

Polish Migration: Experiences and Concepts

Book of Abstracts

Session 1 (Thursday 10.20-11.40)

Aleksandra Kazłowska and Louise Ryan, 'Understanding dynamics and complexity of mobilities and settling processes: anchoring and differentiated embedding in dialogue'

This paper will bring together the concepts of *anchoring* (Kazłowska, 2016; 2018) and *differentiated embedding* (Ryan, 2018) to shed light to the dynamic and complex processes of mobility and settling processes of Polish migrants in the post-Brexit referendum UK. Our concepts of differentiated embedding and anchoring, which we have been developing over many years, offer alternative perspectives to the paradigm of integration predominant in European academic and policy debates, which is built on traditional assumptions, static categories and assimilationist expectations and therefore has been extensively criticised (e.g. Favell 2002; Dahinden 2013; Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore 2017). Korteweg (2017) argues the 'integration' is as a mainly discursive practice that tend to produce non-belonging, and Wessendorf and Phillimore (2018) call for a search for new ways of understanding processes of adaptation and belonging that move beyond simplistic visions of migrants integrating or not into a 'mainstream' society. In line with this, we have developed the concepts of differentiated embedding and anchoring to 'de-centre' this field of research. This paper will aim to present our concepts of differentiated embedding and anchoring in dialogue and bring them together, for the first time, to highlight the dynamics and complexity of mobilities and settling processes of Polish migrants in the contexts of the pre- and post-Brexit Britain. The paper will draw on long-term, longitudinal research of both authors, with Polish migrants, in two different urban localities - London and Birmingham - which allows not only for analysis over time but also for the comparisons of the processes of anchoring and differentiated embedding in different local contexts.

Agnieszka Trąbka and Paula Pustułka, 'From intentional to unintentional unpredictability? Arising risks and new migrant strategies in the face of Brexit'

Emergent literature dealing with the impacts of Brexit on the situation of the EU (esp. CEE) migrants living in the UK identifies two main themes. On the hand, scholars discuss the pervasiveness of uncertainty regarding the expected outcomes of the referendum for everyday life and long-term planning (e.g. employment, legal status). On the other hand, studies demonstrate less tangible disruptions of the sense of belonging to the host country, city or community (McGhee et al. 2017; Lulle et al. 2017, Tyrrell et al 2017). Based on the two qualitative studies conducted in 2018 and early 2019 among Polish migrants in the UK, we shed light on how migrants experience and tackle new risks since the 2016 Referendum. Specifically, we argue that there is a major shift in the situation of the cohort of those who arrived in early post-accession years and were characterized as deploying the strategy of "intentional unpredictability" (Eade et al. 2007) or 'deliberate indeterminacy' (Moriarty et al

2010). For the past decade, this group could be seen as increasingly socially anchored in the UK and the results of the Brexit vote and its fallout had tremendous effects on their “differentiated embedding” (Ryan, 2018). Thus, many of them exercise caution when asked about plans for the future. Besides an increase in deliberate pursuit of a new status (residency, citizenship) can be noted, many migrants “freeze” their life decisions about changing jobs or getting a mortgage to invest in own property. In this paper, we argue that there is a clear recurrence of the unpredictability theme in the narratives, yet the condition itself is different. When asked about their plans a decade ago, interviewees frequently responded with framing unpredictability or “weightlessness” (Favell, 2008) as an individual choice, a freedom that is not a burden but rather a sign of endless options they have. After the Referendum the answers might sound the same but – upon probing – we learn that the power has shifted and the structural – political and economic -conditions and risks now hinder individuals from fulfilling their plans. A broader contribution of this paper pertains to the importance of accounting for generation/ age cohort effects in examining migrants’ views, as we see specific sets of strategies that those in the life-course phases of early- and mid-adulthood typically deploy.

Session 2 (Thursday 12.10-1.30)

Gabriella Elgenius, ‘The role of social capital for labour market participation: Polish migrants in Sweden’

Little is known about the role of social capital generated by civil society for aiding labour market participation among migrant groups and ethnic communities. In order to assess the role of social capital, this study commence by exploring patterns of labour market participation among so called ‘foreign born’ groups with particular reference to Polish migrants on the Swedish labour market. This research builds on quantitative and qualitative material, with an emphasis of the latter. The analysis has been aided by previous work on Polish migration to the UK and will explore comparative patterns associated with civil society organisations and activism as well as external and internal discrimination and division. We are aware from research in the UK that the rewards from education are lower for recent Polish arrivals compared to earlier cohorts and that an ethnic penalty exist for the Poles too, a higher propensity of who are self-employed. This project is funded by the FORTE programme on *Challenges of Polarization on the Swedish Labour Market* and its workpage on Migration and Polarization.

