

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Negotiation of Normality and Identity among migrants from Eastern Europe to the United Kingdom after 2004.

INTRODUCTION

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The seeds of inspiration for this volume have been sown by a group of researchers interested in identity and ethnicity, who met first time at the International Slavonic Symposium held at University of East London in April 2007 under the urgent heading of migration from Eastern Europe to the UK. The Symposium was given a cunning title: *Beyond the Plumbers: Seeking the stage of normalcy by Eastern European migrants after 2004*, which was an allusion to the media campaign started in the French newspaper in 2006 with a picture of a young, homoeroticised man, dressed up as an alleged plumber who was trying to persuade his audience through the slogan: “I am staying in Poland.

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Everyone is Welcome!” That ironic anti-promotion of Polish manual workers was a trigger for a discussion of the situation of Eastern European migrants to the UK and for posing theoretical questions about normalization of their conditions, patterns of socialization, identity making, and relationships between diaspora, homeland and the host culture. Since then the gathering has become an annual event and the contribution from different specialists has increased to encompass more specific themes and theoretical issues from the fields of Eastern European Studies, Migration Studies, Ethnic Studies, Political Relations, Cultural Studies, Media Studies and others. Being committed to various disciplines and methods of research, the contributors to this volume are all engaged with research on identity. We all observe how identity and normality are negotiated among migrants coming to the UK after 2004, whilst localization is not determined spatially and discourses and practices of normality are observed in many different sites, including the Internet.

A methodological framework for the volume has been adapted from sociological ethnography, which unlike traditional cultural anthropology is not restricted to one observational site but rather traces informants across different social worlds they inhabit. Sociological ethnography, employing traditional qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, surveys, participants observation, visual research, puts forward a research objects which is shaped by theoretical knowledge (Marcus, 1995). Processes of negotiation of normality and identity among migrants are our research object, and we understand them as social processes contributing to the organized structure of reality.

While researching those processes in many locations and among different groups of migrants, we also research contexts for their actions and ideas. In alignment with symbolic interactionism we consider these contexts migrants' "social worlds" (Nadai & Maeder, 2005, p.4) and consequently our ethnographic fields. As a common theoretical background for our individual arguments on normality and identity we follow a thesis conceived by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) on "the social construction of reality", which is traditionally associated with symbolic interactionism and interpretation of meanings. However, after Pierre Bourdieu (1979/1982), we give special attention to the environment in which interactions between people take place. With a particular reference to the theory of everyday life by Erving Goffman (1974) we look into the meaning and impact of power of culture, politics, and social institutions on human behavior, while Antony Giddens (1987) provides us with a frame for thinking about routine and repetition as categories of normativisation.

The volume includes six analytical papers and one, state of the art review by Kathy Burrell of current research on migration from Eastern Europe to the West, which serves as a broader theoretical context for our individual arguments, but also provides an academic background for studying this new topic of migration, mainly the migration of Poles. Indeed, in five articles we focus entirely on Polish migrants, only in one paper Monika Metykova introduces a discussion of media practices among different nationals from Eastern Europe after 2004. This overwhelming dominance of the Polish theme in the volume has been deliberately applied in response to the exasperated social and political debates in the UK on the status and role of Polish migrants after 2004.

Although, as Burrell indicates, the theme of Polish migration has been discussed in a rich stream of analyses during the last couple of years, our volume adds to them a subject-based perspective of migration as experienced and reflected upon by individuals from different groups bound by lifestyle (such as Internet bloggers in Galasińska and Media users in Metykova), gender (mothers in Lopez Rodriguez), ethnicity (Polishness in Ryan), and daily habits (food rituals in Rabikowska). For the first time in this field it also offers an ethnographic investigation of social worlds of migrants' reality, in which a critical category of 'normality' is employed to the observation of processes of adaptation and negotiation of identity. In this volume the authors accept a sociologically-led thesis that normality is a human-structured and arbitrary concept, conceived by values, beliefs, norms and patterns of behavior dominating in society and taken for granted by its members. Empirically, however, normality passes as everyday reality which is but materially and pragmatically experienced state of being. The objective of this volume is to observe how that being is negotiated among migrants and how their identity changes in the spatiotemporal reality suspended in the homeland and immersed in the hostland.

