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Polish return migrants. Analysis of selected decision-making processes

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The scale and size of post-accession migration of Poles, especially to the British Isles, was surprising not only for the Polish side. The countries that opened their labour markets for the citizens of the new member states also failed to predict such a massive inflow of Polish nationals. Returning to the home country, however, does not get as much media attention as emigrating. This type of migration was not the subject of such heated discussions and analyses as emigration. The objective of the article is to sociologically describe the re-emigrants and answer questions concerning the motives for emigrating and returning, as well as how the emigration decision is assessed in retrospect. The paper is based on in-depth interviews conducted with individuals who had emigrated from Poland following the enlargement of the European Union and decided to return to their home country after a few years. Importantly, in order to detect readaptation problems, the respondents were selected from amongst those remigrants who had already been living in Poland for one to three years. The article shall present the results of these studies and the classifications of emigration, returns and remigrants.

Key words: migrations, remigration, Silesia Province, typology of migrant decisions

Introduction

The returns of individuals who decided to emigrate from Poland after the expansion of the European Union provide considerable scope for sociological analyses. The reason is that it is not just emigration “forever”, which was typical of the previous migra-

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tory waves from Poland. Neither is it the classic circular migration, even though the ease with which people can travel today enables them to visit their homeland with a certain degree of regularity. The return to the homeland is not permanent either, because the migrants themselves remain open to potential emigration in the future. The mobility possibilities following the transformations in Poland and Europe have led to something which so far had not been known to Polish emigrants, namely the feeling of temporariness in a new place. While those who emigrated in the 1970s and 1980s were aware of the need to settle in their new country as soon as possible, the post-accession migrants live with the conviction that they will always be able to return to their homeland if something goes wrong. It is also the form of everyday contacts, e.g. internet communicators, budget airlines, that promote a greater sense of safety and security. And this has an impact on the way of life abroad.

In the circle of theory

The Silesia Province had already experienced a massive outflow of native Silesians who took advantage of their origin and emigrated in large numbers to the Federal Republic of Germany³. Similarly, after the enlargement of the European Union, the emigrants

³ Upper Silesia is a typical borderland whose state affiliation has changed over centuries. These changes, especially after 1945, were accompanied by intensified migration processes. In addition, the region of Upper Silesia is one of the most densely populated and urbanised in Poland. In the past, it was considered as highly industrialised (with heavy industry) and with stable and well-paid jobs, which made it attractive for those willing to work in industry. This has consequences for the identity of the inhabitants of the region, bringing strong divisions between 'we' – the native inhabitants, Silesians, and 'they' – the newcomers, non-Silesians. The Silesia Province, where we conducted our research, does not only consist of Upper Silesia. It includes Cieszyn Silesia, but also the areas of Zagłębie and Małopolska (Lesser Poland), regions with a different history and identity of the inhabitants.

In the Middle Ages, the Upper Silesia region was under Polish, Great Moravian and Czech rule. Then, it became a part of the Habsburg Empire. After the Silesian Wars (1740–1742, 1744–1745 and 1756–1763), Lower and Upper Silesia came under Prussian rule, while the regions of Cieszyn and Opava Silesia remained under the rule of Austria. This duality has left its traces in the region's culture, language and identity. After the First World War, as a result of the poll in Upper Silesia (1921) and three Silesian Uprisings (1919, 1920 and 1921), the region was divided between Poland and Germany. It was a time of its great prosperity thanks to the development of industry – mainly hard coal mining and metallurgy. In the interwar period, the Silesia Province (within borders other than today) was an autonomous region, with a very favourable financial settlement based on its own treasury, constituting an important element of regional memory. It was also a time of influx of officials and people from Lesser Poland and Central Poland as well as a time of ethnic divisions.

During the Second World War, the territory of Upper Silesia was incorporated into the Third Reich, with all the consequences, including compulsory service in the Wehrmacht, or granting German citizenship to the inhabitants of the region. After 1945, Upper Silesia (as well as Lower Silesia and a part of Cieszyn Silesia) was back within the borders of Poland. This was a period of verification (in the part remaining until 1945 in Germany) and rehabilitation (in the part incorporated during World War II) of the native population. This was also a time of displacement of the German population (the Potsdam displacement process) as well as of mass movements of people from the eastern borderlands of Poland to the former

were mainly young, resourceful and relatively well-educated people (often in a sense of their profession). However, this is where the similarities end in most cases. The first was usually no-return emigration, and if the emigrants did return home, it mainly happened after many years, as a plan for retirement⁴. Post-accession migrations revealed a new issue, namely the aspects of becoming independent and entering adulthood, and – at the same time – improving one’s economic situation. Post-accession migrations of young people, mainly due to the delayed (compared with previous generations) decision to start a family and the longer period of education, are to a greater extent a kind of ritual of passage, a proof of adulthood. What is also important is that, contrary to previous generations, today’s emigrants in their twenties and thirties are not burdened by family responsibilities. This fundamentally changes their situation on the labour market, flexibility and mobility. It is not necessarily emigration “for the sake of children” or “to guarantee their children a better life”, but a preliminary stage of founding a family. It is a kind of self-test, without a concrete plan. These observations are confirmed by sociologists. As noted by Izabela Grabowska-Lusińska, migration does not need to be a causative action which assumes fulfilment of previously set goals. Furthermore, according to the researcher, neither does it have to be a fully rational and intentional action. It may be both a constituent element of a career path and a partially rational action, or even an irrational, unforeseen, unplanned

German territories. Writing about migrations of that period, the Polish historian, Krystyna Kersten, referred to the Poles as “the nation living out of a suitcase” (Kersten, 1986). The contact of two groups of the Polish population had a huge impact on the identity of inhabitants of the region and, as a consequence, was one of the factors encouraging them to emigrate to Germany. Due to the fact that the region was part of the German state, its inhabitants possessed or inherited the right to German citizenship. This was regulated, among others, by Article 116 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany as well as Article 4 of BVFG (Federal Expellees Act).