Piotr Goldstein, ‘Migrant Activism Beyond Key Community Networks: Case study of Poles in Manchester’

This paper draws from my two recent research projects. The first one, focused on ‘everyday activism’ (Goldstein 2017), i.e. activism which happens outside of the framework of NGOs, charities and foundations but also outside of protest movements. Activism of people like Anna, who against anti-refugee policies of the Polish government and ignoring her own financial insecurity, arranges for Syrians to enter Poland as her private guests; or like Ilona

who without any organisational framework 'volunteers' tutoring for several hours every day a neighbourhood child from a deprived family. It aims to understand how these individuals situate their 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2008) (or perhaps rather 'acts of humanity?') performed beyond, against or in parallel to their engagement with others in formal NGOs and associations, informal groups and social movements. In this research, I draw parallels with my findings from Novi Sad, Serbia, where I studied how owners of independent (and often short-lived) bookshop-café oppose the 'economic moment' of today's life and place ethos over profit. They do so for instance by 'selling' books in languages of ethnic minorities, which they know hardly ever sell, but which they insist to have for the sake of keeping these languages present in the public space. There, I found that their acts contributed to an entire network of largely invisible activist endeavours motivated by individuals' feelings of responsibility and intents to (re)create different 'everyday utopias' (Cooper 2014). One particular focus of my research, and the topic of the second project, is the role played in such networks by migrants who engage in activism not for their own community's but for the 'majority'/'general' cause. I am interested in understanding why they engage in such activism and how their motivations and positioning are different from these of others. Are they driven by responsibility, a need to re-affirm their (social) citizenship, or yet by something else? In this presentation I will focus specifically on the case of Polish 'everyday activists' in Manchester and their (dis)connections with other segments of the 'Polish community' in the city.

Session 3 (Thursday 2.30-3.50)

Izabela Grabowska, 'International migration and the Total Human Capital Approach. A comparative analysis of migration of Poles, Slovaks and Mexicans'

This paper is about the intangible components of human capital affected by experiences of work and life abroad. It shows that despite the fact that many international migrants work in the destination countries below their formal qualifications, they can acquire and develop intangible human capital which is operationalised in this paper as *social skills*. I argue that migration is not only about gaining economic capital. It is a social process through which migrants acquire, develop and transfer social skills across their life courses. The paper is nested in the leading paradigm of *total human capital* approach which says that human capital should be viewed not only through its tangible variables such as education attainments, GDP growth and life expectancy but also through intangible components such as informal skills and competences acquired and developed throughout the life course and across different areas of human activities, including migration. Thus, the key aims of this paper are: (1) to explore briefly the skill portfolios of international migrants; (2) to explain relationships between experiences of work and life abroad and intangible components of human capital; (3) to explain how social skills are acquired as a result of international migration, in other words, the opportunity and constraint structures for their acquisitions and transfers; and (4) to explain how migration-affected social skills are transferred by migrants between localities and areas of human activity in the life course. This paper will be

based on data obtained through the application of *mixed-method* methodologies, mostly surveys and in-depth interviews. It brings together the three cases of mobility and work among Poles, Slovaks and Mexicans, where their intangible human capital was examined in-depth. In other words, the cases of Poles (Grabowska 2019; Grabowska and Jastrzebowska 2019) and Slovaks (Williams and Baláž 2004, 2005) are treated here as post-EU accession cases and are referenced to the contemporary Mexican case (Hagan et al. 2015). These cases are not studied comparatively but in reference to each other in order to strengthen the argument about the impact of international migration on social skills.

Justyna Sarnowska, 'Growing up on the move – internal and international migration trajectories of young adults with high educational aspirations'

Recently, we have been observing an increased interest in the significance of migration for the process of transition into adulthood (Eade et al. 2006, Crivello 2011, Punch 2015, King et al. 2015, King 2017, Moroşanu et al. 2018). The reason for this interest is related to the scale of moving young adults, especially in international spaces, which contributes to the emerging subdiscipline of *youth mobility studies* (Raffaetà et al. 2015, Robertson et al. 2018). It is important to emphasize that researchers of internal migration (Jones 1999, NiLaoire 2000, Gabriel 2006, Clivello 2011, and Punch 2015) were the first to begin to combine spacial mobility with transition into adulthood. There is no systematic elaboration so far that would indicate a clear difference between the process of *growing up on the move* of international migrants and the process of entering adulthood of those who move within one country. This paper aims to explain the role of internal and international migrations for transition into adulthood of aspiring young adults. The term "aspiring" refers to those individuals who have undertaken educational activity (successfully or not) at university level. To answer the question of the significance of various migration trajectories for transition into adulthood, there will be analysed the stories of young adults who (1) undertake only international migration; (2) experienced only internal migration and (3) experienced both forms of movement. Both differences and similarities in experiencing transition into adulthood between the internal, international and internal-international migrants and will be sought. The above considerations will be based on two sources: a doctoral research project (in-depth interviews with 44 people) and 'Peer groups & migration' project (Grabowska et al. 2017) (in-depth interviews with 111 people from 3 local communities).