Eastern European immigrants coming in unexpectedly big waves to the Western Europe in the aftermath of the EU accession in May 2004 have been perceived from the beginning of their post-Communist exodus to operate within the frame of materialistic motivations and betterment of their financial conditions. This signification has informed an image of an uneducated, unskilled Eastern European immigrant who comes to the West to seek an easy life through manual jobs, like a position of an already-proverbial plumber, a builder, an electrician, or a cleaner. In the UK, an additional bonus for

migration has been seen in the welfare organization of the country which guarantees support to the unemployed and unskilled - the social mechanism still underdeveloped in post-Soviet countries. Stories about Eastern European sleeping at railways stations, in public toilets, and taking jobs from the local Brits had filled all kinds of the Media coverage during the first years after the accession in 2004, fueling public imagination and undermining the immigrants' status in the UK. A limited perception of the political and economic situation in Eastern Europe did not help to defeat the derogatory image of a mythical Other taking over the jobs of the locals. There has been limited public approbation for migrants from politically stabilised countries, like Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovakia or Slovenia, who are coming to take advantage from the advanced capitalist economies of the 'developed countries'. It was not for a political emancipation or rescue from the war trauma that Eastern European immigrants decided to set off to Great Britain after 2004, as it was for many immigrants under Communism and for the World War II victims after 1945. While seeking better standards of life for themselves and their children, the current migrants must arouse some suspicion and social circumspection. Most of the times they have to work out their way to survival and a professional success on their own, beyond a supportive circle of the assimilated "old migrants" in the UK from the post-war generation, known as *Polonia* (see, for example, Garapich, 2008), who tend to isolate themselves from the "new wave", and out of the context of the refugee politics and without the means allocated by the EU for the underdeveloped nations.

As this volume shows, five years after accession, a life of immigrants has become more stabilized, better organized, more predictable and even routinised. In the perception

of the immigrants interviewed for this volume, their life “is slowly becoming normal”. This categorizing expression has many meanings, and quite often contradictory, but it implies an expectation to be filled in the future and some tone of achievement which could not be acquired in the past. Migrants refer to ‘normality’ in a symbolic sense to signify any kind of stabilisation in their lives, but also they see it as a practical measure of success which can be discriminated against what has been missing in their lives. A state of normalcy in the case of migrants can be called a new version of normality, different from what they had known at home, but at the same time imitating home to a high extent. If we accept that normalcy is a condition of regaining a certain kind of order after a disturbance of that order, or even its loss (due to war, catastrophe, or political turn), the situation of migrants is marked by a significant, sometimes even dramatic change. After settling in a new country, they face a different culture, religion, customs, new people, new system of education, they can take a new profession and adapt a new lifestyle. Regaining normalcy is difficult or even impossible under such conditions and the strategies of rebuilding a ‘normal home’ must also be different from those to which they were used. Normalcy would be characterized by repetitive acts, or rituals which signify belonging to a certain ‘home’ whether be material, psychological, cognitive or even somatic, whereas normality would delineate a set of conditions which enable that home against the backdrop of differences and abnormalities in a given group (national, cultural, or social). In this volume the authors use the term normalcy and normality interchangeably, but the meaning switches depending on whether they put the stress on the conditions to be regained according to the known patterns, or rather make an emphasis on the idealized mode of normality in a general sense of satisfaction, well

being, financial security, or personal success. Naturally, in real life both dimensions overlap and precondition each other, thus we acknowledge their empirical interdependence and theoretical modality. However, we cannot deny that in certain historical circumstances some groups may be undergoing a phase of increased confusion and chaos dominating their lives and undermining their stability. In such untypical circumstances, which create the common context for a group, a generation or a whole nation experiencing the same conditions, the loss of normality understood as order, routine, and predictability makes it even more valuable and meaningful. In fact for migrants, as this collection shows, the search for normality can become a value on its own.

