AGNIESZKA SZCZEPANIAK-KROLL

GAINING SOCIAL MOBILITY: POLISH MIGRANTS IN BERLIN, 1980-2016

Abstract

Social mobility can be both horizontal and vertical. The latter is characterised by movement from a lower social class to a higher one, and with it a change in social status. Upward social mobility appears in different guises; it can pertain to education, occupation, cultural capital, income, etc. Until recently, the phenomenon of upward social mobility concerned a small number of emigrant Poles, with "migrants of success" composing only a small minority of a much larger number of Polish migrants in previous years. The accession of Poland to the European Union in 2004, and then to Schengen Zone in 2007, opened new opportunities. This article (based on my ethnological fieldwork) presents different ways that Poles who emigrated to Berlin between 1980 and 2016 managed to enact upward social mobility and the changing characteristics of this migration pattern.

Key words: social mobility; migration; Federal Republic of Germany; Berlin; success; Polish migrants

*ZDOBYWANIE MOBILNOŚCI SPOŁECZNEJ:
MIGRANCY Z POLSKI W BERLINIE W LATACH
1980-2016*

Streszczenie

Awans jest jednym z dwóch rodzajów ruchliwości społecznej pionowej, przejściem z niższej warstwy społecznej do wyższej, powiązaniem ze zmianą statusu. Następuje różnymi drogami, wiąże się z wykształceniem, wykonywanym zawodem,

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prestżem, dochodami itd. Jeszcze do niedawna zjawisko to rzadko dotyczyło Polaków udających się na emigrację, „migrantów sukcesu” było niewielu. Nowe możliwości otworzyło przystąpienie Polski do Unii Europejskiej (w 2004 r.), a następnie wejście do strefy Schengen (w 2007 r.). Artykuł (oparty na własnych badaniach jakościowych) przedstawia drogi do awansu społecznego migrantów z lat 1980-2016, na tle zmieniających się uwarunkowań.

Słowa kluczowe: awans społeczny; migracja; Republika Federalna Niemiec; Berlin; sukces; polscy migranci

Pitirim Sorokin, the American with Russian origin, was the first who described the phenomenon of upward social mobility (Sorokin, 1959). He distinguished two types of social movement: horizontal, that is moving individuals from one group to another located on the same level, and vertical—characterized by transition from a lower social strata to higher one, and with it comes a change in status. In the article I analyze the second one.

Upward social mobility appears in different guises; it can pertain to education, occupation, cultural capital, income, etc. Until accession to EU, the phenomenon of social mobility did not apply to Polish migrants who came to Berlin. Among those Poles who came to Germany at the end of the 20th century, were few who were able to obtain better professional positions, earn above average salaries, and gain prestige in a host society. Therefore, we can say that so called “migrants of success” among Poles appeared rarely.

Until 2011 Poles were not allowed to enter the German labour market freely. It opened for them on May 1, 2011. However, migrants could fulfill their ambitious plans earlier, in the period 2004-2011, because as members of EU they could benefit from business-friendly laws allowing German companies to employ foreigners from other EU countries, including Poles. At the same time, Polish immigrants who have lived in Germany since the 1980s and 1990s have also become active in business and social spheres, starting to exploit their personal, cultural and social capital and financial sources, built up over decades, in order to obtain success, very often on the basis of renewed and intensified transnational contacts with Poland.

The issue of social mobility is most commonly analyzed from a sociological perspective, but it appears to me also be worth investigating through ethnological research on, in this case, migration. Polish migration is a relatively new issue in ethnological studies, possibly because of their close connection with the issues of cultural changes, both in a host society and in migrants’ environment, therefore did not compose a separate ethnological research topic.

During my ethnological fieldwork in Germany in 2009-2012¹ I noticed that although there is a common perception that upward social mobility depends on the life conditions afforded to incomers by a host country, the migrants’ own ability to exploit these conditions is much more important.

Such ability comes from the cultural and social capital of migrants, as well as their *habitus*, which can be understood as “a socially created system of structured and structuring dispositions which is learnt during the practice and constantly directed onto practical functions” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001). In practice, this means that there are needed

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¹ Project under the title: ‘Transnationality in the Polish-German context. Germans in Poznań and Poles in Berlin’.

certain predispositions—often unnoticed—in order to increase the capital, such as openness to other traditions and norms, creativity, innovation, resistance to stress (Domański, 2004, pp. 45–46). Ethnological research is based on qualitative methods and holds the proper tools to investigate such issues. The techniques of semi-structured, in-depth interview and family interview, which is a transitional form between the structured interview and narrative-interview, are used.