In the post-war period, there were several waves of migration of the German and native Silesian population from Poland, which was due to various factors. In this respect, complex family roots cannot be regarded as insignificant. There was also a sense of temporariness in the region related to the uncertain status of the western border of Poland. After the normalisation of relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Polish People’s Republic in 1970, the Polish authorities agreed to the departure of Polish citizens entitled to German citizenship. At that moment, a mass migration to Germany took place, which was mainly based on economic and political issues. The departures were “legal” – based on documents handled in Poland (the waiting period for a permit often took years) and “illegal” – upon invitation, based on a tourist and transit visa. The departure was prepared in secret, and the formalities related to German citizenship were already done in Germany. The latter method was especially frequent in the 1980s. In total, according to German statistics (www.destatis.de), 969383 Polish citizens went to Germany “for the reason of origin” from 1970 to 1990. As shown by German (Arnold 1985, Harmsen 1983 and others) as well as Polish research (Korbel 1977, Trzcielińska-Polus 1997), most emigrants came from Upper Silesia. During this time, many workers recruited to work in industry from other parts of Poland arrived in the Upper Silesian Industrial District.

⁴ This is a common strategy among Upper Silesians living in Germany. Many of them still have houses in Poland. The issue was often raised in research conducted by Justyna Kijonka as part of the DAAD Project “Die Welten der (Spät-) Aussiedler aus Oberschlesien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland” [*The Worlds of (Late) Emigrants from Upper Silesia in the Federal Republic of Germany*].

and unprepared action (Grabowska-Lusińska 2012: 9). Analysing interviews with remigrants, who were primarily young people, we reached similar conclusions, especially with regard to issues concerning the spontaneity of emigration.

The Silesia Province is one of the most urbanised regions of the country, with industry, technologies and corporations that have their seats and branch offices there. Additionally, which is not without significance, the region has a good transport infrastructure and lies close to Kraków, which offers job and development prospects. The majority of our interviewees are young people, students or graduates of higher education institutions. However, a diploma will not necessarily be regarded – in the context of migration – as a factor increasing its holder's chances on the labour market. "[Being] a graduate is not in itself sufficient to be regarded as highly skilled in labour market terms. Since many graduates are not employed in jobs requiring high-level expertise. Conversely, many people whose work is deemed to be highly skilled are not graduates. Skills can be acquired through experience rather than by education or training, and there is a strong case for distinguishing between skills-based and qualifications-based procedures for recognizing a migrant's professional expertise" (Koser and Salt 1997: 287, as cited in Achenbach 2015: 41). Therefore, many newly-minted graduates took up jobs below their formal education level, as opposed to individuals with vocational education working in their acquired or similar profession.

As noted by experts, it is incomparably less common for return migrations to become the subject of scientific reflection. As a result, there are fewer definitions of the phenomenon or classifications of return migrants (cf. Grabowska-Lusińska 2012: 9). We have adopted the following definition of return migration: "return migration can be defined as 'the process of people returning to their country or place of origin after a significant period of time in another country or region'" (King 2000: 8, as cited in L. Macková, J. Harmáček, 2019). No consideration was taken of the so-called second generation reemigration. A remigrant was a person born in Poland "who, having settled abroad, returned to Poland for good" (Iglicka, ed. 2002, as cited in Grabowska-Lusińska 2012:9). Another issue is the way of looking at return migrations, depending on the paradigm adopted (cf. Cessarino 2004: 269). It goes from *neoclassical economics* that classifies returns as failures, because – according to this concept – the winners of the migration process stay in the country to which they emigrated, to *cross-border social network theory* that underlines the remigrants' agency and treats their return to the country in terms of a step to the completion of the migration project (Cassarino, 2004a:15). Obviously, it is a kind of continuum, because *new economics of labour migration* also regards a remigrant as a man of success who has fulfilled his goals and feels attached to his homeland. This attachment to the homeland is also highlighted in *structuralism* (Cerese 1974) and *transnationalism*.

With regard to the post-accession period, the situation of Polish return migrants and their motives is complicated from the research perspective because "the post-accession mobility, due to its flexibility ..., it eludes clear-cut criteria and sociological

research tools” (Grabowska-Lusińska 2012: 9). Despite these problems arising out of the specificity of post-accession migration, it is possible to apply the classical models of re-emigration and remigrant classification, as is also done by other researchers. An example of classical deliberations is the study by Cerase dedicated to Italian return migrants from the United States. This concept assumes the following reasons for return: *return of failure*, *return of conservatism*, *return of innovation* and *return of retirement*. In the case of post-accession remigrants, an interesting group is the one categorised as *return of conservatism*, encompassing those who always treated emigration in terms of temporariness, and the closely related group categorised as *return of innovation* – with successful people returning due to an improvement in the economic situation in their country of origin, which makes it possible for them to fulfil their previously set goals and utilise their newly-acquired skills (cf. Iglicka 2010: 28–28, Cekiera 2014, Achenbach 2015: 121, 46–47). With regard to the migrant categories we analysed, according to King’s typology, the majority of migrants fell under the category of “return migration”. Only a few represented the model of “transilient migration” or “second-time migration” (cf. King 2000).

However – in the opinion of Ewa Nowicka – for return migrations, it is not only important who returns (the personal aspect) and after what period of time (the time aspect), but also where this person returns (the geographic aspect) „the geographic aspect: one should research whether the place of return is exactly the same place (village, city, local or regional community), wherefrom the previous emigration occurred. It can also be a less precisely defined region such as the country of origin, and the territory of national state”. (Nowicka 2008: 11–12). Our studies concerned the return migration of people emigrating abroad and returning to the Silesia Province (in most cases, to their home town). At least one year spent abroad was treated as a significant period of time. Following the deliberations by Ewa Nowicka, migrants can be categorised even more precisely by the area of return – it may be a return to the place from which they emigrated, to the region or country, or to a country formed while they were living in diaspora, or – last but not least – to the continent they come from.