After Michael Kearney and Bernadette Beserra (2004, p. 4), we distinguish migration “as movement across a significant border that is defined and maintained by some political regime – an order, formal or informal – in such a way that crossing it affects the identity of the crosser”. In all papers in this volume the question of challenge and change to the migrant’s identity in the new circumstances they face is analysed in depth, although from different empirical perspectives. We also consider the impact on the host culture which migrants inspire through their everyday life practices. Relating the concept of normality to identity and the situation of migrants serves a methodological purpose of identifying the strategies of adaptation to new circumstances and the demands of a new type of life associated with the West. It is our working hypothesis that “the West” has become an aspiration and a desired embodiment of normality for people living in Eastern Europe, while their everyday practices are oriented towards bridging the ‘gap’

between their own reality and that one which is expected. Drawing upon sociological definitions of normality and its discursive articulation, we are aware that our hypothesis is not determined by predictive value, but rather by “strategic value in relation to the question raised” (Lyotard, 2004, p. 7). From a philosophical point of view, normality is a meta-concept created by people in order to regulate a structure of a civil society and as such it should be always used in quotation marks. In fact, from that perspective, normality, like reality, is not applicable as a theoretical concept in the analysis of practices, and it only exists for political purposes. However, from a social perspective, our perceptions, imaginings and discursive articulations affect the structure of reality, even though they are themselves determined by the prior impact of authorities and institutions. Thus the way normality is imagined, perceived, and desired plays its role in structuring of reality as a social arena, while the concept of normality becomes a critical issue which tells us about the social, cultural and political processes which had given birth to its ethical categorization and semantic differentiation. In fact, the same criteria we have applied to understanding normality could be applied to interpretation of satisfaction in an existential sense. As Erving Goffmann (1974) observes, normality is always a state to come, a state projected to the future, but it is also immersed in the present from which desires and ambitions originate. This double dimension of normality finds its particular attribution when we speak about motivations for migration. It can be argued that migration is mainly instigated by a picture of normality that can be achieved in the future - however vague and incoherent that picture would be among individuals – and thus it is always somehow unfulfilled and always in progress. As abstract category as normality is, however, in Eastern Europe it evokes very concrete responses today and

provokes changes in both: that reality which migrants left behind and the one in which they currently live.

In light of the findings from the research on transitional period in post-Communist countries, our hypothesis of normality as a pro-Western modality of (well)being gains in additional credibility. Although people constantly refer to 'normality' in unspecified terms and interpret its meaning in their own ways, it has been observed by a team of Polish sociologists (Fatyga & Tyszkiewicz, 2001) that during the last decade the polarisation of the social function of this term has acquired a new vector. An increase in usage and the hysteric articulation of 'normality' and 'normal life' in social and public discourse in Poland is intriguing. The pro-democratic and pro-liberal transformation, which came to the post-Soviet countries after 1989, meets with the continuous trials of the people to establish some kind of order among many other, competing orders, including those ones which some Poles still remember from Communism, which could give them a sense stability and continuity. Eastern Europe has been living in a complex of inferiority towards the West throughout the whole post-war period: what was 'normal' in the West was forbidden in the East, what was lacking in the East was available in abundance in the West. Although far from ethnographic evidence from the time of Communism to empirically support such a sweeping observation, a methodological assumption can be posed that in the eyes of the local people in post-Soviet countries Communism was always regarded in opposition to Capitalism and in that sense was experienced as a system of the missing Capitalism from its structures. The immediate desire to fill in that lack after the fall of Communism in 1989 could be observed in the politics of most post-Soviet countries. The above mentioned ideological dialectics

