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Introduction

Mobility is one of the most frequently used categories in attempts to analyse societies in the early twenty-first century. The willingness to change, dynamism, movement, openness to transformation all are hallmarks of contemporary social life and are challenging for individuals. The ethos of mobility is sometimes regarded as a specifically modern form of self-realisation and treated simply as one of the current religious themes (LUCKMAN, 1996: 149). Emphasis is put even on the fact that literally and metaphorically understood freedom of movement imperceptibly turns into a "compulsion to mobility" (VIRILIO, 2008: 43). Understandably, in recent years, the issue of mobility has become an important and often explored theme in the social sciences. The notion of mobility as it is recognised in different contexts, ranges in meaning and may be conceptualised as a change of residence, of social status or profession, and sometimes just as a certain disposition, openness and willingness to change or as functioning in a temporary life mode, lacking solid and stable landmarks. J. Urry writes, "mobility – as a metaphor and as a process – constitutes the core of social life, [...] should therefore be at the heart of sociological analysis" (URRY, 2009: 75). This stresses the fact that the development of civilization contributes to the increase of processes involving the "change of place, movement, wandering, and the kind of the individual's tendencies for continuous change of many elements of one's own life" (BUDAŁOWSKA, 2005: 57). Intense activity and mobility of people has become a constitutive feature of the globalised world.

Certainly, the rules of functioning in modern societies stimulate and demand mobility. It is, however, worth noting that the positive connotations of mobility were already pointed out a very long time ago. Relocation serving as a source of cognitive enrichment (especially among young people) is promoted today, for example through international exchange programs such as ERASMUS. Yet the idea behind them differs little from the admonitions once addressed to students by Nicholas Rej. He believed that every young person should have an "educational expedition" at the end of which "they return home again, to their honest fame, as well as their parents' and other relatives' fame in time [...] covered with beautiful things" (REJ, 1914: 72).

The multiplicity of perspectives on the issue of mobility demands a definition of that term as applied analytically. In this very text, mobility is to be understood as "moving from one region to another (national mobility) or from one country to another (international mobility), the key here is the difference between permanent residence and place of residence associated with e.g. work" (JAŻWIŃSKA-MOTYLSKA, 2013: 6). For this understanding of mobility its connotations with the professional careers of individual – its imagining, planning and execution, and some kind of willingness to change – are extremely important. As the above quoted researcher in the field of Polish migration writes "spatial mobility can make a significant impact on labor mobility, and even determine it. Spatial mobility may be closely associated with the course of [...] careers and can be considered an instrument or a plane of realization of professional goals" (Ibidem).

Spatial mobility, national and international migration become important contexts within which individual careers are designed and implemented. Characteristically, the new paradigm in research careers is called "career without borders", which is of equal importance both metaphorically and literally. As noted by one of the researchers of the professional careers of Polish immigrants "a new model of career lies in moving beyond the framework of one organization and individual experience. It also involves the larger dynamics of changes in professional life and, above all, of *taking matters into one's own hands*, with a focus on *active action* and not just *passive being* on the labor market" (GRABOWSKA-LUSIŃSKA, 2012: 8). Inherently "careers without borders" signifies also a willingness to change one's place of living in connection with taking up a job or to work outside home.

Polish mobility after 2004

A phenomenon not to be underestimated in the context of occupational mobility of Poles was the Polish entry into the European Union in 2004 and the possibility of undertaking legal work therein (gradually, varying in time depending on a particular country). Freedom of movement within the territory of the Union, one of its key operative principles, not only allows one to navigate through Europe effortlessly, but also gives one the opportunity to pursue a career on its territory, equalising the chances of foreigners from EU with those of the nationals of a particular EU country.

Poland's accession to the European Union has opened new perspectives for young Poles in terms of designing their professional careers and planning their future. The possibility of undertaking legal work abroad has become another option that can (or even should) be taken into account when pondering their future professional fates. An outstanding Czech writer M. Kundera once wrote that "every new opportunity that has existence, even the least probable opportunity, transforms the entire existence"¹ (KUNDERA, 1997: 27–28). This sentence seems to perfectly recognise the new context of planning professional careers by students of Polish after the EU accession. Even only a potential perspective of migration for a shorter or longer time becomes an important reference in professional plans, shifting one's perspective and – what is particularly important – one's expectations towards the domestic labour market.