Methodology

The research aimed at determining, among others, the motives of emigration, the assessment of life in a foreign land, as well as the reasons for return and the re-emigrants’ quality of life, was conducted in the years 2016–2018 in the Silesia Province. The research team was composed of three sociologists from the University of Silesia, namely Justyna Kijonka, Monika Żak and Rafał Cekiera. The research concept was developed on the basis of a project funded from the grant for young researchers of the Institute of Sociology of the University of Silesia in Katowice.

The research material was obtained from standardised interviews with post-accession re-emigrants. The study encompassed 38 individuals who, after Poland's accession to the European Union, emigrated to one of its member states and then returned to Poland, which was a prerequisite for the subsequent analysis. An additional criterion for the selection of respondents was the fact of their residence in Poland for at least one year after return. The respondents were selected using the "snowball" method – it was the respondents themselves who indicated which individuals met the recruitment criteria for the study. The interviews were divided into three main thematic areas concerning the personal and professional situation of the respondent before leaving the country, the reasons for emigration from Poland, the assessment of life as an emigrant, the motives for returning to the home country, the assessment of the appropriateness of this decision arising out of the respondent's current personal and professional situation. The study included 22 women and 16 men, who represented quite a diverse group in terms of age, as the youngest of the return migrants was 22 years old and the oldest 45. The largest group was represented by individuals with higher education – 22 respondents, 15 respondents had secondary education and three respondents had basic vocational education. The vast majority of interviewees remained in a formal marriage or permanent informal relationship. The present article will primarily present the results from the analysis of the motives behind emigration and the reasons for returning to Poland. The analysis was also enhanced by a typology of migrants according to the motives that made them decide to emigrate.

The reasons for emigration

The post-accession remigrants from the Silesia Province whom we interviewed are primarily young people who had decided to go abroad after examining the situation on the domestic labour market. Those were usually freshly-minted graduates earning their living from temporary jobs:

So, before emigrating, I had completed my studies. After graduation, I was looking for a job in my profession for almost a year, but I didn't find any and I went to England (a 32-year-old man).

It should be noted that many of our interviewees were freshly-minted university graduates who had not found their place on the labor market in the home country, which is why they decided to emigrate. However, most of them undertook low-paid jobs abroad. The authors of the study "Class and Ethnicity: Polish Migrant Workers in London" drew attention to this paradox, concluding that: "many recent Polish migrants have relatively high levels of education despite the majority being employed in low waged jobs" (Eade, Drinkwater, Garapich, 2007: 36). A similar opinion was expressed by Polish researchers: "Poles have held a high standing also in terms of education,

which is higher than other immigrants and native Brits. Unfortunately, education does not seem to translate into success on the job market” (Fomina, Frelak 2008).

There were also interviewees whose permanent job in Poland was low-paid or provided them with no satisfaction, or even led to professional burnout. Issues such as a lost job and the risk of long-term unemployment also came up in the interviews.

There were also individuals who decided to emigrate for educational purposes, including scholarships, longer training stays and internships:

I studied there; I was accepted to the music academy in Aarhus. No Erasmus, just a standard study period (a 23-year-old-woman).

Actually, I have been twice. Once, as part of the Erasmus programme – it was for 10 months in the academic year of 2006/2007. Then, I went for the second time, as part of my scholarship which I was granted from the region of Rhône-Alpes for one year. It was the academic year of 2009–2010. And then I stayed till the end, I mean till the holidays, after which I went to London and spent the rest of the year doing my internship in London. Then I wanted to stay there longer so I prolonged my internship, but after that I decided, well... what the purpose of all this was (a 32-year-old woman).

There are respondents who emigrated and were able to continue their work for their Polish employer remotely abroad. This was the case for one of our female interviewees, whose husband had got a job in Germany:

After graduation, I was looking for a job. For a while, I worked in my profession as a teacher of Polish as a foreign language, and later this job became temporary. I started to look for a permanent one and I found a vacancy in an agency that was... I mean in an employment agency which sent women to work abroad in Germany as carers for elderly people. My responsibility was to recruit individuals and verify their knowledge of German and the general predispositions for the job The idea to emigrate was linked to the job of my husband, who had been offered a contract abroad. And we simply decided to change our place of living (a 29-year-old woman).

Therefore, while analysing the statements of our interviewees (post-accession re-emigrants) in the Silesia Province, it is possible to divide them in terms of their socio-professional situation into the following five categories⁵:

⁵ Based on the carried out interviews, the typology of return migrants was constructed. Unfortunately, the framework of this article does not allow for a broader discussion of the classic typology of Polish post-accession migrants, including one of the best known by researchers from the Center for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism at the University of Surrey. They distinguished: *Storks* – circular migrants, *Hamsters* (migrants whose main purpose is to raise capital), *Searchers*, who are “young, individualistic and ambitious migrants. They occupy a range of occupational positions from low-earning to highly skilled and professional jobs” (Eade, Drinkwater, Garapich, 2007: 34), and *Stayers* who “intend to remain for good” (Eade, Drinkwater, Garapich, 2007: 34). The classification of emigrants from Poland was also proposed by Rafał Cekiera and included *homo oeconomicus* and *homo viator* (Cekiera, 2014).

1. a student or a graduate who cannot find a permanent job and making his/her living from temporary jobs based on “junk” contracts,
2. a student or a doctoral (post-graduate) student emigrating for educational purposes – studies, scholarships, specialist long-term courses,
3. an individual working under an employment contract in Poland – a low-paid job, a lack of job satisfaction,
4. an individual working under an employment contract in Poland – the possibility of continuing employment abroad,
5. an individual with an attractive job offer or a contract abroad,
6. young individuals looking for new experiences,
7. young individuals for whom the migrational „lightness of being” is a way of life.

Most of our respondents knew the language of their target country – it was usually English which also made it possible to find a job in non-English-speaking countries. However, as many of them note, they learned English at school and it was only after going abroad that they were learning the real, living language and its dialects:

I had a communicative command of English. However, the conversational Irish English is completely different, I mean you need a few days to get used to the Irish people’s pronunciation, which is very specific (a 35-year-old woman).

