to future researchers to keep exploring the new outcomes of this huge population movement in contemporary EU. This Special Issue brings a mix of fascinating insights into the nature of mobilities in contemporary world, and reinserts notions of social class, in-group differentiations and ultimately meanings of integration, exclusion and interaction between groups. For example, the articles by White, Ignatowicz and Botterill look at the meaning of mobility for individual Polish migrants pointing out some of the limitations and challenges it poses for our understanding of ethnicity, diversity, and traditionally conceived transnationalism. White argues that in order to fully understand people's perspectives and their agency we need a more localized and place-situated view, which has to include the 'smaller cities', moving away from the global cities focus. On the other hand Ignatowicz and Botterill describe new and enriching ways in which migrants' rationalize their agency through particular meanings of mobility – contesting social constraints, retaining a sense of control or linking physical with social mobility.

The sign of the times I am referring to lies also in the fact that this collection of articles goes beyond static accounts of 'community' or 'settlement' versus 'mobility' but demonstrates what being mobile means for individual life choices here and

now. It brings to the forefront individual agency and ability to deconstruct and contest some specific hegemonic static notions of what Teresa Staniewicz in this volume calls 'sedentary bias'. By showing the practices of being simultaneously connected to several places across countries, regions and towns, the constant social practice of comparing between 'here' and 'there' and the continual creation of transnational social fields, the articles in this volume break down the bias of the sedentary discourse and the above mentioned split between the past and present or between movement and settlement. White's article, for instance, moves us beyond looking at transnationalism through the prism of nation states and demonstrates that locality and intimate, personal meanings ascribed to landscape evolve in time and have a crucial role in the processes of incorporation and adaptation of Polish families to particular towns in England. Joanna Krotofil's article, on the other hand, shows how Polish migrants shape distinct religious experience in a new setting, to some extent contesting the traditional institutional structures of the Catholic Church. Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska's and David Hay's text shows how different contexts (Scottish Catholics in this case) may have very different outcomes with the supposed cultural proximity (Catholicism) undermined by ethnic particularity.

Numerous articles in this volume also demonstrate what this means for migrants' perceptions of difference within categories assumed as static, total and un-differentiated – ethnicity being the main one. Most of the articles dwell, with understandable fascination, on the mutual perception among Polish migrants of new forms of differences and structures of exclusion or old ones being reconfigured. Teresa Staniewicz, for example, demonstrates this process by discussing the case of the Polish Roma and ethnic Poles, arguing that differences in social capital and levels of trust have a direct outcome on the presence of some groups in public sphere. Katarzyna Andrejuk and Emilia Pietka focus on the relationships between the established groups and new arrivals or relationships between arrivals from more middle class background towards working class Poles. They tease out the various forms of differentiation which people construct in order to pursue their interest but also make sense of what it means to be Polish.

The article by Paul Lassale, Ewa Helinska-Hughes and Michael Hughes on migrant entrepreneurs in Scotland, clearly illustrates how these practices of internal differentiation affect business behaviour, trust, market niche creation and, eventually, the economy. Bernadetta Siara in her article on gender constructions among Polish web forum users shows how these practices are also influenced by gendered constructions of ethnicity, the body and the nation. Paulina Travena brings explicitly forward what is often hidden in scholarship that so often overuses 'ethnic lenses' (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006) – the notion of social class and status within groups. Here, the fact that so many articles in this volume deal directly

with this issue may show that scholars find the Polish case intriguing. The evident clash between ethnic ascription and class-related forms of differentiation remind us that these two forms of social identity are more closely linked in plural societies than we often realize. Michal Buchowski notes that '*as it happens, in the case of virtually monoethnic Polish society, class and cultural diacritics fulfill a primary role in making social distinctions'* (2006: 479) and we could argue that – whether we talk about co-workers in same factory, Polish students, entrepreneurs, Polish Roma, *intelligentsia* – Poles seem to constantly maneuver between the horizontal imaginary bonds of ethnicity and the vertical world of hierarchical divisions imposed by capitalist social relations. However, in the migratory context this negotiation seems more complex and intense, because it happens among more numerous negative and positive reference groups, significant Others and situational decisions Polish migrants have to make.

   Louise Ryan, Alessio D'Angelo, Bogusia Temple and Beatrice Judd articles bring these issues to the forefront by looking at how in the 'host' society's diverse environments - workplace, school, public and private space - these strategies of differentiation and distinction making play out and are made socially significant. Ryan and D'Angelo demonstrate how children manage diversity both in relations to their peers as well as parents, Temple shows how Polish perceptions concerning ethnicity influence notions of integration and interaction with other ethnic groups and Judd offers an insightful interpretation of how culturally bound ideas of care, age and commitment influence care delivery among Polish staff working in adult social care. My own article in this volume fits this theme as well, since the Polish homeless men I describe are the recipients and victims of the 'host' British society's complex welfare policies with their exclusionary practices to which the homeless themselves respond with learned and tested culturally embedded social practices.

   If mobility, 'settling in', class, ethnicity, interaction with new Others, transnational practices and reflexivity are the focus of this volume, then it may be well argued that current scholarship has successfully moved on from the two dominant 'national' paradigms discussed by Iglicka above. We seem also to have moved on from the early dominant question within British public and academia alike on 'whether Poles are here to stay or not' and for sociologists and anthropologists this is a positive sign of the move away from the methodological nationalism, which dominates many theoretical agendas of migration research. In many ways the profiles of authors of this volume demonstrate that there is a steady and increased communication between academics from both countries and that this particular domain of scholarship has developed into another, specific transnational social field. This is not surprising because, after all, we describe the world that we simultaneously shape. There are surely numerous special issues, edited volumes,

monographs and books on Polish migration ahead and I hope that this one will mark another step forward in this fascinating field of study.

This endeavour would not have been possible without commitment, encouragement and mild but firm pressure from the Editor of *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny,* Prof. Dorota Praszałowicz who in 2009 took over the rejuvenated (another sign of times) the *Przegląd* published by the Polish Academy of Sciences. I would like to thank her for creating this opportunity. I wish also to thank my colleagues at the Department of Social Sciences at Roehampton University who provided me with an intellectually stimulating environment and especially Prof. John Eade, who has been supporting me all these years with great patience and friendship.

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