Multidisciplinary Workshop on Contemporary Poland UCL SSEES, 21 May 2018

Abstracts

# Sadie Bell (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) ‘Exploring vaccination behaviours and health service access amongst Romanian and Polish communities in England: a qualitative study’

In 2015, Poland and Romania were two of the five most common countries of nationality amongst non-British UK residents. Despite the size of these population groups, limited research has focused on vaccination uptake or experiences of accessing health services amongst Polish and Romanian communities. This is an area warranting exploration given the differences in vaccination programmes and health care systems across countries. We aimed to explore vaccination behaviours and health service access amongst Polish and Romanian communities in England.

To explore any barriers to vaccination and broader health service delivery from provider perspectives, semi-structured interviews were performed with 20 healthcare workers involved in delivering vaccination information, administering vaccinations, and sending vaccination reminders. Healthcare providers were recruited from areas with large Polish and Romanian communities. To explore community perspectives, interviews were also performed with 20 Polish and 10 Romanian participants, who were asked to share their experiences of vaccination and health service access in relation to themselves and their families. Data were analysed thematically, drawing on the Social Ecological Model.

Although most Polish and Romanian participants reported receiving vaccinations according to the recommended UK vaccination schedule, several barriers to uptake were identified. Barriers were highlighted around trust in vaccinations and healthcare providers. These were compounded by difficulties in accessing trustworthy sources to inform vaccination decision-making, concerns about the safety of certain vaccinations, language barriers, and differences in vaccination delivery in the UK compared to Poland and Romania. Vaccination providers reported challenges in translating and understanding Polish and Romanian vaccination histories to ensure patients are up-to-date with the vaccination schedule.

In several instances, it had taken time for Polish and Romanian migrants to understand and trust the UK healthcare system which, for some, had resulted in frustrations and strained patient- provider relationships. For several Polish and Romanian participants, it required time to understand and adjust their expectations of health services, built on Polish and Romanian experiences, to the UK system. In some instances, unfamiliarity and mistrust of the UK system was associated with ongoing use of pay for health services in Poland and Romania and private Polish general practitioners in the UK.

Several barriers to vaccination and broader health service access were reported. To improve vaccination uptake, the readability and accessibility of credible vaccination information (in translated forms) requires improvement. In addition, healthcare workers require greater support to overcome language and cultural barriers, highlight and explain differences between vaccination schedules across countries, and to obtain accurate vaccination histories. To improve health service access and acceptability broadly, it is crucial that healthcare workers discuss and acknowledge different health services expectations with recent migrants.

# Eva Duda-Mikulin (University of Bradford) ‘Precarious lives of Polish migrants post-Brexit vote’

This paper will investigate the notion of ‘precarity’, particularly in relation to the paid labour market and the EU migrants within it. I will first refer to Guy Standing’s (2011) theorisation of the precariat as the new dangerous class and its relevance to migration and migrants. The fashioning of precarious workers will be analysed and put against the backdrop of EU workforce (Lewis et al., 2015; Anderson, 2010; Waite, 2009). Precarity has been much discussed by politicians (Neilson and Rossiter 2008) and in the theorisation of neoliberal labour (Standing, 2011). This discussion will provide a global and comparative perspective on how the socio-political, cultural, demographic and geographic context interlinks individual migration experiences. I will explore whether precarity and migration are synonyms and whether the process of migration always brings about some element of uncertainty. The paper will end with discussion on precarity in contemporary world which is characterised by increased job insecurity which consequently heightens uncertainty about our future. Throughout this paper I will present extracts from recent qualitative interviews with Polish migrants to the UK referring to their lives from before 2016 and at present as well as their plans and hopes for the future. Case studies will be offered to illustrate how people’s lives were affected by the referendum result.