affected a vision of normality to be sought after Communism. As has been discussed by many specialists, the transitional period that started in 1989 in post-Communist states, has developed as a time of ‘catching up’ with Capitalist democracy (Błażyca and Dąbrowski, 1995; Nagle & Mahr 1999; Anderson et al.,2001; Dobry, 2000; Gill, 2002). However different were the political and economic predispositions of individual states within the post-Soviet region, they all aimed at restoring private economy and creating “a modern industrial bourgeoisie” (Outhwaite & Ray, 2005, p.27) which would denounce the Communist model of nationalization and equalisation. The right to express one’s individual self and the right to freedom and private property was a benchmark for moving from state Communism to state Capitalism. Although not all writers agreed that following the West was the right direction for the East (Murko et al.,2008), most theorists accepted that a return to Communism is not possible and that state Capitalism paves the only way to democracy and rebuilding civil rights of post-Soviet citizens. The transitory period implied the move forward, the move to a better phase ruled by democracy and freedom, where the echoes of the ideals of a modern civil society resonate very strongly. As William Outhwaite and Larry Ray admit (2005, p. 32), it was a period in Eastern Europe in the 1990’s “driven by normative conceptions of what is “Western”, “modern”, “European”, or just “normal”. The fact that it was a mythical vision of the West does not undermine its impact on the new democracies in Eastern Europe. According to sociological theories of normality (Goffman, 1974; Giddens, 1987; Durkheim, 1982,1983; Berger & Luckmann, 1966), it is not possible to conceptualise or imagine normality without referring it to something. Normality always needs a context against which it can be measured. It is, in fact, the measure rather than normality itself that can

be defined in discursive terms. In this research we argue that it is the idea of the Western utopia that predetermines the desire of normality among migrants in very different spheres of their life, from religious to social and to family. Having been exposed to the discourse of the transition from Communism to Capitalism for the last two decades, post-Soviet societies must always feel 'behind' and never able to catch up. As the argument of Lopez-Rodriguez demonstrates, this feeling of inequality also draws migrants into a complex of inferiority which they continuously try to overcome. It is clear that the ethnic others have their political history which adds to their double identity in the host culture.

According to some critics of the transition period, the concept of post-Communism does not signify any relevance to the actual change the post-Soviet countries have been undergoing, since the disparities between them are too vast and the whole concept of emerging on the 'post-level' is not convincing. C. King (2000) argues that the idea of post-Communism is genuinely useless, while Sakwa (1999) stresses the regard for the global transition triggered by the fall of the Soviet regime. Emphasising the role of the post-Soviet countries in the consolidation of the EU common politics and economics, Outhwaite & Ray (2005) draw our attention to the transition within the structure of all European countries, which has not been finished and has been now spreading on a global scale. In a way, we are all in the transitional period which never ends, while Communism is only one of the historical caesuras which show that the old regimes can be abolished and possibly open the gate to the third way defined by Anthony Giddens

(1998, p. 26) as “an attempt to transcend both old-style social democracy and neoliberalism”. The third way shows close connections with the model of a civil society based on a social initiative of building trust, tolerance and informal networks, but also on dialectics between the state and the ‘civils’ with the latter influencing the social order. Our papers show that the ‘transition’ from the anti-democratic Communism towards the ‘normal’ and ‘civil’ Capitalism is not a one-directional process and is characterized by contradictions of inconsistent practices and discourses which compete with each other. In fact, through the observation of migrants, we have realized that there is no common understanding of what the future should bring to the Eastern European citizens and their countries. There is some common dialectics in thinking about the past, manifested in the hostile attitudes of nationals towards their governments, which have been discussed in this volume by Galasińska and by Ryan in their analyses of critical views of Polish migrants towards their home politics and moreover towards each other. However, such popular dialectics based on dominant ideology and ethics is constantly undermined by practices enabled by new opportunities available to migrants. Everyday life ‘food rituals’ researched by Rabikowska carry out the sense of chiasm between migrants’ attachment to Polishness and their aspirations to become ‘Western’, and there is no evidence that those two platforms can ever be satisfied leaving migrants on the transitional stage which is unrelated to the dominant politics of their own country. In Galasińska’s observation of the Internet practices among Polish migrants power is disseminated on a horizontal rather than hierarchical level and eventually taken over by the participants of chat rooms and Internet fora where independent discourses of Polish identity and normality counter the dominant ones. On the other hand, the research of contemporary Polish values from

