Migration pressures and opportunities

Challenges to belonging within the European Union's mobility regime[1]

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Introduction

What for a long time appeared unimaginable became reality with the enlargement of the European Union, beginning in 2004, which united countries that had been separated from each other for decades by the Iron Curtain partitioning Europe into the »East« and the »West.« The expansion turned people into EU citizens whose mobility had been severely restricted in the past, but who had nevertheless experienced widespread migration, often in a partly clandestine manner. The opening of borders was thus accompanied by fears that certain countries would be overrun by the movement of people from the new to the old member states. Among those new acceding countries, Poland, due to its large population and high rates of emigration, has significantly impacted discourses on Europeanization, intra-European migration, and inequalities within the European Union in the post-accession period. People from Poland have taken advantage of their post-2004 freedom of mobility with an unexpected speed and scale, thereby fundamentally transforming the socio-demographic landscape in many European regions (Favell 2008). Most of them have migrated to the UK, which as one of the few old EU member states has not restricted the immigration of people from the new member states. Yet despite Germany's seven-year accession moratorium, and widely unnoticed by social sciences, a significant and increasing

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number has also immigrated to Germany (Fihel, Kaczmarczyk, and Stefańska 2012).

Scholars have been eager to find answers as to why so many people have emigrated from Poland. After all, it is a country with a growing economy and one that was comparatively spared the economic crisis that hit Europe around 2008. The coexistence of economic growth alongside high levels of emigration has demonstrated the shortcomings of purely economic arguments for patterns of migration, and has paved the way for more cultural views on such phenomena. In the case of Poland, we find that many people in the country grew up in social contexts where mobility had become a socially accepted means to combat a variety of circumstances in their local environments (Garapich 2011). This means that people have used mobility as an exit strategy to escape not only poverty, but also realities such as violent marriages or cloying family bonds, or simply to pursue an adventure. Due to restrictions on mobility before 2004, many people concealed their motives for migration, which fundamentally affected trajectories of settlement and migration.

What does this »new freedom« mean for people in Poland, given that they have always migrated, even if their ability to migrate was previously severely restricted? How do they orient themselves within such frameworks of mobility? In this article, I intend to show that migration, although cherished as an opportunity to equalize life chances within the European Union (see Amelina and Vasilache 2014), may at the same time put people under pressure to obey the »migration imperative« (Kesselring 2006). In its modernist underpinnings, the migration imperative corresponds to the need to pursue spatial mobility, which is linked to the individual's degree of social mobility and flexibility. Yet at the same time, imperatives for mobility also challenge people's sense of belonging, in the form of their affective and inalienable sense of self and of their place in the world (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011). Such a relational view on ideas of belonging implies that there are socio-spatial forms of membership; this reaches beyond the often static and essentializing notions of identifications/identities, assimilation, and incorporation, thus acknowledging the complexities of belonging. This view also stresses

the emotional and processual aspects of belonging with regard to how people form, for a certain period of time, affectively pleasant attachments within contexts and relationships that they themselves have sought out.

The focus here is placed on the challenges posed to people's sense of belonging within the EU's mobility regime. In common use, the »mobility regime« refers to the power and normativity of human movement across borders, which is regulated by global power structures and shaped by inequalities (Glick, Schiller, and Salazar 2013). Although belonging has become a common point of discussion in migration scholarship and beyond (Anthias 2016; Anthias, Yuval-Davis, and Cain 1992; Baumeister and Leary 1995; Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011; Yuval-Davis 2011), it has not been applied very often within the context of intra-European mobility. This is probably because intra-European mobility is often portrayed as a space with low cultural and legal barriers to mobility (Amelina 2016). Yet, this view underestimates the ruptures in the presumed stability of migrants' social relationships, identities/identifications, and attachments (for a similar argument, see Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2008).