In the next research project² I worked in a team of 4 ethnologists to investigate the abovementioned issue. We worked not only in Germany, but also in other Western European countries where large groups of Polish migrants are concentrated: Ireland, England, Sweden, and Norway. The project's aim was to recognize and compare in what ways migration was deemed successful, including the question of whether success was tied only to a person's financial position or upward social movement, whether it was a wider phenomenon that included other aspects of life.³

Amongst Berliner informants there were 56 people with higher education, including physicians, psychologists, journalists, translators, artists, store owners, language schools owners. My interlocutors came to Berlin at the age of twenty or thirty in the 1980s and 1990s, or in the first and second decades of the 21st century. The oldest migrants among them belonged to the large migration wave of 1980, which started the growth of Polish migration in Western Germany, called the "Solidarity" wave. The youngest responders represented the so-called "post-accession" migration wave, post-2004.

In this article I present different ways in which migrants moved up socially during 1980–2018, on the basis of migrants' capital, personal attitudes, predispositions and abilities in dealing with changing conditions. In the article I consider the *emic* perspective of respondents first of all, and I minimize the *etic* perspective to the triangular function (Headland, Pike, & Harris, 1990).

In order to describe and contextualise this migrant environment, I must first speak about the time before their migration, just before the "solidarity" migrant wave of the 1980s. In West Berlin, just as in the rest of West Germany, there were three main groups of Poles. The first group consisted settlers come to the city before the Second World War and also their descendants. The second group is known as DPs (Displaced Persons)—those who did not return Poland after the war. Among these were prisoners of war, captives, war (forced) laborers and other war victims. To the third group belong Poles who came with their German relatives (on the basis of real or fake proofs of origins) and those who came to their German relatives as a result of the German Red Cross program of family reunification, which officially ended in 1959, but in reality continued in the next decade.

Mentioned groups created a unique environment, with most of them now integrated into their host society and a large part assimilating, due to the fact that these migrants did not arrive in large tranches. The reason for this lay in the post-war politics of the communist Polish state, which was used to control and reduce travel abroad to the West from behind the "Iron Curtin" (for instance through introducing multiple obstacles for collecting the correct documents before passage was allowed). It was rare to meet young Poles in these groups of migrants, who had not faced such obstacles when coming to West

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² Project entitled "Poles of success—between emigration and transnationality: new aspects of the Polish diaspora in Western Europe" ("Polacy sukcesu—między emigracją a transnarodowością: nowe oblicze polskiej diaspory w Europie Zachodniej" UMO-2014/13/B/HS3/04927), conducted by Prof. Aleksander Posern-Zieliński, undertaken at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences in Poznań, 2015–2018.

³ The team has already finished the fieldwork, analysed the collected material, and is now preparing a monograph.

Germany from socialist Poland legally, with concrete plans and aims. In addition, after their experience with migrants in the 1960s—the so-called *Gastarbeiter*s—the German authorities were not supportive of or inviting to Polish migrants. They looked unwillingly at those who wanted to settle and instead only opened the country's doors for seasonal migrants who were needed in the farming industry.

Due to a crisis in both trade and politics from the mid-1970s, the Polish government moved away from the strategy of taming emigration among younger generations. The first huge wave was in 1980 and 1981 (up to December 13th—the announcement of Martial law), when Polish authorities softened passport rules and requirements, and opened the border for seasonal emigrants, who very often later changed their status into permanent settlers in Germany. As the nearest city in the West, Berlin became a popular destination and by the summer of 1980 there were approximately twenty thousand Poles in the city. The imposition of Martial law (late-1981 to mid-1983) stopped this migrant wave, but after it was lifted a new wave of migrants started to move to West, mostly to look for a job, but also in search of freedom, democracy, adventure and the chance to discover the unknown. These ideals were presented by communist propaganda as demonic, but despite this (or possibly because of it), it was still strongly desired by many Poles.