# Karolina Follis (University of Lancaster) ‘Rejecting Refugees: Civil society, humanitarianism and the politics of fear in Poland’

In 2015 the number of refugees arriving in Europe increased at a rate that alarmed politicians and much of the public. In this context, some Eastern European leaders declared that they would reject mandatory refugee resettlement quotas agreed at the EU level. Chairman Jaroslaw Kaczyński of Poland’s ruling Law and Justice party was among those who claimed that accepting persons who arrive in Europe by sea legitimizes illegal migration. The party stoked fears of a ‘migrant invasion’ and encouraged xenophobia. They also argued that humanitarian efforts ought to be focused on countries of origin and transit. Accordingly, offering assistance to those refugees who remain close to home would incentivize staying there, thus producing the politically desirable effect of fewer people heading for Europe. In this paper I show how the right-wing Polish government has tried to implement this approach since it rose to power in 2015. I highlight state funding for humanitarian organizations delivering assistance in Jordan and in Lebanon paired with the ostracism of those civil society actors who focus on assisting those refugees who have already arrived in Poland. Drawing on fieldwork in Poland, I unpack the tensions between state-sponsored humanitarianism, the political imperative to maintain Polish borders closed to refugees, and grassroots pro-refugee initiatives which contest the government’s policy. The policy of keeping refugees away has been presented as ‘responsible migration management.’ This research casts this claim into question, showing how civil society actors involved in refugee assistance at home and overseas respond to the politicization of their endeavors.

# Mark Fryers (University of East Anglia) and Joanna Rydzewska (Swansea University) ‘Did You Know that Ernst Stavro Blofeld was Polish? On the Persistence of Eastern European Stereotypes; or, What Has James Bond Got to Do With It?’

Immigration is high on the agenda not only of Great Britain but globally, yet it is rarely acknowledged that immigration is an affective and representational issue. As such the issue of migration has the power to affect outcomes of elections as evidenced by the 2016 Brexit vote or the same year’s American presidential elections. The June vote does not remain without repercussions for the Polish migrants in the UK mostly in terms of attitudes and perceptions. The killing of a Polish man in September 2016 (three months after the Brexit vote), as *The Guardian* journalist asserts, ‘exposes the reality of post-referendum racism’ with some factions of British society feeling ‘wrongly empowered by the Brexit vote to express their racist and xenophobic views as if they were a legitimate position of the majority’ (Krupa 2016). The rise of instances of violence and racism post-Brexit emphasises the importance of political decisions and of media discourses surrounding migrants, which affect the level of permissible (racist) behaviour towards them. Poles now comprise the largest immigrant group in the UK but Polish migration has got a long history in the UK with changing perceptions – from Poles as valiant warriors during World War II to the recent discourses of strain on the benefit system and the NHS. But how varied are these stereotypes? This presentation will look at Polish and Eastern European characters (as this group is often subsumed under collective identity) as portrayed in British cinema with special emphasis on the James Bond franchise, and its contribution to the origin and dissemination of contemporary representational stereotypes.

# Jan Gryta (University of Manchester) ‘Local or transnational? Cosmopolitan memory work in the

**Schindler Factory in Kraków and its sources’**

Contemporary research in memory studies advances the idea of glocalisation, universalisation, and cosmopolitanisation of memory via processes of transnational memory work. The common assumption is that cosmopolitan standards of memory spread from Western centres to Eastern peripheries where the emergence of cosmopolitan memory was suppressed under Communism. This paper problematises this account of globalisation. It identifies the sources of cosmopolitan memory in Poland and demonstrates how, at times, transnational memory work aimed at limiting cosmopolitan interpretations and restoring ethno-nationalist representations.

Spotlighting this Polish yet globally important memory site, this paper analyses the dynamics of competition between varied actors including museum curators, local politicians, representatives of Yad Vashem, and members of a supranational NGO. It reviews the positions and agendas of all the actors and reconstructs the struggle over meanings and representations that played out around the creation of the museum in the Schindler’s Factory between 2008 and 2010. It therefore attempts to answer who was driving the transnationalisation of memory and how it happened. The paper follows to map the sources of both cosmopolitan interpretations and ethno-nationalist interventions. It demonstrates that the thrust of attempts to imbue the museum narrative with cosmopolitan values emerged locally while some of the exclusive ideas, namely the repositioning of Germans as the Other, came from the representative of a supranational NGO. By doing so, this paper sheds new light on the complex process of transnationalisation of memory pointing towards the importance of place and local actors for global memory regimes.