In the following section, I describe the sample, the methods of data collection, and analysis. Afterwards, I point out the most important milestones for past and contemporary patterns of migration between Poland and Germany, which is important for understanding the extent and dynamics of contemporary migration. In particular, it allows us to make sense of why people in the new acceding countries make use of their freedom of mobility to a much higher degree than their counterparts in the old member countries. In the subsequent empirical chapters, I will show that ethnicity continues to play a major role in people's sense of belonging. In this article, I use an empirical definition of ethnicity from an interactional perspective that is not primarily interested in the ontology of what ethnicity is but rather with how people organize their experiences and practices around what they consider to be »ethnic.« The continual assertion that countries have distinct normative sets of cultural values makes migration more likely to rupture people's sense of »ethnic« belonging. Yet, it is important to note that these disturbances do not affect all people to the same extent. Whether people perceive migration

as a pressure or as a freedom, as well as whether they consider their migration to have lowered their social position, depends to a large extent on their access to class-based resources and their gender.

Methodology

For this research, I adopted a transnational perspective and employed a multi-sited research design.[2] A transnational perspective rejects the methodological nationalism of many social science studies, in which nation states are assumed to provide the normative and institutional frames within which individuals organize their lives. This does not mean that transnational research denies the relevance of the nation state. Rather it calls attention to the significance of socio-spatial categories and attributes (such as »national,« »local,« and »transnational«) with respect to individuals' social positions and social relations (Amelina and Faist 2012). It is thus imperative that socio-spatial categories not be taken for granted, but themselves be definite objects of study. For this purpose, I chose to employ an interpretive approach that includes data collection and analysis from two sites, Germany and Poland. In keeping with the subject-centered and social-constructivist theoretical and terminological foundations of this study, my methodology was based on approaches that question the existence of an objective reality. Instead, the social world is understood as emerging from the processes social actors go through to make sense of all the objects in the world that they encounter (on the process of meaning-making, see Blumer 1969).

The results presented in this study draw from interviews conducted with three different types of respondents (n = 35):

- Twenty were migrants from Poland who lived and/or worked in Germany.

- Ten were significant others who lived in Poland and with whom the respondents stayed in touch (the »matched sample«).

- Five lived in Poland and had no immediate experience of migration.

My research was also informed by observations conducted in the homes and workplaces of respondents, analysis of social networks, and expert interviews. The stories of individuals who migrated or who were influenced by the migration of others are placed at the core of this paper, however the insights gained from other types of data informed the analysis presented here.

The 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2012 in medium-sized cities in Germany. In addition, ten interviews were conducted in Poland with significant others whose locations had been provided by the interviewees in Germany. The sample in Germany comprised an equal number of men and women who ranged from 23 to 67 years of age. Of the 20 interviewees, eight had Polish citizenship, eight had German–Polish dual citizenship, and four were naturalized German citizens; 11 were married, four were single, three were divorced, and two were in an ongoing relationship. Thirteen had at least one child; ten had a university degree, seven had completed vocational training, two were students at the time of the interview, and one had graduated from secondary school. Those with degrees had received them in both countries. Interviews with the respondents were conducted in Polish in 13 cases and in German in the other seven. At the outset, respondents were asked in which language they would prefer to be interviewed. In general, respondents who migrated as children chose to conduct the interview in German, whereas those who migrated as adults chose to conduct the interview in Polish, with the exception of Marta, who had migrated to Germany ten years earlier when in her mid-twenties, but chose to speak German in the interview. In accordance with matched-sampling procedures, the 20 respondents

were asked to provide contact information for their significant others. As a result, ten interviews were conducted in Poland (three female friends, two mothers, two sisters, one female cousin, one daughter, and one uncle).

All interviews were transcribed in full and analyzed with the objective of reconstructing the meanings social actors attached to their actions, specifically with regard to the boundaries they drew when making sense of their lives. Social-scientific hermeneutics proved to be a suitable methodology to achieve this (see also Amelina 2010). As a methodology, social-scientific hermeneutics proposes the use of a two-stage data analysis consisting of a combination of coding procedures and sequence analysis. Coding procedures allow researchers to familiarize themselves with the data and to structure the content of the material. Through coding, significant passages (sequences) are identified for sequence analysis. Sequence analysis is an in-depth procedure that analyzes sequences in small units, sometimes even word by word, and generates various meanings for these units of text, which are then either proved or rejected when applied to subsequent text. In the end, only meanings considered by consensus to be the most valid for the whole text are accepted (Amelina 2010).