The new institutional and legal conditions have facilitated adopting a variety of migration strategies and resulted in significant enhancement of Polish migration after 2004. Importantly, the public perception of migration also began to undergo transformation. It is no longer understood as something extraordinary, as a problem to solve or a perversion serving as evidence of a dysfunctional system. The once dominant emigration discourse treated leaving the country as something contrary to human nature, something pathological – this phenomenon was described by recourse to concepts associated with trauma, such as renouncement, escape, expulsion or exile (GARAPICH, 2010: 38). Connotations around migration and the migrant have currently been undergoing dramatic changes – as A. Chodubski writes (CHODUBSKI 2003: 55), presently "in migration of people, the shaping of such values as entrepreneurship of the individual, openness to the surrounding reality, tolerance of different systems and cultural values, the attitude toward the future, faith in progress, recognition of the primacy of human rights against state legislation, the acceptance of a global conscious-

¹ Translated from the Polish edition by the author of the article.

ness, a sense of belonging to a world community are recognized". This perception of migration also reinforces its attractiveness compared to other available career paths.

The conditions favourable for working abroad, however, have not been created solely by the Polish accession to the European Union, but are also the result of other socio-cultural transformations. As M. Ślusarczyk writes, "the development of technology *releases* work, the development of transport causes the distance problem to fade, by extending the geographic coverage of mobility and ease of return or even visits to native countries, the lack of barriers to communicate and at least a seeming ability to maintain relationships not only with the nation, but also with the local community. Crossing borders ceases to have the same meaning as before, as it is increasingly easier to do so" (ŚLUSARCZYK, 15: 2010). We are witnessing a digital revolution – bigger parts of our daily activities than ever are "sucked in" by the virtual realm, we communicate easily over distance using new technologies such as Skype. The new digital tools certainly help expats function outside their country of origin (BARNEY, 2008: 41). Internet technologies "radically transformed the possibilities – and limitations – of mobility of people, information and images" (URRY, 2009: 149). The totality of these changes leads, in the opinion of some researchers, to fundamental changes that create completely different conditions of human functioning in the world; "global communication operating in real time creates a radically different frame of human existence than with previous technologies" (ERIKSEN, 2003: 81). Another manifestation of civilization changes is the dynamic development of low-cost airlines that facilitate the rapid movement between the place of residence and the country of origin.

The processes of globalisation and cultural homogenisation facilitate adaptation abroad (GIDDENS, 2007: 74). Living and working in another EU country does not necessarily surmount to a culture shock anymore as travel and changing surroundings as such are not considered something unusual – "close trips, within Europe, have become commonplace. You can go for a beer to Prague, eat well in Paris, but few Europeans associate it with experiencing the exotic" (ANDRUSIECZKO, 1996: 189). Apart from that, the relationship between globalisation and mobility appear to be linked. The phenomena related with globalisation have created a new reality for mobility. On the other hand – the scale of modern mobility of people is a major incentive, which greatly supports the processes of globalisation. What is also very important in the context of the migration plans of students and the design of their future careers, globalisation promotes the mobility of highly qualified personnel. As researchers of contemporary international migration write "the rapid increase in migration of the most qualified peo-

ple has recently become one of the most distinctive features of globalization of economic relations" (KORYS, OKÓLSKI, 2004: 21).

There are also two other issues that are particularly specific and important for the popularity and availability of foreign trips among the present-day students. The first is the students' significantly higher level of language competence compared to the older generation (CBOS, 2012). Another important factor is migration networks in which many students operate. They play an important role in making any decisions on emigration: "[t]hese networks link migrants, people with experience of migration, and others who are helpful in migration (especially residents of the host country) with those who have yet to be involved in the migratory movement and thanks to those networks obtain useful information, assistance both tangible and intangible" (GÓRNY, STOLA, 2001: 164). Bearing in mind the scale of Polish emigration after 2004, we can responsibly assume that due to the departure of a large number of young people after the EU accession, many Polish students operate in complex transnational social networks – often with friends or family members who live abroad.

The assumptions and context of the research project

As part of the research project "The economic awareness of the young generation of Visegrad countries" in the spring of 2015 there was a survey questionnaire distributed in Katowice among 400 university students of: Silesian University of Technology, University of Economics and the University of Silesia. Among the respondents there were 220 women and 180 men aged 21–30. The vast majority (82.8% in total) were aged 23–24. Therefore, the study included people who were approaching the end of higher education and, as expected, began to think about the next stages of their lives and prospective future careers. The study period is usually the starting time of professional biographies for young people and also the start of their independent economic activity (KUBIAK-SZYMBORSKA, 2003: 143). In this article only some aspects of the research and its results will be tackled, primarily those related to four thematic areas:

- students' readiness to change, which can bring better jobs in the future,
- the declared level of national and international mobility of students,
- their experience in working abroad,
- and the reasons for taking up employment abroad.