I knew only what I learnt at school. Frankly speaking, when I was going there, I thought I knew English, but the first couple of days was a nightmare (a 36-year-old woman).

Besides language skills, a significant role was also played by issues related to education and profession. Freshly-graduated students usually worked below their formal qualifications, and the university degree was not the determining factor in landing a job. In the case of individuals who had already marked a longer presence on the Polish labour market, the situation looked a little bit different. Finding a job in one’s profession was easiest for engineers and IT specialists who often already had a guaranteed job while going abroad or found it relatively easy to land one upon arrival, and treated the emigration itself as an opportunity to enhance their qualifications.

A low-paid job in Poland, marriage, and we had a choice between living in ... with either my or my wife’s in-laws and renting some place because we had no money to buy any flat. Me and my wife, we were both thinking about emigration, and when we got married, we decided to emigrate together. So the reason was economic. And, of course, the adventure; I was leaving automatically, with a view to working in my profession, not “on util” (a 39-year-old man).

Although the emigrants from Poland were relatively well-educated, having a sound vocational education also gave them a chance to find a job in one’s occupation or

a similar one. However, the primary role was played by personality features, such as the ease of learning new occupations and acquiring new skills.

The remigrants most commonly emigrated for **economic, personal** and **educational** reasons. The determining issue in the majority of cases was the **economic** aspect related to the lack of an adequately paid job in Poland. However, there were people for whom emigration was a kind of way of life, and the change of residence or work was undertaken spontaneously. It should be noted that the decisions about both emigration and return were also motivated by non-economic factors. Thus, besides the economic issues, a significant role was played by **personal** aspects, when the emigrants decided to emigrate in order to become independent, to a partner or a family member who had already been abroad:

I still had my ex-boyfriend and it was him that we visited [laughter] (a 32-year-old woman).

You mean, what made me... [thinking]. First, well, in the beginning a visit to my sister, as she was the first to emigrate. Then, a job offer came up and I could go, so. I arranged for an unpaid leave, for three months to start with, and then the three months turned into one and a half years (a 42-year-old woman).

There were also instances when a partner or husband wanted to go abroad and the couple emigrated together. A crucial role was also played by acquaintances, even though the relationship with them abroad – as it later turned out – was often put to the test.

Scholarships, studies or internships abroad, on the other hand, were the **educational** motive, with the decisive factor being, in particular, the acquisition of new professional competences and learning a foreign language.

Due to the relatively young age of the respondent remigrants and their lack of family commitments while taking the decision to emigrate, the emigration was **spontaneous** in the majority of cases, e.g. going abroad together with one's acquaintances who decided to emigrate, extending one's holiday or visit abroad:

I did not think much, it was a spontaneous decision and I wanted to leave (a 34-year-old man).

No, it was a spontaneous decision. Our acquaintances emigrated and said it was great. They had been there for two months and we suddenly decided. I went abroad with my partner, well two months, immediately after graduation – two or three months (a 29-year-old man).

There were obviously many instances where emigration was the result of a previously prepared and well-thought-out decision:

It was a well-thought-out decision taken a few weeks beforehand. Then followed the preparations, so it was a time to become familiar with the decision, and say goodbye to the family and friends (a 42-year-old man).

The last statement indicates a very important, **collective** aspect of emigration.

Our respondents most often went abroad **individually** for educational purposes – to a specific higher education institution, for a training course or to get a job which they already secured while still in Poland. It was more common, however, to go abroad individually to **join somebody** who had already been there – in most cases, a partner or a family member. The family usually plays an important role in the migration process. Not only does it provide support before emigration and after arrival abroad, but it is also the reason for people to return to their home country. The reactions to the emigration decisions varied from objection through acceptance to encouragement to emigrate, for example, by finding a higher education institution and offering financial support. Most of the reactions can be summarised with the following statement:

Well, my mother asked us to give it a good thought. But generally, we were all adults, so you know. She was surely worried but she was for (a 36-year-old woman).

Most of the remigrants assessed their emigration decisions in terms of profits and losses. The positive aspects of emigration include, above all, learning a foreign language, acquiring new professional skills, and meeting one's life partner. For a number of young people, emigration marked the beginning of adulthood and independence, gave them courage and broadened their horizons.

There is something, for sure. For example, the language... courage, one could say, because you need to be brave out there to find a job and speak with people in a foreign language, or so. Strength, charisma, maybe something like this, because you need to be strong there. You have nobody, you have to rely on yourself. You will not get your money from anyone else, well, I was not keen on borrowing anyway. But the fact is you had to rely on yourself, because there was nobody out there to help you. Generally speaking, this is what you learn when you live abroad. I had to rely on myself (a 32-year-old woman).

The personal aspect of emigration is the most important one for the interviewees. Difficult separation from one's family, a dramatic relationship break-up and many individuals simply felt that they had missed something in Poland. Therefore, some remigrants experience mixed feelings:

I have different feelings – sometimes I think it's good we took such a decision, because we learned a lesson out of it, we have something, a kind of experience in our life. And sometimes I think, for example, that if I had not emigrated, I do not know now, perhaps I could be doing something else. There are different thoughts, one cannot say definitely. Sometimes I think I regret, sometimes not. This is quite ambiguous (a 36 year-old woman).

The respondents themselves admit that they often worked below their formal education level for many hours in exhausting conditions. They also changed their job quite often during their stay abroad. Furthermore, there was no stability in terms of

accommodation, hence the relatively frequent removals within the same city, from one city to another, or even to another country. However, what the migrants mention as an important and pleasant experience is the multiculturalism. On the one hand, the interviewees like the atmosphere of multiculturalism and appreciate the opportunity to go to “ethnic” bars as well as they have many friends from other cultures. On the other hand, they see the negative aspects of multicultural and multi-ethnic societies, which are usually hidden behind political correctness. Thus, a certain paradox emerges that is reflected in the following statement – I like multiculturalism abroad, on emigration, but I would not necessarily like to have it in my home country. Similar opinions were expressed in relation to the Polish labour market and its possible opening to emigrants. This illustrates an underlying sense of superiority towards immigrants from Eastern Europe and non-European countries. The respondents are reluctant to receive refugees and economic migrants. They are in favour of a certain filtering of people arriving in Poland, even though they benefited from the open labour market themselves.