Migration from Poland to Germany: In the past and today

The migration of people from Poland (or of Poles in times where there was no Polish sovereign state) to German territories stretches back to at least the nineteenth century (Zubrzycki 1953). Since Poland has, throughout its history, been partitioned and deterritorialized several times, it has encountered frequent and extensive streams of migration. People from Poland have immigrated to Germany under very different circumstances depending on their legal statuses and the point in time of their migration. Until the post-socialist transformation of the country, many people migrated as »ethnic Germans« (especially during the 1970s and 1980s), since this was one of the very few legal possibilities to leave Poland and migrate to Germany. For some, migration to Germany felt like returning home rather than immigrating. For others, it simply presented an opportunity to leave Poland; these people often experienced migration as an escape. Others immigrated as asylum seekers (particularly around the time

of martial law in Poland from 1981–1983). Moreover, during the socialist era there were not only legal barriers to migration, but also moral ones. Emigration contradicted the socialist propaganda of Poland, which presented the country as a »socialist paradise« (Garapich 2011). As a result of bilateral agreements in the 1990s between Poland and Germany for short-term employment in some sectors of the German labor market, in particular agriculture, many (male) Poles travelled to work in Germany for a period of months, while maintaining their center of life in Poland.

The enlargement of the EU in 2004 marks the most recent peak in emigration from Poland. Due to changes in legal regulations, in 2011, after the abolition of a seven-year accession moratorium, Germany allowed the free movement of workers from the new acceding countries, and forms of mobility between Germany and Poland changed as a result. Short-term work contracts in Germany, during which migrants maintained their bases in Poland, tended to turn into longer stays or permanent settlement, and undocumented residence was legalized. The United Kingdom, Ireland, and Sweden, which were the only old member countries without barriers to accession, became major destination countries for Polish citizens. In particular, the United Kingdom, which had the largest labor market of the three countries, experienced an unprecedented inflow of workers from the new acceding countries, the majority of whom were from Poland. Germany—though this is not as widely recognized in the news and research articles that focus on the United Kingdom and Ireland—has received a sizable number of newcomers from the new acceding countries, most of whom are from Poland, and the numbers are increasing (Fihel, Kaczmarczyk, and Stefańska 2012).

There are now three generations of Polish immigrants to Germany, totaling an estimated 1.6 million people, which makes them the second largest immigrant population after people from Turkey (German Statistical Office 2014). However, we know little about them other than their economic and historical backgrounds. Polish migrants in Germany are portrayed in an often stereotypical and derogatory way as »units of labor« or an »army of leprechauns« (*Heinzelmännchen*) who come to Germany to do the »dirty« work, such as caregiving, cleaning, or working in construction,

and then return to Poland (Wagner et al. 2014, 55). Migrants from Poland have kept a low profile, as they are largely invisible in German (migration) discourse (Schmidtke 2004). Also, the traces of this large community of Polish migrants and their long history of immigration to Germany are not easy to identify. The hidden presence of Polish migrants in the local German landscape stands in stark contrast to the abundance of Polish shops and churches one finds in the other major destination countries, such as the United Kingdom. These are not as easy to spot in Germany as Turkish shops and places of worship. The reasons for their invisibility can again be attributed to their particular migration history. For most of the immigrants of the past, »ethnic Germans« and those who managed to »escape,« maintaining of a sense of belonging to Poland and adherence to Polish networks was neither easy nor necessarily what immigrants desired. During most periods in the past, Polish migrants to Germany came under very restricted legal conditions and often had to conceal their reasons for migration; this situation did not foster the creation of dense networks between Poles, who often formed only weak ties and regarded each other with mutual distrust and suspicion (Irek 2011). Also, uncertain possibilities of returning to their home country and very limited opportunities of travelling to and communicating with Poland meant Polish migrants of previous waves hardly engaged in such transnational activities. This situation has, however, changed profoundly since Poland entered the EU, enabling easy transnational communication and frequent border crossings.