# Anna Gwiazda (Kings College London) ‘Substantive representation of women in Poland: the Black Protests’

This paper examines the substantive representation of women in Poland after the 2015 parliamentary election. By looking at the case of the ‘Women in Black’ protests where tens of thousands of demonstrators defended women’s rights by protesting against a new proposal restricting abortion, this paper revisits the existing approaches to substantive representation. Pitkin’s definition of substantive representation is used as a starting point, but broader questions concerning women’s interests, agents and sites of representation are considered. This paper argues that in Poland conservative interests dominate in parliament but feminist voices are heard too, especially through extra-parliamentary sites of representation. This paper is an important contribution to the research on women’s political representation because it deals with an unexplored aspect of representation in Eastern Europe.

# Marek Naczyk (University of Oxford) ‘A Boon to Stock Market Development? Financial Ideas,

**Reform Sequencing and the Divergent Fates of Pension Privatization in Hungary and Poland’**

Between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s, most CEE countries decided to significantly cut their public pension systems and divert part of their social security contributions towards mandatory private retirement accounts – so-called “second pillars” – managed the financial services industry (Orenstein 2008; 2013). Yet, since the 2008 global financial crisis, CEE policy-makers began scaling down their second pillars and restoring the role of public provision (Drahokoupil and Domonkos 2012). Different countries have reversed pension privatization in different ways: While most countries (e.g. Baltic ones) have decided only to reduce contributions towards their second pillars, Hungary and Poland have – fully or partly - nationalized second pillar assets. Naczyk and Domonkos (2016) have argued that governments have been most likely to nationalize private accounts when the level of public debt and exposure of pension funds to domestic government bonds have been high. Hungary and Poland were indeed the countries that had the highest levels of public debt in CEE and their pension funds were most exposed to domestic sovereign bonds in the early 2010s.

Yet, these two countries – which were also the first CEE countries to partly privatize their pension systems in the late 1990s – have, in reality, followed different reversal trajectories. Viktor Orbán’s government has almost fully nationalized its pension funds and discontinued their existence while Poland (under the liberal-agrarian Tusk government) only nationalized the sovereign bonds that were held by second-pillar funds and has allowed them to continue existing. What explains these different reform trajectories?

Naczyk and Domonkos (2016) have already highlighted the fact that Polish pension funds traditionally invested a very large chunk of their portfolios in domestic equities and that this allowed business groups to resist their full nationalization (since a nationalization of domestic equities held by pension funds would result in a partial nationalization of the Polish economy). By contrast, Hungarian pension funds invested the large majority of their assets in domestic sovereign bonds and had very limited domestic equity holdings, thereby giving the Hungarian government more leeway to nationalize them. This paper delves deeper into this issue and argues that these different portfolio allocations of Hungarian and Polish pension funds have been the result of endogenous processes related to how pension privatization has been linked with the privatization

of state-owned companies in the two countries.

From the early 1990s, economists involved in post-communist structural reforms saw private pension funds as a potential vehicle for the development of capital markets and for the privatization of state-owned enterprises through the issuance of common stock of such companies on equity markets (Lipton and Sachs 1990; Fischer 1991). Through process tracing of two decades of pension reform in Hungary and Poland, the paper shows how this idea about stock market development was one of the drivers of pension privatization in the two countries, but also how it was implemented very differently. In Poland, pension privatization was intimately linked with the privatization of state-owned companies: Throughout the 2000s, second-pillar pension fund managers, the Warsaw Stock Exchange (WSE) and Poland’s privatization agency closely cooperated in order to have state-owned companies listed on the WSE, thereby creating a supply of domestic equities for second-pillar pension funds. In Hungary, similar plans were put forward by the Budapest Stock Exchange (BSE) and that country’s privatization agency in the early 1990s, but, by the time pension privatization was implemented (i.e. 1998-1999), Hungary’s largest state-owned companies had already been sold to foreign strategic investors, thereby limiting the potential for a listing of such companies on the BSE. Hungarian pension funds ended up having no domestic equities to buy into.