Session 4 (Thursday 4.20-5.40)

Barbara Janta, 'Childbearing and migration. The relationship between Polish migrants' family building decisions and settlement in the UK/return to Poland'

This presentation sheds light on the complex relationship between the phenomena of settlement abroad / return migration and migrants' family building decisions. Given the demographic, social, political and economic situation in the UK and in Poland, one of the priorities of public policies in both countries is to have a better understanding of the factors that shape childbearing and migration decisions. This study helps (at least partly) to

disentangle the rationales behind settlement and the role of childbearing in the decision-making process. The study results are based on a doctoral study using a mixed method approach. The significant and unprecedented number of births to Polish mothers in the UK and the distinctive fertility patterns among Polish migrants raise questions about the importance of factors for fertility decisions. At the same time, as previous literature shows, being a parent decreases the likelihood of return as children anchor migrants in the UK. Making return decision is not easy, regardless of whether one is a parent or not. However, as this study highlights, the presence of children requires migrants to confront themselves about making rational decisions about the future and helps to justify the decision to stay in the UK. The work-life balance measures also encourage Polish families to settle abroad, with the ability to reconcile work and family life and the state support for working parents being considered by study participants as better in the UK. The lack of experience of the Polish labour market and worries that qualifications and skills gained abroad would not be recognised in Poland also discourage migrants from returning. The limited options for a 'double return' migration (White 2014) post-Brexit may also change Polish migrants' attitudes, if they are not ready to take a risk of never going back to the UK under the new legal provisions.

Marta Buler, Paula Pustułka and Dominika Winogrodzka, 'Millenials on the move? Gender, family roles and international mobility of young Polish women'

Although quite a substantial number of studies have focused on the international migration of Polish women, the main wave of gendered research on mobility covered the experiences of women who went abroad during 1980s and 1990s, up until about five years after EU accession (2009). In the context of examining the biographies of subsequent generations of women, existing studies investigate primarily the mobility paths of the Generation X. However, a decade later, migration continues to be present in the biographies of the Polish women from the Generation Y (i.e. Millennials). At the same time, traits that potentially differentiate the current mobility of the Polish women born between 1980 and 2000 from their migrant counterparts from earlier generations have not been explored. What is more, the majority of the analyses that pertain to the trajectories of Millennials illustrate their labour market experiences. In this presentation, we discuss how international mobility intersects with gender and social roles that young women take on in their personal/family life (e.g. being a partner, wife, mother, daughter, friend). While the generational theory constitutes a conceptual backdrop for this work, we analyze migrant biographies of Polish women through a comparative lens, specifically looking at transition markers in the family realm. The paper is based on empirical material from a Qualitative Longitudinal Study called "Peer-groups and Migration" (2016-2020, National Science Center Poland, Sonata-Bis 5 scheme). A subsample of narratives from two waves of interviews with internationally mobile women representing Gen Y was used for this analysis.

Session 5 (Friday 9.30-10.10)

Justyna Bell, 'Mental health and wellbeing among Polish migrants in Northern Ireland and Norway'

Despite the growing number of studies in migrant health, little is known about the effect that migration has on the mental health and wellbeing of the individuals and their families. A range of small-scale studies and reports from healthcare professionals and migrant support organisations indicate a growing concern about the mental health in migrants, often in the context of work-related stress, social isolation and loneliness. They are confronted by the double burden of dealing with everyday life challenges in a new, unfamiliar environment, and trying to maintain ties with the home country. They are additionally susceptible to social, economic, cultural and political exclusion. Deriving from several qualitative and quantitative studies conducted by the author, the proposed paper will discuss these issues using the examples of Polish migrants in Northern Ireland (NI) and Norway. The two countries present an interesting case for comparison: both experienced a large, unprecedented influx of Polish migrants from 2004, and also in both, Polish migrants are now the largest ethnic minority. There are also many differences between these two contexts: Polish migrants in NI often work in factories, food processing and recycling plants, whereas in Norway the majority of Polish workers found employment in the construction industry (and the cleaning sector for female workers). Unlike in NI, it is still very common for Polish men in Norway to split their time between work in Norway and family in Poland (there are still twice as many Polish men in Norway than women). The studies referred to in this paper indicate that Polish migrants in NI and in Norway appear to have high levels of depression, addictions (higher levels of gambling in NI and alcohol addiction in Norway) and suicides. These results will be discussed in the context of determinants of mental poor health in migrants.