Migration and challenges to belonging

It would seem logical that, in the case of Poland, freedom of migration has been a clearly positive political accomplishment. After all, it allows people to pursue plans that they had previously tried to conceal. Yet, as the following empirical accounts show, these opportunities also present challenges to belonging. That is because migration is closely bound to discourses on globalization, which frequently place high value on the liberated, cosmopolitan, and free-floating subject, and link migration to a »successful navigation of social life« (Faist 2013, 1640). In contrast, these same discourses associate lack of movement with »stasis, decline, and

disadvantage« (Faist 2013, 1640). The following empirical accounts reveal the challenges posed to people's sense of belonging due to the enduring power of ethno-nationalist boundaries over how people understand themselves and their place in the world. This concerns in particular those people who were raised within strong nation states, which still provide a primary framework within which people can navigate their daily lives (see also Skey 2010). Migration, therefore, may disrupt people's sense of belonging, in particular when they feel forced to migrate and to conform to discourses that link spatial and social mobility. At the same time, migration may disturb accepted knowledge, as one leaves a social order that feels meaningful, familiar, and predictable (Misztal 2001). I will show, exemplified in the case of Poland, that the option of pursuing migration, the losses resulting from resisting discourses of globalization, and the profits to be gained from conforming to the same, are all tightly bound to class and gender.

»Being a Pole in Germany«: Migration and ethnicity-related belonging

Belonging »tends to be naturalized and to be part of everyday practices« (Yuval-Davis 2011, 10), and thus the need to establish and fight for belonging emerges only when people feel their sense of and place in the world to be threatened (see Brockmeyer in this issue). Perceptions of »ethnicity« play a major role in how people anchor their taken-for-granted sense of belonging. While the categories of ethnicity and nation are often used interchangeably, for analytical reasons it is important to consider that ethnicity is a more relational and micro-level category that denotes a »socially shared perception of differences between categories of people« and thus is less bound to place (Eder et al. 2004, 3). In contrast, the term nation refers more to a territorial demarcation and concepts of citizenry. In the case of Poland and Germany, both terms are interwoven since, in contrast to the US and Canada, both nations base their »raison d'être« on the myth of ethnic homogeneity (Eder et al. 2004, 1). The case of Poland is particular, as the country circulates ambivalent narratives of ethnicity and nationalist attachments, which reflect strong, »peasant-rooted« (Garapich 2011, 6) attachments to territory. At the same time, they also mirror long-standing experiences of migration and »the fact that throughout

the last 200 years Polish state borders were shifting, disappearing, reappearing, and shifting back and forth again« (Garapich 2011, 6). Many Polish intellectuals worked from abroad and turned the themes of migration, exile, and loss of homeland into important symbols and subjects of both classical literature (by authors such as Adam Mickiewicz and Henryk Sienkiewicz) and modern writing and film (see for example Galasiński and Galasińska 2007). Migration in the case of Poland thus has ambivalent ties to narratives of ethnicity and nationalism.

This ambivalent relationship to migration also stems from the fact that throughout history, the imagining of stark differences in prosperity, »modernity,« and political stability between the »East« and the »West« were central parts of the European narrative. Max Weber provided an early account of Polish-German history framed in this way. In his times, there was no Polish sovereign nation, yet parts of Prussia were inhabited by people who tended to identify themselves, and were identified by others, as Poles. When Max Weber occupied himself with an inquiry into agriculture in the different regions of Prussia between 1892 and 1905, he also travelled through its Eastern parts. Weber described the territories inhabited by Poles, and the Poles themselves, as rural, backward, and less civilized—an image of Poland that, until recently, appears to have been deeply rooted in the Polish-German collective memory (Barglowski 2015; Schmidtke 2004). Polish migrants in Germany often adopt this oppositional binary, when they reflect on themselves as a »Pole in Germany« in contrast to when they reflect on themselves as a »Pole in Poland.«

Piotr, who migrated from Poland to Germany in the early 1980s, elaborates on the differences between Poland and Germany:

> Well, now [that] the borders within Europe are open, people are no longer faced with such categorical choices. It doesn't mean so much anymore. A lot of people from Poland—I think two million —are in Western Europe: in Ireland, England and they get along very well there. They see a bit [of] another civilization, especially those from small towns. I think in a sense it will help Poland to [open itself] to the world, [to get] to know [it]. People [will not be] so closed off in their xenophobia and [in the] belief that they are