# Edyta Nowosielska (University of Cambridge) ‘“Polish” Third Culture Kids in the UK: challenges and advantages’

The paper is aimed at presenting and discussing the situation of Polish children or children of Polish origin children currently living in the UK. Children born in the UK and those who arrived there as young children belong to the so-called generation of Third Culture Kids (TCK). The choice of the topic was dictated by the need of confronting the real problems of these children with the benefits that flow from being a Third Culture Kid. What is the current Polish linguistic landscape in the UK, and what role and future do Polish children or these of Polish origin have in this country? Since 2004 the number of Poles living in the UK has increased dramatically. Since 2011 more than 20,000 children of Polish descent are born each year in the UK. How can we use the potential of young people and what can British universities do to effectively "utilize" the huge wave of tens of thousands of multilingual children of Polish descent in the immediate future? What are the advantages, but also the dangers of being a Third Culture Kid? Is missing cultural exclusivity is a problem or a facilitator in the present world? How could we help TCK and is there any need for such help? Who will young Poles living in the UK become in the future?

# Joanna Rzepa (Trinity College Dublin) ‘Language and the Politics of Memory: Jan Karski and Jan Gross in Translation’

My paper examines how (re)translations of historical texts interact with contemporary political narratives of the past. It focuses on English-Polish translation and the portrayal of Polish-Jewish relations during and immediately after World War II in Jan Karski’s *Story of a Secret State* (*Tajne państwo*) and Jan Gross’s *Fear* (*Strach*). Bringing together the methodologies of translation studies and critical discourse analysis, the paper argues that textual and paratextual revisions in subsequent editions of the two books are embedded in larger dominant narratives of the past. I

examine the role played by translations in the debates on the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish wartime relations to suggest that practices of translation and self-translation have a significant impact on memory politics and national identity formation. Thus, translators and publishers of translated texts can be viewed as political and historical agents, whose work simultaneously shapes and is shaped by cultural memory of the past in various national and historical contexts.

# Sara Young (UCL Institute of Education) ‘I moved with my Mum and my brother, my Dad is in Poland’: the changing nature of the contemporary transnational Polish family’

Since Poland’s accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004, Polish migration has increased exponentially. This has resulted in different forms of transnational relationships emerging, transnationalism here being understood as the way that individuals endeavour to maintain their identity across different countries and cultures. Previously, sustaining transnational relationships in terms of the family was often taken to refer to maintaining ties with grandparents or extended family. However, patterns of family migration are changing: while customarily the father has been responsible for making the initial move to migrate, increasingly it is the mother who is seen to make this step, often leaving the father in Poland. While there are some studies on maintaining family ties when one parent moves away temporarily to work, so far there has been little exploration of such permanent separation amongst migrating families. In my doctoral study investigating the experiences of Polish-born adolescents living in the UK, it transpired that several of the young people had divorced parents, and in the case of two of them, their fathers had remained in Poland. This paper presents the narratives of these two adolescents – Anna (aged 15) and Marek (aged 14)

– and explores the issues which arise from these stories. One is the limited amount of time the children are able to spend with their fathers, and how this impacts their relationship. Another challenge is that of language: neither father speaks English, which is fast becoming the adolescents’ main language. This further affects interaction between these children and their fathers. I argue that such issues can influence the way that these adolescents negotiate their transnational relationship with Poland. The paper thus aims to open a discussion on how transnational identities may be constructed amongst such adolescents.