The situation of young people entering the labour market is conditioned by the cultural and socio-economic changes. Individualisation, ero-

sion of traditional patterns, the rate of change of an unpredictable vector, which are regarded as constitutive features of life in an unexpected reality (ŚWIĄTKIEWICZ, 2010: 55), significantly increase the resource opportunities faced by young people; these, however, often require making independent choices and taking full responsibility for them. When one operates in such an uncertain and unpredictable reality, particularly "young people, deprived of binding patterns of previous generations, become a point of reference for themselves" (KRZYCHAŁA, 2007: 8)

Moreover, the young enter the labor market, which requires, above all, flexibility and permanent readiness to change. They are expected to have "not only the technical ability, but also the mental flexibility, determination and entrepreneurship" (FRIEDMAN, 2009: 286). That flexibility has its unpleasant downside, as T.H. Eriksen writes in a laconic, metaphorical style "nervousness is the Siamese twin of flexibility. They feel at ease in each other's company" (ERIKSEN, 2003: 181).

A component of this flexibility is mobility; being mobile becomes a kind of important individual capital. As Z. BAUMAN writes (2000: 14), "mobility became the strongest factor of social stratification and the object of universal envy; something on which every day rises constantly and rebuilds a new hierarchy of social, political, economic and cultural relations with an increasingly global reach"². In this context it is also worth noting the new property migration after 2004, which manifests itself through unfinished emigration and fostering potential current migration decisions. P. Kaczmarczyk notes that "the freedom of mobility, which the accession to the European Union gave us, in an outstanding manner, increases the range of available options or migration strategies. We do not have to choose between staying abroad and returning to the country of origin" (KACZMARCZYK, 2010: 12). The danger associated with this freedom, however, are hidden "pitfalls of emigrational lightness" (CEKIERA, 2014), which may involve the temporary functioning between the country of origin and the country of emigration.

It is in the context sketched above in which the students try to imagine their own future and career plans. Using the nomenclature of A. Giddens – they seek to "colonize the future"³ (GIDDENS, 202: 153). The said plans are all the more important and necessary when the reality appears increasingly less stable and more difficult to predict. R. Sennet accentuates this challenge, writing that "flexibility and short-termism seem to prevent human character development and building life narratives through labor"⁴ – and yet it is necessary to make such attempts to save one's own subjectivity (SENNET, 2006: 169). Finally, irrespective of civilization and society changes,

² Translated from the Polish edition by the author of the article.

³ As above.

⁴ As above.

the plans associated with work are still essential in shaping the biography of individuals – “among the many choices made by an individual in the context of biographical planning, those relating to employment (and decisions related to decisions on the allocation of time and capital, the choice of objectives and reference groups) seem to be the most crucial” (DOMECKA, 2005: 230). Still, the performance in a particular job is combined with “achieving certain material benefits and thus the ability to serve the diverse needs resulting in satisfaction and determining the individual’s place in the social structure” (ŻAK, 2015: 11).

Designing specific aspects of existence always takes place in a particular position, accordingly “plans are not only shaped by the individual itself, but also by significant others and structural conditions in which it operates” (DOMECKA, 2005: 230). The problem is that these conditions and factors that affect individuals’ plans are currently difficult to identify not only because the young are just debuting on the labour market targeted on graduates, but also experts and specialists, professionals involved in designing careers have not yet managed to develop a distinguishable, unified strategy reflecting the new circumstances, – “the question of how to plan one’s career these days, which may be a sequence following and foreseeable event or a mosaic of episodes that make up the life of an individual, troubles both individual life projects, and those who are professionally engaged in career counseling” (MINTA, 2005: 195).

Willingness to change and mobility as declared by students

In the conducted survey students were asked about their willingness to take specific measures and make life changes, in order to get a better job in the future. Upon analysing the answers, it can responsibly be said that students are ready to undertake various activities that would result in better work. The most often declared approach was readiness to sacrifice free time in favor of education and increasing one’s qualifications. Such activity was declared by as much as 95.5% of the respondents – including 59% who answered “definitely yes” and 36.5% – “rather yes”. Only 1.5% of people chose the option “rather no” and only 0.3% – “definitely not”. Such unambiguous results indisputably point to the fact that students are aware that the functioning of the modern labour market will require improving their qualifications and developing their competence – even at the expense of their own free time. The responses to this question may well indicate the students’ knowledge of the current labour market reality.