> special, some kind of patriotic outcast (*wyżutki*) from poor societies, to rationalize (*żeby coś tam wmówić*) that they are chosen, because otherwise it would be hard to survive, and I recognize that. And yet, one becomes disconnected (*człowiek się odzwyczaja*) after 30 years, [which] is quite understandable. I studied Polish studies, and when I read something in Polish, [it was] always with a kind of patriotic bonus. It was close to me, and until the end of my life I will jump [for] joy when the Poles play soccer and score a goal. (Piotr, age 55, Germany)[3]

By his use of the phrase »categorical choices,« Piotr means that when he arrived in Germany in the 1980s, his migration was supposed to be permanent, since during the first few years after his immigration return visits were not allowed; Piotr and his wife had to hand over their Polish passports to the Polish government when they received their German passports. Nowadays, migration from Poland is considered to be much easier, since people can travel to Poland as often as they like and can return at any time; thus, migration »does not mean so much anymore.« From the perspective of the migrants, migration often meant leaving a closed country for an open one. Whereas prior to the transformation period (i.e., before 1989), the term »closed« referred to borders, to an isolated country that had no interaction with the world outside, today the notion of being closed refers to the conservatism and traditionalism of Poland, which the respondents feel is not changing fast enough to correspond to what they regard as the more liberal and less traditional habits of the West. Similar to Piotr, many respondents described the less urbanized regions of Poland as »patriotic« and not open to global changes. These accounts reflect homogenizing views of these regions, which supposedly do not engage in exchange with the outer world. Piotr argues that »poor societies,« by which he means those lacking cultural and economic capital, need patriotism to feel a special identity and to see themselves as »chosen« in order to deal with their deprived situation.

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3   The parentheses after quotations from interviewees include the pseudonym and age of the interviewee. Additionally, they state the country where the interviewees live, which corresponds to where the interview was conducted.

International mobility, especially to the West, is thought to enable self-transformation and development through which people can overcome their patriotic insularity by »seeing a bit of another civilization.« In this sense, migration entails overcoming not only legal but also psychological borders.

Drawing ethnic boundaries between »co-ethnics«

For many people, moving to another country is accompanied by experiences of a fundamental shift in sets of cultural values. Testament to the power of the myth of ethnic homogeneity, people often frame their experiences of difference in ethnic terms, which is also often fueled by collective nostalgia and the remembered narratives of members of the diaspora (Gońda 2015). Migration often makes people feel dislocated, as if a part of themselves were missing. These challenges affect newly arrived migrants as much as those who have been abroad for longer periods of time. While for newly arrived migrants, the perception of a »difference« between themselves and their new environment is a common experience, as more time is spent in the country of immigration, ethnicity often becomes an issue of negotiation between family and friends in the country from which they have emigrated. In the initial phase of migration, people often feel themselves to be »different« within the new environ-ment to which they immigrated but, over time, as indicated in Piotr's account above, it might become a boundary between themselves and their relatives and friends in the countries from which they came. Markus is a 28-year-old man who migrated with his family from a village in southern Poland to Cologne at the age of three. He sees very clear differences between himself and his family members in Poland, which he classifies in religious terms: »With those of the family who stayed behind, it's really like this: church every Sunday, nice and proper and, er, and whatnot […], and I believe it [his lifestyle; KB] wouldn't fit in with their world.« Although ethnicity here is used in a rather fixed way, as an interchangeable trait shared among people, ethnicity can also travel across countries. Those who are considered to have remained »Polish« after immigration are affected by »othering« carried out by members of the same »ethnic community« to which they supposedly belong. Markus also

expresses his astonishment about his cousin's life in Germany when he shares the following observation: »When I go to my cousin's Facebook page, I look at her list of friends: all of her friends are Polish women. I have no idea where on earth she finds them all.« Ethnicity, which here is used to designate Polishness, is thus not a connection between fixed groups, but is constructed through processes in which people define how they belong to one another by emphasizing commonalities in »ethnic« terms. What and who is regarded as Polish, and more generally the ethnic boundaries that are drawn, are closely linked to the way migrants' social relations and their senses of themselves are constituted.