The issue of remigration has recently become as important as the issue of emigration itself. It is all the more interesting that, in a number of cases, the decision to return from emigration is much more difficult than the emigration process. It is not uncommon for emigrants to postpone this decision for fear of how their family and people from the nearest environment would react. This is because many of them are convinced that a return is tantamount to being a failure at living in a foreign country. Our research shows, however, that returns are often not the result of low assessment of the quality of life abroad, but of the family situation in the home country. Moreover, the life after return often looks different than the remigrants imagined.

The motives for returns to the homeland

The latest research of the Central Statistical Office shows that for the first time since Poland’s accession to the European Union there has been a decrease in the number of people emigrating from Poland to the countries of the European Community.⁶ It is a kind of novelty demonstrating both a change of opinion on the living standards abroad (to a large extent related with Great Britain’s decision to leave the European Union – Brexit) and an assessment of the current economic situation in Poland (related to the implementation of social programmes, including Family 500+ social benefit programme). Fearing the consequences of Brexit, many Poles decided to return to Poland in order to start their daily lives from scratch – enriched with new professional and social competences, and perhaps capital. In a number of cases, it was related to a certain revolution in the life of migrants and their families, which brought about various consequences.

⁶ <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/migracje-zagraniczne-ludnosci/informacja-o-rozmiarach-i-kierunkach-czasowej-emigracji-z-polski-w-latach-2004-2018,2,12.html>. Access: 30.11.2019.

The decision to return to the home country can be well-thought-out or spontaneous. According to Cassarino, the important element is the level of readiness to return and a suitable return preparation. "To be successfully achieved, return preparation is a process which requires time, resources and willingness on the part of the migrant. In other words, there exist various degrees of return preparation which differ from one another in terms of resource mobilisation and preparedness." (Cassarino 2004: 17). The research results demonstrate that the process of return is closely related to its cause. The professional and personal situation varied across interviewees. Contracts and/or fixed-term stays abroad focused on education or performance of a certain assignment caused the smallest problem in terms of returns to the home country – in this case, the respondents did not have to go through a complex decision-making process as they had been aware of the termination date of their migration stay since the very beginning. In their opinion, such an approach is the least problematic because it is possible to plan the conditions for stay, travel plans and the entire logistics related to transportation and removal well in advance. Such a type of migration, which is described in the literature as "long-lasting temporariness" (cf. Grzymała-Kozłowska 2005), was most common before Poland's accession to the European Union – migrants had a plan (goal) to implement and returned after reaching it. This category of migrants King defines as "»target migrants« who migrate to work abroad in high income countries in order to achieve a certain amount of savings which they plan to invest in some project back home – a new house, for instance, or a shop or small business." (King 1986). The respondents were bound by contracts under which they stayed in the emigration country:

(...) it was a one-year contract, probably, yes, that's right. It was a contract for one year and I had to return. If this contract had been longer, I would surely have stayed for the next years (a 34-year-old man).

The results of the present research indicate that fix-term stays were in a substantial minority. In the majority of cases, the respondents emigrated without knowing how much time they would spend abroad. Therefore, they had no concrete return plans. In many cases, the return was very spontaneous. The respondents declared that their return decision was taken during their holiday stay in Poland and they ended up sending an SMS to their superiors in the country of emigration with information about their resignation. Unforeseen circumstances may lead to the decision to immediately return to the home country – King classifies this type of return migration as „unintended return“. "Such unintended returns take place for a number of reasons. First, there are migrants who are forced to return by some circumstance beyond their control such as loss of job or a family crisis back home." (King 1986). Nowadays, this type of migration is typical of post-accession emigrants who appreciate the freedom of movement in the European Union, and this phenomenon has been referred to as

intentional unpredictability (cf. Drinkwater, Eade and Garapich 2009). The freedom of movement as well as a sense of freedom and spontaneity give migrants the opportunity to smoothly control their professional situation in the EU.

I just went there for the second time for a holiday and I e-mailed my boss that I was not coming back (a 24-year-old man).

We have come here (to Poland – the authors’ note) for a wedding and were supposed to go back there. But as we were arranging for the things, it turned out that there was a bar for sale in our place – had always been a prosperous business as the only pub in the area. Because the owners were elderly people, they could no longer run this business, so there was an option to buy it real cheap. That’s why this decision was taken suddenly that, after the wedding, we were not flying back. We had some savings so we decided to start the business. It came up so unexpectedly that I decided not to go back there. I went there for only ... three days to deal with all the matters and that’s it (a 36-year-old man).

The process was very slow and it did not take us long to make a decision when it would happen, until the moment when it turned out I was pregnant. Then, we packed up and returned. We had quite the opposite plan – to return first and then, but it failed (a 39-year-old woman).

(...) I am kind of more spontaneous and I just decided to pack up and let things happen. I will come back to Poland, and it seems to me that I will return to England, when things go wrong (a 33-year-old man).

It can be noted that Great Britain is still a very attractive destination for Polish emigrants. This is probably due to several of the most important reasons (mentioned by the interviewees themselves) such as: language competence – English is the most common foreign language spoken by Poles; cultural openness – the respondents admit that during their stay in the UK they did not feel “different” as they were part of the multicultural community; the experiences of other migrants – thanks to the widespread migration to the British Isles, many Poles, who have lived and are still living there, can provide advice and substantive support to those who are just going to move to the UK. It should be emphasised that after Brexit, it is uncertain how the UK’s migration policy will be shaped – however, it can be assumed that the number of Poles emigrating to the British Isles will decrease significantly due to the uncertainty of rules and laws they will be subject to in the country of migration.