Session 6 (Friday 10.30-12.30)

Adrian Favero, 'Shall I stay or shall I go? Assessing the influence of local conditions in Polish cities on transnational mobility strategies'

The global network opened for Poland after the fall of the communist system, but especially after it became a member state of the European Union (EU). With accession to the EU came also the option of free movement and transnational mobility. This opportunity in turn created new possibilities for urban residents, but the scholarly focus on macro-structural factors may overlook the impact of individual resources and local surroundings on exit strategies of well-educated Polish citizens. In contrast to other studies, I include all three levels of analysis when evaluating the incentives for migration of well-educated young residents living in urban spaces. The aim of this paper is to assess the decision-making process behind strategies for (trans-) national mobility through the eyes of highly skilled potential movers from Poland. Based on semi-structured interviews with MA students in three Polish cities, this study evaluates how perceived benefits of EU membership, attachment to place and social networks, and satisfaction with urban living conditions affect

the propensity to move amongst the urban educated youth. Evaluating the sampled students' restrictions and incentives from their perspective and *before* they move abroad offers an insight view into the social dynamics and political reality of long-term urban residents in Poland. The results confirm a complex interaction of individual cost-benefit analyses and attachment-driven factors that guide the interviewed students' decision-making process within the opportunity structure of EU integration. Furthermore, the rather nationalist domestic political landscape in Poland and the rising political tension between the country and the EU may influence exit strategies and mobility patterns.

Marta Buler, 'Family, migration and time – a case study of Polish return migrants through the lens of an unplanned qualitative longitudinal study'

Family is perceived as the most basic and the most important unit of society, due to its pivotal responsibility for raising new members of society and maintaining key norms, values and practices. Migration is considered as a formative experience not only for individuals but also for such groups as families. The conceptual framework of this paper relies on uncovering of the 'doing family' processes through the lens of social remittances. It also discusses the concepts of transnationalism and transnational family against the timescape. The presentation will be focused on data gathered in research among return migrants (four egos) and their families (six people). The study is an unplanned QLS among participants of the project *Cultural diffusion through social remittances between Poland and UK*. One ego out of four did not take part in the aforementioned study. The chosen method is IDIs with genogram visual presentation of family relations. Data has been analysed across individual cases (unplanned QLS) and family cases. In the presentation, individual cases are presented. The outcome shows that not all migrants are transnational and that time is underestimated dimension when we discuss the influence of migration on family life. In this perspective migration is one of many experiences and definitely is not the most important one.

Mariusz Dziegłowski, 'Homecomers and world citizens: life trajectories of Polish return migrants'

The presentation is based on the findings from the research project 'Coming Home to an (Un)familiar Country' (2018). The project focus was on both: (1) returning migrants' life trajectories, as seen by themselves, and (2) analysis of the structural processes that have taken place in the last three decades in Europe and in Poland. The project included in-depth interviews with returnees (n=40) and public statistical data exploration. Analysis of the social and cultural changes reflected in the biographies of returning migrants is governed by an original synthesis of Alfred Schütz's phenomenological approach and the social realism of Margaret Archer. The first grand theory has led the author to focus on the returnees' 'life words', while the second requires researchers to focus on the concerns and projects of individuals interacting with social and cultural structures. The research project was undertaken to answer the question: 'What strategies do returning migrants adopt in connection with their life cycles and the structural characteristics they perceive?' The juxtaposition of structural processes and returning migrants' subjective perceptions of their

trajectories enables the author to point out the taxonomy of returning migrants' strategies, understood as a constellation of six criteria: migrants' actions as the result of their perceptions of structural characteristics; patterns of reworking emotions in the migration cycle; pattern of social mobility; macro-structural consequences of returnees' actions; the meaning of place and social network patterns; identity and personality changes. Such a taxonomy makes it easier to understand the determinants of the complete re-acculturation process and the acceptance of social remittances. The presentation covers the multi-dimensional depiction of six return migrants' strategies revealed in the research project.