As a result, for some, migration can lead to a feeling of liminality and cause lower degrees of well-being and a sense of alienation. Joanna, who migrated as a child with her parents in the 1980s, senses that her subjective identity does not correspond to the environment in which she lives. She feels herself to be Polish but cannot imagine herself living in Poland, where she assumes she will experience poorer living conditions:

> Well, I'm torn between Poland and Germany. […] I don't know what I would have achieved by now if we had stayed in Poland. In Poland, adult children, even when they are married, live with their parents because they can't afford to have an apartment of their own. […] I have a Polish heart; my temperament is Polish. Here in Germany, everything and everyone is so cold, everyone [acts] on their own and for themselves. […] But I don't know what I would be doing in Poland. […] My younger sister is completely German. It's obvious that Germany is her home. My older sister is mainly in contact with Poles, and she actually only speaks in Polish. She's a typical mother and housewife, and although she identifies as a Pole, she doesn't want to return to Poland because she knows her life is better here. And for me it's the same. (Joanna, age 35, Germany)

Joanna ties her subjectivity to Poland while living in Germany where she experiences a sense of »being torn.« These feelings are often driven by comparisons with close family members who are perceived to manifest different degrees of Polishness and Germanness. Joanna's quote is a good

illustration of general discourses that link ethno-nationalism to gender, constructing women as the central agents in ethnic and national repro-duction (Anthias, Yuval-Davis, and Cain 1992). In Joanna's opinion, both her older and younger sisters' identifications are not problematic—they are either German or Polish. Yet, she rejects what for her are characteristics of Polish women when she describes her older sister as representing »Polish hardness and conservatism.« Usually these traits refer to clear social expectations regarding gendered lives and sexualities, expectations that are often attributed to the widespread presence of the Catholic Church in public discourse, as well as images of »Matka Polka« (meaning both Polish motherhood and mother Poland) and constructions of femininity related to nationhood (Pustułka 2016). Conversely, Joanna sees herself as having a »Polish heart« but evaluates her life chances in Germany to be better, which makes it impossible for her to consider living in Poland. She seems to envy her sisters' unquestioning feelings of belonging. Perceptions of both stratification and ethnicity are frequently evidenced by respondents who feel they need to navigate between two unsatisfactory spaces. The respondents believe that while Germany offers many more opportunities for making a good life, it is also considered to be »cold« and individualistic. A similar balancing act was found in our study of queer migrants' coming-out narratives. In these, respondents were afraid of the limited social mobility they would experience in Germany as a result of being stigmatized as a migrant, restricted to their »ethnic« identity; on the other hand, they also tried to not be excluded from family networks by emphasizing their ethnic belonging to the countries from which they had emigrated (Barglowski, Amelina, and Bilecen 2014). Yet these processes show that for some people, ethnicity is connected with »the authentic site of original belonging,« which may exacerbate the process of realizing coherence within the scope of a dislocated subjectivity, as well as being linked to stability and normalcy in the times and places in which they currently live (Gońda 2015, 75).

The pressure to migrate as a matter of class and gender

The negative side of the new freedom of mobility experienced after 2004 in Poland is that while it has broadened migration opportunities, it has at

the same time also created restrictions on belonging and pressures to migrate. Where mobility is increasingly linked to advantages, immobility is associated with disadvantages. These benefits are present in particular within modern approaches to mobility, which equate spatial mobility and social mobility and successful living (see Kesselring 2006). Depending on their gender and class, people have different opportunities to profit from mobility; at the same time, these categories also shape the impact of their immobility in terms of their perceived life chances and self-realization.

Generally, the post-2004 wave was different from previous waves of emigration in that the option of migration was presented to people who had not typically migrated before, such as highly-qualified people or those with well-paid and secure jobs. For instance, Andżelika, a psychotherapist, and her husband, a computer scientist, both had, as she says, satisfying jobs. She recalls the atmosphere in Poland in the wake of its accession to the EU in 2004 as follows: »And then we thought, all Poles thought, I mean that [when] a lot of our friends moved to England, Ireland, [it] was a boom, a social movement.« Like Andżelika, most individuals believed that they were witnessing a »social movement« and a »boom,« and they considered becoming a part of it. My research has shown that all the respondents in Poland have reflected on the option of migration. This is the case since migration has, on the one hand, increased its »attractiveness« through the policy of open borders and, as Piotr puts it above, migration is no longer tied to »categorical choices« as it was before. In addition, individuals in Poland have found that their networks have spread across Europe, and these widespread networks between people in Poland and Polish citizens abroad have created spaces of opportunity, providing a variety of resources to enable migration but also allowing the circulation of »success stories« (Nowicka 2014). This meso-level of migrant networks is crucial for understanding why migration tends to be a self-enforcing process (Faist 2000). The extent of emigration, and the resources and stories exchanged across networks, make other citizens contemplate the potential gains migration might offer them too. This provokes an important, though widely neglected, question: How do people navigate these imperatives for migration, in particular when they