Galasińska alongside the insight by Lopez-Rodriguez into forms of association and marketisation among migrant mothers indicates that the idea of democracy and neoliberalism are still winning among Poles, while it also paves the meaning of normality among both the middle class and the working class. With the extension of the ‘civilizing’ process into the group of young, professional migrants, as documented by Metykova, the civil initiative of building informal networks goes beyond the state-society dialectics and presents young migrants using media for appropriating their own identities and with indifference to the demands of traditional neoliberalism. Migrant groups likewise national groups are not homogenous entities; aspirations and experiences of individuals are different in each country, thus they affect transition, understood as a contact change of the group, in diverse ways, and at the same time they undergo transition themselves in an unpredictable direction. As many socio-cultural critics admit today, contemporarily individuals are forced to commit unlimited number of choices to “find” themselves in the absence of traditional guidelines (Bauman, 1992; Giddens, 1991). In the case of Eastern European migrants, their “self-identity”, to use Giddens’ phrase, is split between the traditional culture, still perpetuated in certain rituals, and a liberating heterogeneity of the global market. The global model, although criticized for its void of the local colour, is favoured by many young people who frequently choose “England” as their place of destination, where they expect to achieve normality. The lack of opportunities in the home country spins out the ideal of the West where everything is possible, while Polish reality is suffocating and intolerable, or even “sick” as expressed by some participants of the online forum a in Galasińska’s case study. A hostile attitude of migrants towards Poland as both a state and a nation is rather striking, but does not surprise in light of their

understanding of normality which Giddens would allocate as the second rather than the third way. Like for most Polish migrants represented in this volume, normality for Poles staying at home is associated with economic stability, individual freedom and social success. In the case study of Polish mothers in London, analysed by Lopez-Rodriguez, it is determined by meritocratic ideology which dictates the expected forms of achievements as well as the tactics of competition in the neo-liberal 'rat race'. However, this aspiring class of migrants cannot see that their position is disadvantaged at the start, since they are not able to be equal to those members of the society who had practiced neo-liberalism for decades in the UK. As Lopez Rodriguez indicates, Polish mothers use "the discourses of "normalcy" without seeing its discriminatory value turned against themselves. Interestingly, migrants do not recognize their own traditionalist approach as incongruous with a modern model of culture to which they aspire. Yet this kind of conjunction only reinforces the ideological intricacy of transition towards so called normality. To highlight the paradox, if normality is to be rooted in the neo-liberal, Capitalist society, it generates "an unprecedented level of sociological inequality, insecurity, and anxiety, both domestically and internationally" (Kim, 2004, p. 4)

On a phenomenological level, the complex of (un)equality among migrants increases the need to be recognized as a unified group and empowered in some way. Therefore the meaning of ethnicity and nationality, which did not play that role at home, offers a desired degree of coherence to be countered against the host culture. The negotiation of one's Polishness becomes both an individual and a group battle for recognition. The need to be defined within Polishness - an object of study in Galasińska,

Rabikowska, and Ryan's papers - has been revealed among those migrants who estrange from their roots and those ones who consciously reinforce their Polishness in daily practices. Whether it is a memory of an idealised home in Poland (Rabikowska) or the way people communicate their hostile judgments about the homeland (Galasińska, Ryan), the platform for understanding their standards of normality will include the performance, discursive practices, and representation feeding into the experience of Polish identity. How Polish migrants negotiate their Polishness in practice has been observed on such sites as the Internet (Galasińska) and home (Rabikowska), while in-depth interviews applied to a random sample of Poles living in different parts of London (Ryan) have shown how social narratives around ethnic identity serve as means of inclusion and exclusion. Normality of one society or one national group is never equal to normality perceived by the outsiders, and only when contrasted they reveal the arbitrary character of rules and norms differentiating the normal and the abnormal. Nevertheless, an insight into one group of nationals immediately discloses inner differences between them too and brings to light a more complex picture of normality which proves but its symbolic status and individual discrimination. Hence in our volume the social worlds of migrants are observed against their own interpretation of social worlds (on a vertical level) and that of the local people and other minority groups (on a horizontal level). In line with other debates on the social interaction among migrants (Opalski, 1998; Fortier, 2000), it has been acknowledged by all authors in this volume that, negotiation of normality and identity takes place inside their own national group and through the relationships between themselves and the host culture. As Ryan reports, a very strong ostracisation (defined in this volume in terms of stigma) of some Poles who "misbehave" in public places in