A slightly smaller percentage of respondents declared readiness to retrain and to change their profession – answers “definitely yes” were given by 31.5% of the students, “rather yes” – respectively 48.3%. 2.5% of respondents definitely rejected such an option, while 12.8% chose the option “rather not”. The presented distribution of responses demonstrates students’ flexibility. They are not strongly attached to their profession and, in most cases, accept the possibility of retraining during their own careers, if it were to result in obtaining a better job. Such a result can also be considered proof that students are well aware of the fluctuations on the labour market, are ready for them and are willing to go the extra mile to facilitate their success.

DEDICATION TO ACHIEVE BETTER JOB – RETRAIN AND LEARN NEW SKILLS			
	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	ACCUMULATED PERCENTAGE
DEFINITELY YES	126	31.5	79.8
RATHER YES	193	48.3	
RATHER NOT	51	12.8	15.3
DEFINITELY NOT	10	2.5	
DIFFICULT TO SAY	20	5.0	
TOTAL	400	100.0	

A significantly lower percentage of students would be willing to devote their time to volunteer work, even if it could result in getting a better job. Almost half of the respondents (48%) rejected such a possibility – the answer “definitely not” was chosen by 14.5% of respondents, while “rather not” – 33.5%. Every tenth student chose the answer “difficult to say”. Such a cautious attitude towards voluntary work (even if it would lead to getting a better job) may be due to the perception of “free labour” as a form of workers’ exploitation. It may be due to the significant lack of tradition of volunteering in Poland. As research indicates, barely 8% of Poles declared undertaking any work as a volunteer in 2014. This figure, however, is slowly increasing – even compared to 2006 where it amounted to only 4% (CBOS, 2015).

In an attempt to identify the particular activities that a student entering the labour market is willing to take, the respondents were also asked about their willingness to change residence or commute to another town. The unquestionable majority of the respondents declared their readiness to work in another town and to commute (89.5%), of which 41.5% chose the answer “definitely yes” and 48% – “rather yes”. Despite such a significant dominance of the affirmative answer, it is puzzling that as many as 6.5%

of the surveyed students do not take into account work outside the home town and commuting – these are the people that we can include in the category of “complete immobility”. It should also be noted that another 4% of the respondents were unable to choose a clear answer to this question (answer “difficult to say”).

DEDICATION TO ACHIEVE BETTER JOB – COMMUTING TO ANOTHER LOCALITY			
ANSWERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	ACCUMULATED PERCENTAGE
DEFINITELY YES	166	41.5	89.5
RATHER YES	192	48.0	
RATHER NOT	24	6.0	6.5
DEFINITELY NOT	2	0.5	
DIFFICULT TO SAY	16	4.0	100.0
TOTAL	400	100.0	

In trying to identify the students’ readiness to take certain actions which will eventually bring them a better job, they were also asked about their attitude to changing their place of residence – national or international migration. In comparing the responses, attention was primarily drawn to the small difference in the percentage of people who reject the possibility of migration. Moving to another place in the country was rejected by 33.3% of respondents, while 44.3% of students did not take into account the possibility of going abroad. The relatively small difference of 11% in the answers to these two questions allows for the assumption that the surveyed students do not differentiate so much between their willingness (or lack thereof) to emigrate and moving at all, both are thus relatively coherent in terms of showing their attitude to mobility itself.

When interpreting the answers chosen by the respondents, one can also distinguish the most mobile group of students, ones definitely ready to change their place of residence – regardless of whether the new location would be in Poland or abroad. Statistically, such an approach is declared by approximately one in every six students – as the readiness for cross-national migration was declared by 17.8% of the respondents, whereas one for international migration was declared by 14.8%. An important fact is that up to 13.5% of the study population did not have a clear opinion about their readiness to emigrate in order to take a better job. Such a relatively large percentage of indications may prove the students’ caution of students towards definite statements regarding their willingness to migrate.