take into account the ideologies embedded in the Polish-German transnational social space? Such a view requires acknowledging the centrality of immobility within imperatives of mobility and focusing on what it means »when people react to the mobility imperative of modern society by refusing movement« (Kesselring 2006, 269). The interviews conducted in Poland with people who have not (yet) migrated clearly elaborate the relationship between belonging and migration pressures. All interviewees considered migration to be an option, such as David: »Well, in general, many Poles emigrate, so I sometimes think about it too. But I always think that [those who] emigrate can't cope here in Poland. So I was ambitious and tried to organize my life here« (David, age 26, Poland). Similar to Andżelika, who stated above that around 2004 in Poland emigration felt like a social movement, David also refers here to how migration has become a common thing to do and that he also considers it to be an option. In another central narrative, David refers to the class-related differences among migrants, who have different levels of access to the option of migration. There are those who »can't cope here,« who are considered as needing to migrate, and others who can choose to stay or to leave, which reflects a hierarchy among Polish migrants in terms of their supposed reasons for migration (Erdmans 1992).

While ethno-nationalist boundaries, as has been shown earlier, are a central mode in which people construct their sense of belonging, it can hinder some people from migrating, as they anticipate losing a sense of belonging: »I was thinking about migration, and my sister [her cousin Andżelika] really tried to persuade me. But honestly, I'm a bit afraid, and I like Poland because they speak Polish here. […] And I'm afraid of being isolated from my family« (Basia, age 23, Poland). Basia explains that she is afraid of migrating, mainly because she fears separating from her family and dealing with a new language. The decision not to migrate appears to be significant for her, as she suspects that migration would improve her life chances and her cousin is trying to persuade her to migrate. Family commitments are one reason why people choose to »stay put.« Basia expresses a sense that migration may open opportunities to her and there seem to be some benefits, which both she and her cousin, who tries to

persuade her, anticipate she would gain. Mobility and immobility are enmeshed in a web of cultural norms, particularly those pertaining to gender, which stratify the options of staying or leaving (Mata-Codesal 2015). For instance, the mobility of some depends on the immobility of others. As I have shown elsewhere, female family members are often excluded from international mobility because of their anticipated care commitments to the elderly in their family, which, however, enables the mobility of other (female) family members (Barglowski 2015).

Also, decisions about migration, settlement, and return are themselves gendered, because they are bound up with gendered labor markets and social norms in both the countries of emigration and immigration. Emilia's pattern of migration is a very common one and aids our understanding of the gendered inequalities inherent in migration. Her husband commuted between Poland and Germany for several years before they settled in Germany in 2011. Before migrating, Emilia had a job as a middle manager in a large retail company, and she was satisfied with her job.

> I don't know if I will ever have as good a job here as I had in Poland. My husband said that he doesn't want to return to Poland because he doesn't see any future for himself there. It seems as if it's better for him here. I don't know if it's better for me, though. I can't say I'm 100 percent happy with how things are now. […] While my husband was working here [in Germany] and we were in Poland, there was no problem. His income here, converted into Polish currency, was quite good. Now that we're here, the situation is a bit different. We pay taxes and so on. (Emilia, age 35, Germany)