London by other Poles, who apply different standards of behaviour, aims at exclusion and punishment. Separation from Poles who do not abide the rules of social order by those ones who want to be perceived as “good Poles” is a reaction to the pressure of the dominant order absorbed in the original Polish habitus and also to the prevailing order of the host culture to which they want to adapt. Ryan stresses that by applying stigmatizing practices migrants reinforce the ground for class divisions and gender discrimination. The analogical conclusion has been drawn by Lopez-Rodriguez in her analysis of aspirational practices of Polish mothers living in London who stigmatise both: the undereducated Poles and the locals, who do not meet the standards of what they see as desired normality for children and families. As Ryan and Lopez-Rodriguez’s interviews demonstrate, stigma is a tool of social regulation, while in Rabikowska’s paper, rather unpredictably, it proves to support social liberation from the old conventions and gender-determined roles dominating at home. Under the influence of new social circumstances, the dimension of normality becomes more compliant and accommodates new values and practices which would not be acceptable at home. However, the typification of normal and abnormal, acceptable and unacceptable still changes from one person to another and when “bad Poles” are rejected by some fellow countrymen, they are embraced by others. Ryan and Lopez Rodriguez highlight the meaning of class and social status in that typification, while Rabikowska points at the porosity of culture *per se* affecting the relaxation of migrants’ behavior.

At the crossing point of these different levels a new version of normality emerges which challenges the old routines, beliefs, values and identities of migrants, but the host culture and even the home culture become affected since cannot avoid confrontation and eventually change. The evidence of the interaction with the host culture takes a material form in the acts of food consumption and food preparation described by Rabikowska. While regarding normality after Goffman as a collective representation perpetuated in interactional rituals, Rabikowska argues that ethnic food epitomises the myth of home and re-establish the role of national identity among migrants. Yet she also observes that food is a consumer product which the local economy embraces by adjusting the supply to the demand as has been lately observed in all supermarkets in London filled by Polish stock. Metykova in her paper points at the response of migrants to the opportunities offered by the traditional and the new media which are used for communication with home and for updating knowledge about both the homeland and the hostland. By controlling their choice of the media content and establishing their own routines of communicating with the family by means of mobile phones and the Internet, migrants create completely new ways of negotiating their normality and identity within a host culture and at the same time they alter the frame of normality at home. As has been said before, normality has a double dimension: it is factual and present, enclosing experiences and habits from a given environment, and at the same time it opens to the new prospects which are aspired, expected or even dreamt about. In the case of migrants, past and present merge into the third space which becomes an arena of perpetuating the old habits and settling with the new ones. Food rituals show it very clearly that “home” will never be the same for migrants who are

affected by their own culture and the host culture in all aspects of everyday life. Even if they try to protect their Polish identity in an orthodox way, their daily practices bear out, that mutual influences cannot be avoided. Those migrants who accept this intersection as part of their new normality show greater interest in the host culture. As Rabikowska demonstrates their attitude becomes more “porous” while their daily practices are more oriented on adaptability in comparison to those migrants with an “orthodox” attitude. Daily rituals of establishing ‘home’ reflect different levels of their engagement with the local culture, but more generally celebrating Polish food discloses a contradictory need of migrants to assimilate and reject assimilation. As James Clifford argues (1994), a double consciousness of migrants living between ‘there’, which was left behind, and ‘here’, where a new home has to be created, produces the characteristic paradox for diaspora which lies in empowering migrants and estranging them at the same time. By disturbing a ‘normal’ order of the local culture, migrants achieve a special status of being in-and-out, here-an-there at the same time. This double belonging can be liberating, but also, as Homi K. Bhabha shows (2007), quite painful, leading to a ‘hybrid’ existence of migrants who simultaneously try to satisfy the host culture and reinforce their original position. The effort of Polish mothers trying to secure a better status for their children is the most representative example of that paradoxical demand. Their ambitions derive from their Polish values, but their actions are subordinated to the local ideology of success of neo-liberal origin to which they cannot fully respond. The need of constant negotiation of migrants’ identity points also to the fact that their attempts at securing normality will never be fulfilled either from the local or from the home perspective.