DEDICATION TO ACHIEVE BETTER JOB – MOVE TO ANOTHER LOCALITY			
ANSWERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	ACCUMULATED PERCENTAGE
DEFINITELY YES	71	17.8	
RATHER YES	160	40.0	
RATHER NOT	101	25.3	33.3
DEFINITELY NOT	32	8.0	
DIFFICULT TO SAY	36	9.0	
TOTAL	400	100.0	

DEDICATION TO ACHIEVE BETTER JOB – GOING ABROAD			
ANSWERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	ACCUMULATED PERCENTAGE
DEFINITELY YES	59	14.8	
RATHER YES	110	27.5	
RATHER NOT	84	21.0	44.4
DEFINITELY NOT	93	23.3	
DIFFICULT TO SAY	54	13.5	
TOTAL	400	100.0	

The surveyed students were also asked about their own experiences related to working abroad and the basic motivations behind it. The experience of working abroad was declared by a total of 13.3% of respondents. If we take into account that a full-time job, or a written order, either full or part-time, was declared by a total of 46.8% of respondents, it can be assumed that almost every third working student worked abroad. Interestingly, this result almost exactly coincides with other studies that have investigated the professional initiation of young Poles, “almost one in three (29%) migrants is a person whose entry into the labor market (*professional initiation*) occurred in the foreign labor market during migration. These people did not usually look for a job on the local labor markets, taking up their first professional activity on the foreign market, undertaking work usually unrelated to their formal education” (GRABOWSKA-LUSIŃSKA, JAŻWIŃSKA-MOTYLSKA, TREPCZYŃSKA, 2013: 27).

HAVE YOU EVER GONE ABROAD FOR WORK PURPOSES?		
ANSWERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	53	13.3
NO	347	86.7
TOTAL	400	100

The vast majority has worked abroad at least once (8.8% of the study group). Most of the indicated reasons for working abroad were, as predicted, (in order) high wages, the possibility of saving money, increasing linguistic competence and proving oneself in an international work environment. Of significantly lesser importance were opportunities for career development and good social conditions, which clearly indicates the casual nature of work undertaken by students abroad.

Conclusions

After graduating, young people are faced with the necessity of entering a fully adult life in an era when “life *automatic pilot* becomes harder and harder and the harder it is to protect a certain lifestyle, even if it was deeply rooted, from a generalized atmosphere of risk”⁵ (GIDDENS, 2002: 173). This situation also applies to professional careers – to plan their course solely around knowledge acquired through education at school or university seems less and less possible. In the recent Polish context of increased migration following the accession to the European Union, the phenomenon of a “flow of professional careers” occurred, “when individuals undertaking work either in Poland or abroad are open to all possibilities and changes. Such people often change their place of work as well as the scope of responsibilities. Migration itself becomes an element of this flow” (JAŻWIŃSKA-MOTYLSKA, GRABOWSKA-LUSIŃSKA, 2013: 51).

Research conducted among students allowed for a cautious claim that they are aware of the challenges they face, which arise from the rules governing the workings of the modern labour market. The vast majority declared their readiness to improve their qualifications or even to retrain and change career paths, if this could lead to an opportunity for obtaining a better job. A negligible percentage of people did not take into account the possibility of commuting to work outside their place of residence.

Being aware of the flexibility which the labour market will require of them, Polish students do consider work associated with the change of residence. The study highlighted the fact that for contemporary Polish students going abroad is not an unusual or dramatic decision – it simply becomes one of the options that can be considered when planning the next steps in their professional biographies. What differentiates students is not the willingness (or lack thereof) to emigrate, but rather, the approach to very notion of mobility itself. Within mobility, the differentiation between national and international mobility becomes secondary and less important for students than the key distinction of whether to move at all or not; accordingly the students should not be divided into “potential emigrants / non-emigrants” but rather into “mobile people / immobile people”. For a large number of students the transnational labour market is a natural environment in which they plan their professional future. The generation for whom the possibility of undertaking work abroad is a perfectly viable and natural option, is just entering the labour market.

⁵ Translated from the Polish edition by the author of the article.

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Rafał Cekiera

Wewnętrzna i międzynarodowa mobilność polskich studentów w perspektywie ich karier zawodowych

Streszczenie

W artykule omówiono fragmenty wyników badania przeprowadzonego w 2015 roku wśród 400 katowickich studentów Politechniki Śląskiej, Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego oraz Uniwersytetu Śląskiego. Rezultaty badań – prowadzonych w ramach międzynarodowego projektu “The economic awareness of the young generation of Visegrad countries” – skonfrontowane zostały ze współczesnymi przemianami rynku pracy oraz skalą mobilności Polaków po wejściu do Unii Europejskiej. W tekście autor poddał analizie przede wszystkim cztery obszary: gotowość studentów do różnego typu aktywności w celu zdobycia lepszej pracy, poziom deklarowanej mobilności wewnętrznej i międzynarodowej studentów, ich nabyte już doświadczenia emigracyjne oraz motywacje do pracy poza granicami kraju.