Various unforeseen factors caused the respondents to decide, as a matter of fact, overnight, to return to Poland. Yet, the decision to return is also often delayed, because it represents a kind of unknown – the respondents did not know what to expect after returning to the home country, which meant that the process of return migration was spread out in time. In this case, we can see an analogy to the approach of Cassarino, who analysed return migrations in the context of a process that requires a high level of awareness and a lot of preparation from the migrant. “Preparedness

pertains not only to the willingness of the migrant to return home, but also to his readiness to return. In other words, the returnee's preparedness refers to a voluntary act that must be supported by the gathering of sufficient resources and information about post-return conditions at home (i.e., readiness)." (Cassarino 2004: 17).

It was, so to speak, a maturing decision, which I already took together with my husband. We came to a conclusion that it was necessary to make a decision whether to return or to stay in Ireland forever, and as we both felt professionally unfulfilled, we decided to close all our issues and return to Poland (a 35-year-old woman);

The decision-making process took a few months. When the crisis began – this was the main mechanism, it was mainly my wife who started to experience its increasingly negative effects. So, it took us a few months to take the decision (a 39-year-old man);

The decision-making process took us a long time. Actually, one may say that it was a few years and that's why I wasn't sure whether to return or not. I came back... If my husband had had a different nationality or attitude to the issue, I surely wouldn't have come back (a 38-year-old woman).

Based on the collected research material, it is possible to distinguish three main types of **return migration decision making: planned decisions** – related to completion of a contract, achievement of a set goal. In this respect, an analogy to the concept of "long-lasting temporariness" can be noticed, meaning that the migrants returned to their home country after achieving the goal set before their migration. "Return takes place once enough resources, whether financial or informational, have been gathered and when conditions at home are viewed as being favourable enough." (Cassarino 2004: 10); **spontaneous decisions** – arising out of the emergence of unexpected opportunities related to life in Poland. This type of decision reflects the freedom of movement within the EU ("intentional unpredictability"), which often results in many migrations of very temporary and unpredictable character; **long-lasting decisions** – being the consequence of uncertainty as to the desire to return to the home country, postponement of the return decision, and a change in the personal situation abroad ("preparedness").

The decisions – regardless of whether they were spontaneous or long-term in nature – were always caused by the emergence of circumstances that pushed the emigrants to return. Those were either objective factors (e.g. deterioration in the financial situation resulting from the global economic crisis) or subjective, personal issues (e.g. health problems of the family members who stayed in Poland). The situation of emigration often entails a difficult experience of separation, uncertainty of the family situation, weakening of social ties, lack of sufficient direct care, children's school problems, etc. (cf. Walczak 2016). Undoubtedly, the respondents' decision to return was greeted with joy by the family. Quite frequently, it was the family that

was the reason for returning to the home country. Marriage, childbirth or the decision to return taken by close relatives who were also living abroad are amongst the frequent reasons for reemigration. An important role was also played by the longing and feeling that true life was taking place somewhere else and the respondents were missing something abroad. As in the case of emigration, returns can also be divided into spontaneous and well-planned.

The analysis of the collected research material indicates that, depending on the reasons behind the return decision, the decision-making process concerning reemigration was either shorter or longer. "The motivation to return represents an important factor for returnee reintegration." (Macková, Harmáček 2019: 150). One of the most commonly cited motives for returning to the homeland was the broadly conceived family situation. On the one hand, the reason for the decision was the respondent's family problems happening in Poland. In a number of cases, they concerned the deterioration in the health state of the respondent's parents or close family members, making the respondent feel the need and a kind of obligation to return and help them. A turn towards the analysis of the role of social migrants (social remittances) is visible here, including individuals whose life is not only based in the country of migration, but is divided between the current place of residence and the home country (cf. Slany, Ślusarczyk, Krzyżowski 2014; Cekiera 2016). The life of a migratory family takes place in new living conditions outside the home country. But, it does not exclude close links that migratory families maintain in the transnational space with relatives remaining in their homeland (cf. Pustułka 2016). Relationships with close ones, who remained in the country of origin, often determine the return decisions of migrants.

(...) I had already bought a flat and I came to a conclusion that it was the moment to return, plus some personal family-related problems which were also the reason. A disease of a close relative also contributed to the decision to return (a 29-year-old woman);

(...) a feeling of longing, and my parents. Because my parents started to fall ill and I was kind of afraid to stay there in case something bad happened, I decided to return (a 45-year-old woman);

London, the city centre of London, a job in London, working hours in London, Tomek (the respondent's partner – the authors' note) decided that he wanted to have a baby. I said there were two options: either we return to Poland as life is more peaceful there, or we move out of London. We thought that the decision to return to Poland, where we have some roots, would be easier than moving out to some backwoods in England. Then it turned out that Tomek's mother was ill. And that was the final, determining factor to pack up and return (a 39-year-old woman).

An illness of a close family member living in Poland was a significant reason that made the respondents shorten their stay abroad. Family issues were significant in a number of migration biographies amongst the respondents. However, they involved

analyses and reflections concerning the upbringing of children – most of the respondents admitted that, in their opinion, the Polish realities and the possibility of taking advantage of their close relatives' assistance and support were more favourable for the upbringing of children. And here came another group of factors determining the returns to the home country, including pregnancy and childbirth. The respondents stated that they wanted their children to be born in Poland and it is the home country that they decided to bring them up in:

Pregnancy. It was the only reason, because medical care looks a bit different there. And due to the fact that I had twins, the doctor there told me he would not manage my pregnancy on a remote-basis. So, as I say, things look a bit different abroad and we decided to return (a 38-year-old woman);

(...) I gave birth to a baby (...) and then I started to realise that my family is very important and no acquaintance I had there would ever be able to replace a family for me in any way whatsoever (a 38-year-old woman);

During my emigration, I came to a moment when I had to make a decision: either to stay there forever to build my future abroad or to return. Besides that, our baby was born and it was probably the most appropriate moment to return (a 39-year-old man);

The costs of childcare are enormous there. Even though it feels good to live there, the costs are so high that, according to my calculations, I would keep less than 10% of my wage to live on. Unfortunately, you have to consider: either you stay at home because there will be little left from your wage, or you actually hire a nanny not to lose your job ..., but generally speaking, the costs are very high (a 38-year-old woman).