Due to the need of acknowledgement among migrants, categories of belonging to certain identities must be distinctive enough for signification of their presence and their difference among others. Creating common groups of support around churches, around common aspirations (mothers' networks), or interests (internet forum) serve as platforms for performing those different social and cultural identities which participate in the process of assimilation. Paradoxically, they also produce an isolationist border which separates diasporas in the same way as any social, political or ethnic affiliation does to groups and movements. Belonging to an ethnically marked support group, or performing one's ethnic identity according to certain cultural models derived from home, or even rebelling openly against those models carry out what Fortier sees (2000, p.70) as "a gesture against oblivion in, and of, the homeland". "Behaving badly" by some migrants and the discreditation of such behaviour by others is one such example which shows on one level a need to be distinguished according to an ethnic category, but on another level it draws our attention to the signifying role of class and gender among migrants. Both levels: horizontal (where migrants differentiate themselves on ethnic basis) and vertical (where other identities come to play) contribute to their claims for equality and cultural specificity. Migrants want to be like others and want to be different hence negotiation of their identities must convey contradictions. Some confused comments collected by Ryan, Galasińska and Rabikowska from migrants who expressed their hostility towards the host culture, but also despise for the home country, reinforce the concept of displacement in a diasporic group and reveal increasing contestation over participation and meaning. It has been noticed during interviews that collective identity empowers migrants in the context of the host culture, but their understanding of

belonging or exclusion is based on individual expectations and experiences which blurs the 'purity' of the collective and deny its fixedness. Articulation of the organic collective such as ethnicity (in Ryan and in Galasińska in this volume) or nationality (in Rabikowska in this volume) puts on view a claim of migrants to a particular culture, yet individual responses collected for this volume prove that it also a very selective claim which overcomes homogeneity and generalisation. In Ryan's argument inspired by Barth Polishness is a collection of features "which the actors themselves regard as significant" (Barth, 1969, p. 14). This approach to ethnicity rests on the assumption that there is a pool of features which can be first recognised as meaningful by all Poles and then applied individually in relation to a subjectively interpreted context, such as, for example, migration or home. From Ryan's argument we find out that Poles do refer to such features mainly in a moral and ethical sense and that they even use them in different situations as a demarcation line to signify their own difference among other ethnic groups. However, Ryan also argues that ethnic features can be manipulated and "acted out" in the Goffmanian manner (1959) for establishing power externally or for affecting relations within the Polish community. A question about a model of a "good Pole" emerges from Ryan's discussion, which on a political level links with a model of a civil man, or a good citizen to which some Poles aspire. New normality (or normalcy) for them would be a state where ethnic identity and civil identity complements each other. Who is a "better Pole" in a foreign context and what criteria are considered to measure the ethnic correctness is a problem with complex ramifications which Ryan analyses in relation to situation ethics and Goffman's theory of impression managements. Interestingly, the same features of Polishness which Ryan considers to be of ethnic

origin, Rabikowska connects with a myth of home-nation which migrants re-create for both their individual comfort and for public view. In this paper national identity meets with ethnic identity on a symbolic level where they signify a common experience of home bounded by space. It is an ideal of a nation, however, which materialises itself as *doxa* in everyday activities of migrants who themselves build the concreteness of the nation out of the homeland. Both arguments, although through different definitions of a collective identity, point at the contesting meaning of Polishness in the cultural process of establishing normality among migrants.

Although our research has indicated a certain degree of isolation of Polish immigrants within the host culture, in this volume we have overcome a dichotomy introduced by Anthony Giddens (1991) between “closed traditional communities” and “open modern societies” in favour of a theory of negotiation in which individuals construct identities for themselves. In our volume identity and normality are always unfinished projects and can be effectively transgressed through individual and group actions which change social reality. However, we have tried to show that in certain historical and political circumstances, such as a wave of migration, the “liquidity” of identity, to use Bauman’s phrase, crystalises around some ideological issues, such as a lack of representation of a migrant group in the host culture, or contestation of national mythology, and reinforces then the meaning of organic models of identity which can lead to a rebirth of nationalistic tendencies, or, on the opposite end, to breaking up with them. We have also demonstrated that dialectics of discourse around migrants’ identity, especially that one enclosing them within the boundaries of ethnicity and nationality,

does not help to understand social vitality of groups and individuals which defeats oppositions and contributes to new normalities most suitable for themselves.

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