Emilias's story sheds light on some of the involuntary requirements of crossing borders, such as the expectation that households should be united under one roof, and therefore family members should eventually sacrifice their own systems of belonging. Emilia's story illustrates that men often neither feel like quitting their bivalent lifestyle—working in Germany and living in Poland, for decades a common migration pattern between Poland and Germany (Łukowski 2001)—nor settling in their country of origin. This reluctance can be understood as a more general pattern in which a man's status is based mainly on his position in the

labor market. Although gender roles are changing, many people still believe that the male breadwinner model is ideal for both men and women. These factors also shape migration decisions. The loss of status that often accompanies migration means that men often have more trouble adapting to the country of immigration than women do (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 2005). It is particularly working-class men who fear becoming »migrants,« in other words a stigmatized category in the country of immigration, which would lower their status more then would have been the case had they not migrated, which leaves them feeling trapped in a liminal space. Therefore, the decision to settle in Germany may not always be a straightforward one, but it is often a strategy for overcoming »bivalence« and reuniting families. Moreover, Emilia's wish to adhere to the norm of nuclear families living together, and her lower bargaining power, leads her to a worse economic and career-related position after migration, as before she was satisfied with her job in Poland. Now that she is living in Germany, where her husband works, she is unhappy because she believes that her living standards have declined. Also, she struggles with not understanding the school system, institutions, and the German language. Reflections on social mobility play an important part in how migrants perceive the outcome rate between losses incurred after migration, such as feelings of alienation and distance from family and friends, and its positive results, such as increased security and economic prosperity.

Conclusion

Migrants and non-migrants alike have social expectations and visions about what migration would mean for them, creating imagined spaces of opportunity and illuminating the constructions of and challenges to belonging that are experienced in emigration environments. The example of Polish migration to Germany was specifically chosen for its ability to reveal that belonging is an open category that includes daily and mostly unconscious practices (see also, Brockmeyer and Harders' introduction to this issue), which, through a range of events, can become disturbed and threatened (Brockmeyer, this issue). In this article I hope to have shown that for some people, enlarged spaces in which they can be

mobile are connected to pressures to migrate and the feeling that their belonging is threatened. This is particularly true in regions that have a culture of migration, such as those that have traditionally high levels of emigration, deep-rooted socio-cultural norms, and where mobility has been restricted in much of the past, such as is the case in Poland. Notably, in those environments from which people emigrate, immobility and mobility are again stratified as people of lower classes often also have a more limited ability to »choose optimal environments for themselves and their resources« (Weiss 2005, 714). In contrast, the resources of the upper-middle classes are more universally recognized which usually makes both staying and leaving advantageous for them, and renders their practices of immobility and mobility more optional in nature. In a distinct way, the process of opening borders that began in 2004 created a discursive universe that perpetuated preexisting imperatives for migration, which made people feel they had to take advantage of their new freedoms. Yet for many the opportunity meant accepting lower living standards abroad, such as the many women who sacrificed their own careers and live under conditions that feel to them like accepting alienation in favor of meeting the expectation that nuclear families should share a household. In these reflections, social mobility intersects with ethno-nationalist ideas of belonging, which showcase the balancing acts migrants have to perform to meet both of these expectations.

The empirical accounts presented in this paper relate to contemporary debates on the subject of belonging. Most importantly, they show that belonging reaches far beyond issues of discrimination, repression, or assimilation, the latter of which is mostly studied in relation to the adoption of the language and culture of the dominant ethnic group (»cultural assimilation«) or the acquisition of an adequate work place and social contacts (»structural assimilation«). But, as Roy F. Baumeister and Mark R. Leary (1995) argue, belonging is more than this, and represents the need for positive and pleasant social contact in chosen relationships with people who are not regarded as »other« and in social contexts that feel familiar. That is, the need for belonging is satisfied by a person's bond to people and places, and is marked by »stability, affective concern,

and continuation into the foreseeable future« (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 500). Belonging also reaches beyond studies of individual or collective identities, and even beyond the more processual notion of identifications, as it refers not only to »collective boundedness, but also to personal options of individualization and to the challenges while navigating between multiple constellations of collective boundedness« (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 199). Such an argument methodologically and theoretically questions ontological notions of belonging in favor of empirical studies of the boundaries that are relevant to the ways in which people form desirable kinds of attachment (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 199). Understood in this way, transnational sociality affects belonging in distinct ways and, as such, also social inequalities under the conditions of globalization. As much as desire for belonging includes the need to feel in place and experience a sense of membership, it is, at the same time, characterized by displacement, dislocation, and even exclusion.

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