The pregnancy and the subsequent childcare in the case of the above-cited respondents were the main reasons why they decided to return to their home country. The respondents stressed that it was very difficult to live abroad without their families that could help them in bringing up their children. Additionally, the situation is not improved by the fact that, in a number of cases, the costs of life are much higher than in Poland. The respondents also noted that, in certain cases, the care of under-age children abroad tends to be much easier – it all depends on the social policy of the country and the benefits that parents can receive for taking care of their children. Nevertheless, the closest relatives' help and support tend to be irreplaceable, especially when young parents have to rely only on themselves. It should be emphasised, however, that the respondents do not completely dissociate themselves from the experience gained on emigration – the elements of culture and the system of values they consider meaningful are transferred to the home country. "Seeing his aspirations frustrated, he may turn his thoughts again to his country of origin, but because he has reached quite an advanced stage in the process of acculturation into the host society, he takes new values back with him." (King 1986).

Another important group of factors, which represented a crucial stimulus encouraging migrants to return to their home country, included the issues of job dissatisfaction. While leaving their home country, they often hoped to become fulfilled in terms of professional development and financial consideration, but these hopes were quickly verified during their stay abroad. Long-term dissatisfaction with the professional and financial situation made the emigrants start contemplating the decision to return. Here, this process was usually long-term in nature, because – apart from the anxiety about how they will be judged by the people from their nearest environment – there were problems related to a specific dissonance the emigrants felt due to their failure. Even though it seems that failure to achieve professional and financial satisfaction is one of the most common reasons for return to a home country, it is also one of the most difficult situations to accept, as it is related to a sense of failure, thereby causing discouragement and burnout. This type of migration can be called, using Cerase’s (1974) classification, “return of failure”, when migrants return because they think they have failed in some area of life on emigration.

(...) my husband was more and more tired by this work, all the different organisational problems within the company, and we were both more and more fed up with the journeys to and back for each Christmas and stays here in Poland for some days living at our family over this time, and the fact that we missed this family in our daily lives (a 29-year old woman);

... first of all, the costs of life in London and the fact that I was already fed up with this job as I was overworked. The fact is that if you want to earn your living there, put some money aside and have fun from time to time, you have to work very much and do a lot of overtime. As a result, I had no time for my own life. Throughout this time, I was visited by a friend of mine twice and we went to a concert, but – in fact – I was completely exhausted. Because I worked 60–70 hours a week, plus night shifts. It was worst in the autumn, as I actually only worked and slept. The days were getting shorter and people seemed to be more sleepy, which made me completely tired (a 26-year-old man);

It seems to me that for some time, for the last few months of our stay abroad, me and my wife were missing something. I suppose, it was mainly the lack of prospects for a better job. My wife worked in a shop. I supposedly got a better job as a sales representative. But still, it wasn’t the kind of job we had dreamt of and wanted to do. It is rather a pragmatic approach to the fact – if we want to stay, we either have to upgrade our knowledge there, gain some education that is recognised there, and find our niche, or move to a bigger city to look for a job in our profession. Or, in fact, to decide what to do next. And so we decided that we would come back to Poland (a 35-year-old man).

A lack of satisfaction with the professional situation is a common motive for return to a home country, but – on the other hand – it is the fulfilment of professional and financial plans that often makes emigrants return to their home country.

This situation primarily concerns people who decided to leave with a view to earning a specific amount of money or gaining new knowledge, competences and professional experience. Such individuals return to their homeland with a sense of fulfilment and a clear plan for the subsequent stages of their personal and professional life:

(...) in a situation when both money and people need to be redefined and it is necessary to ask yourself whether this is what I actually wanted in life, then you have to honestly answer this question and, without a shadow of hypocrisy, take a decision which will push me forwards instead of making me stay in one place complaining that life sucks The financial status improved well enough to make me feel satisfied and say that this was what I wanted to achieve so let's pack up and return (a 41-year-old man);

We decided to go back home, not to stay, there is no point in staying any longer. We have nobody here. We have earned enough to return to Poland. We had nothing to stay for, we saw what we saw. We did some sightseeing, tasted different foods, met a few nice folks and a few bad folks. And we came back home, a good decision. We saw what it looked like, we have good memories, sometimes bad, but at least we have a good life experience (a 29-year-old woman);

... I simply did not have the feeling that I wanted to stay there. I just wanted to learn various things there, this learning process was cool for me, but I had no pressure to stay and live there... (a 32-year-old woman).

The above-mentioned situation seems to be the most comfortable when it comes to the migrant's well-being, because it can provide a sense of fulfilment and accomplishment of plans. The analysis of the collected material indicated that the return decisions were determined by extremely diverse factors – from family, through divorce, to health issues. Amongst the respondents, there are individuals who had to return to their home country due to health deterioration and because of the fact that they or their close ones did not feel good living abroad.

... my sister was coming back to and that's it... I could have stayed but the language barrier made it a bit impossible for me ... (a 42-year-old woman);

My health simply played up. It was a tough job there and I simply had to undergo my operation earlier. That's why I had to quit and return (a 39-year-old man).

Referring to the concepts of Ruth Achenbach (2015), Russel King (1986) and Francesco P. Cerase (1974), it can be noted that the motives for return of the studied migrants fall into four main categories. The first group includes emigrants returning for family reasons, which primarily involved returns to a family (longing, worsening family relations, the respondent's or his/her family member's illness, etc.) – unintended return. The second group of returnees encompasses those who were driven by economic and ambitious aspects (career), which primarily stemmed from

dissatisfaction from earnings abroad, dissatisfaction with the professional status (no development prospects, work incompatible with the migrants' skills and qualifications) or various organisational problems in the workplace (e.g. a transfer of the company's seat, which entailed long journeys to work) – failure return. In the third group, we can find emigrants who planned their returns – such returns occur when the emigrants have achieved their goals from before emigration (e.g. saving a specific amount of money, gaining new experience, etc.) – target return. The last category includes impulsive returns caused either by the emergence of an interesting proposal in the home country or by a sudden impulse that has had a crucial impact on the emigrant's decision – spontaneous return.