Session 7 (Friday 1.30-2.50)

Bolaji Balogun, 'Racialised Migration — from the perspective of colour in Poland'

Racialisation remains an important area of 'race' where, for centuries, the ways of life of people from the Middle East and Africa have been seen through the prism of Eurocentrism. Using different ways of representation, Europeans often represent the other as a European fantasy of exoticness, strange and foreign. It is a kind of representation that has been advanced in the discourses on 'race' and nation-state. Scholarship on migration is restricted in its understanding of movement of people. Whilst it engages well with the impact of in-out migration in Poland, it does not satisfactorily engage with or consider the processes in which non-white migrants are racialised. In this presentation, I examine the racial contour that is often neglected in migration discourses in Poland. In doing so, I draw on empirical data collected in different cities in Poland to demonstrate the racialisation of people of colour in the country. I argue that such representation puts immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and their children, either born or brought up in Poland, in a condition where their link to Polishness, if not disconnected, is fragmented through the process of racialisation. Hence, I situate the European migration crisis within the representation of those racialised as White, Black or Brown.

Alexandra Bulat, "Romanian cleaners and Polish labourers": Romanian and Polish responses to stereotypes and their own attitudes towards "the other"

This presentation explores attitudes towards migration in the context of Brexit, focussed on the views and experiences of 25 Romanian and Polish residents living in two local authority areas in England - Newham and Tendring. First, it looks at participants' attitudes towards their co-nationals and their reactions to certain stereotypes circulating about Romanian and Polish people in the UK. Second, it analyses participants' attitudes towards 'the other' expressed in the interviews, such as non-EU migrants, other Europeans, or British people. The qualitative interview data reveals a mixture of attitudes, which are almost always expressed in reference to anecdotes from personal experience or direct experiences at the local level. While participants reject some stereotypes they heard about their nationalities or 'Eastern Europeans' more broadly, they recognise others as having a basis in 'reality'.

Session 8 (Friday 3.20-4.30)

Anne White, 'UK-born Invisible Poles and "sufficient integration" into society in Poland'

In his book *Identity in Flux: the Polish Community in Great Britain*, Keith Sword describes the activism of Poles who came to the UK after the Second World War, but also, from the 1970s, the decline of Polish community organisations. In his final sentence, Sword (1996: 233) wrote that 'While it seems rash to make predictions, it seems likely – unless unforeseen changes take place – that only London and a handful of provincial metropolitan centres will retain organised Polish communities of any viability in twenty years' time'. That unforeseen change occurred after 2004. The Invisible Poles project picked up the story where Sword left off. Kinga Goodwin and I conducted interviews with 28 people born in the UK who self-defined as invisible Poles. They came forward because they had stories to tell: the metaphor of becoming visible – which they interpreted in different ways – seemed relevant to them. They brought different perspectives, as teachers, interpreters, social workers, doctors, dog owners, postgraduate students and others. My paper analyses what the interviewees said about Poland, where many were now spending more time, without having 'returned' to settle. In contrast to much of the scholarship on 2nd and 3rd generation returnees to other countries, but in keeping with the arguments of my recent co-authored book *The Impact on Migration on Poland*, I look at the idea that Polish society spreads over international borders. I ask whether Polish society is gaining new recruits in the person of these increasingly visible British-born Poles. My paper discusses different domains of their integration into Polish society in Poland, taking into account Ager and Strang's (2004) suggestion that successful integration needs only to be 'sufficient' for each individual migrant to feel confident to operate in the receiving society.

Kinga Goodwin, 'Making invisible visible: performance of Polish identity amongst UK-born Poles in post-2004 Britain'

This presentation is based on the interview material collected as part of the research project 'Invisible Poles' and the new prominence of Polish people in the UK society since Poland's EU accession'. In this talk I will discuss the ways in which some British-born people of Polish origin joined post-2004 Polish infrastructure and communities, and the manner in which this affected the way they understand and perform their Polish identity. Born in the UK, and invisible as Poles to both Polish migrants and the British (and often to each other), our respondents developed various distinctive approaches to making parts of their identity visible or invisible, especially when faced with the realities of the emergent post-EU landscape. In particular, I will discuss the use and renewed acquisition of Polish language, especially when utilised in contact with new arrivals and within new situations that did not previously require the use of the Polish language. The imminent threat of Brexit brought into focus the more procedural aspects of being a Pole, such as applying (or not) for a Polish passport, while changing attitudes to Poles were also discussed, often evoking childhood memories of discrimination. Unlike Polish migrants, British-born Poles have different tools to accentuate or hide their identities at their disposal: this presentation will showcase the way in which societal changes such as the Polish migration wave of 2004 and the current post-Brexit reality affected our interviewees' Polish identity performance. This talk will

attempt to present identity revival stories in changing cultural and political circumstances, and provide examples of the transformation between the invisible and visible.