Summing up, it can be observed that both the motives for returns and the decision-making process were highly diverse. However, as underlined by a vast majority of the respondents, their decisions were usually correct and now, in retrospect, are assessed in a clearly positive manner. The conclusions presented in this article concern only a small part of the migration history of each respondent, but they demonstrate the diversity of factors that determine the remigration decisions.

Types of migrants

The authors of the publication entitled “Zaraz wracam... albo i nie. Skala powrotów, motywacje i strategie życiowe remigrantów z województwa śląskiego” (*I will be right back... or not. The scale of returns, motives and life strategies of return migrants from the Silesia Province*) noted that the number of remigrants was increasing in the Silesia Province. At the same time, they predicted that this trend would be maintained (cf. Szymańska, Ulasiński, Bieńkowska 2012: 5). Importantly in this context, the spontaneity of emigrations and the temporariness of stays abroad may be due to the fact that most of the emigrants are experiencing a liminal phase of their life, where a certain suspense and a change of social status are natural (cf. Turner 2006 as cited in: Szymańska, Ulasiński, Bieńkowska 2012: 19). These migrants are adults – individuals of legal age, who have completed their education and studies, but failed to settle professionally and socially, so they still do not live a life typical of “adults”. They may be termed as “transitional-beings” who are mainly characterised by “uncertainty, a lack of both social status and properties. «Transitional» migrants remain suspended between temporary life abroad and the return to Poland at some undetermined point in time” (Szymańska, Ulasiński, Bieńkowska 2012: 19). „In case of pendulum or boomerang return migration, return migrants come back exactly to the home village, town or even exactly the same building they left long time ago. This is the case of the return to the private homeland.” (Ossowski 1967 as cited in: Nowicka 2008: 13).

The analysis of the respondents' migration stories demonstrated that they can be divided into a few categories, in terms of the motives behind their emigration

and return decisions. The first group is made up of migrants who can be termed as “a man of calculation”, for whom the fundamental argument in favour of the decision to emigrate is the economic issue, or more specifically the earning opportunities offered by emigration. “A man of calculation” pursues a plan which assumes the achievement of a specific financial goal and very often returns as soon as the economic assumptions have been fulfilled. The migrants from this category make well-thought-out (and rarely spontaneous) decisions and are primarily focused on the profit-and-loss balance. The second type of migrants encompasses individuals who can be termed as “a man of the road”. The entire life of a man of the road is focused on the search for new experiences and attempts to find his/her “place on Earth”. For these migrants, it is important not to become too much attached to one place to be able, at any time, to make a spontaneous decision, which would seem to be a true revolution for other people, to leave everything behind and search for new, better perspectives. “A man of the road” finds fulfilment in constant searching, hence his/her decisions are usually impulsive and caused by the emergence of new stimuli. The next group is made up of migrants whom we termed “a man of learning”. This category includes migrants who go abroad to broaden their knowledge, gain new experiences, as well as improve their linguistic and social competences. The awareness of educational possibilities (also in an informal dimension) represents a very important motivating factor for them to act and take migration decisions. “A man of learning” does not necessarily pay attention to formal qualifications (confirmed by diplomas, certificates), but rather attaches attention to the subjective assessment of how his/her knowledge and skills are being improved. The fourth category consists of migrants whom we termed “a man of new opening”. Those are individuals whose migration was caused by various turning points in their lives, and the emigration itself was a kind of ‘*catharsis*’ (or purification). The migration decisions taken by “a man of new opening” are very often determined by difficult personal situations (a divorce, break-up of a relationship), but also by a sense of necessity for change (the surrounding, the professional situation, etc.). In this case, emigration is often a kind of escape from what brings bad memories in the country and prevents effective functioning in the existing conditions. The above typology serves as a model and each migrant’s biography should be considered on an individual basis. However, the analysis of the collected research material showed that the proposed categories of migrants are reflected in reality.

Conclusion

None of the interviewees referred to the informational campaign entitled “Masz Plan na powrót?” [*Have you got a Plan to return?*], which led to the emergence of “Powrotnik” [*Return Guide*]. The moment of the study was a time when there was no

more information about government programmes, such as the “12 miast. Wracać, ale dokąd” [*12 Cities – Return? But where to?*] campaign, encouraging post-accession emigrants to return to Poland. It can therefore be assumed that the return decisions were of an individual nature and depended on the personal situations of the particular respondents, who were driven by specific circumstances that had occurred in their lives. Due to the exit of Great Britain from the European Union, it is reasonable to expect an increase (which is already noticeable) in the number of returnees – time will tell what their readaptation processes will look like.

Furthermore, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic provoked a very interesting phenomenon which can be perceived as a kind of revolution in the migrations of Poles. Due to the pandemic, many emigrants decided to leave their lives on emigration and return to their home country (“unintended migration”). They argued that the Polish authorities reacted better to the emergence of a pandemic threat. Many of them benefited from the government’s “LOT do domu” [*Flight Back Home with LOT*] programme, which concerned the organisation of air transport from various global destinations to Poland. Among the returnees were many people who had spent years on emigration and left their jobs, flats and circles of friends. For numerous Polish emigrants, the closing of borders and the blocking of air traffic means a longer stay in the home country and may end in permanent resettlement. It is difficult to predict the economic consequences of the pandemic. However, as for now, experts forecast that the global economy will be significantly affected by the crisis and many countries will find it difficult to regain the financial balance. Consequently, it will open up a possibility to limit the employment opportunities for immigrants in order to provide jobs for nationals.

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