As a result of this migrant phenomenon, Polish society in West Berlin increased. In 1979 there were 3,544 Polish residents in the city, in 1982 8,500, and by the end of 1987 14,203 (Ziętkiewicz, 1989, p. 31). During this period, the dominant motivation was economic, but for people with a level of high education, who made up a large subgroup in the Polish community in Berlin, the political, social, and cultural reasons for migration were also very important; Berlin was chosen because of its multiculturalism, openness, and democratic character.

In this period Polish migrants were treated in Berlin differently when compared to other foreigners in the city, partly in support of the Solidarity Movement. People coming from Poland to West Berlin did not need to have a visa. There worked an regulation established by the Allies in 1967, according to which citizens of the Eastern Bloc could stay in the city for one month without any documents. This regulation was finally removed in 1990 (Polska Rada Społeczna, Internet, access Sept. 15, 2015). Poles received asylum and so called *Duldung* (a kind of a tolerated stay) very easily (Ziętkiewicz, 1989, p. 33).

Such migrant-friendly regulations did not reduce other difficulties connected with migration though. Poles obtained a legal offer of work only very rarely; almost everybody started their job illegally. Often these were mundane or physically hard ones, and there was always a need for worker, i.e. cleaning, construction, child care, care work with disabled and older people, etc. The lack of opportunities for permanent residency or a longer stay (neither asylum, nor *Duldung* guaranteed this), combined with obstacles for obtaining legal employment, significantly stunted the realisation of the migrants' higher aspirations. Those successfully managed to extend their stay legally still had problems with an inadequacy of education on the German labour market, non-recognition of diplomas, and—most importantly—huge competition for jobs. They were also additionally burdened by negative stereotypes of Poles as thieves, drinkers, dirty, economically disabled. Few migrants knew the German language and most of them were burdened with the complex of coming from “a worse, eastern country.”

All of this meant that Polish workers rarely expected or asked for a professional promotion. From a Polish perspective, they earned very good money, which on the one hand compensated them for these inconveniences, but on the other inhibited the aspirations

of migrants. Breaking free of mediocre economic situations required not only investment funds and experience in running a business, which Poles did not usually have, but there was also a need for great self-denial in such activity, the attitude which many people also had a problem with; and sometimes plain old luck was needed too.

Migrants focused on accumulating financial, social and cultural capital, mainly through building social networks of connections with compatriots who shared the same fate, and with Germans and foreigners living in Berlin. Next friends or family members were joined with intra-ethnic networks; However, it was extremely difficult for a common platform for all Poles, uniting them over personal connections. The main reason was the level of diversity within the Polish population. There was a generation gap between the “old” and “new” migrants. They appeared in Germany in other socio-political conditions. The degree of their integration, stay strategies, legal status, material status, and even views on events in Poland and visions of the relationship with the country were manifold, and their interests and goals were in conflict. The result was the lack of effective action in efforts to solve problems important to their own ethnic group (such as citizenship, their status as a national minority, favourable residence regulations, etc.). Thus, there was no improvement in the conditions for the functioning of all Poles, which could be seen as the starting point for individuals pursuing higher professional aspirations (see more: Szczepaniak-Kroll, 2012).

Building connections with Germans was also not easy. Admittedly, as mentioned above, after the beginning of changes in Poland (1980), the migrants who came to Germany were treated with kindness, but after some time (since second half of 1980s.) their stay in the Federal Republic of Germany began to be considered a nuisance. The high numbers of immigrants aroused concern, and interfered with cultural differences. Negative stereotypes, known already in the 18th century (like *Polnische Wirtschaft*), intensified, which were accompanied by a German ignorance about the realities in Poland and the situation of incoming Poles. Within the network, immigrants included, at most, German associates, neighbours, “acquaintances of acquaintances,” but this did little to improve the overall image of Poles in German society at the end of 1980s. For this reason, they became “invisible” (Loew, 2017). They preferred not to demonstrate their dissimilarity, instead cultivating their own culture individually, in private settings. Only individual people managed to be promoted to a higher social strata; most did not even attempt to try. Although they integrated in everyday life and the immediate environment, they were unrecognizable for broadly understood German society and national institutions.

On October 3, 1990, Germany was officially reunified. The demolition of the Berlin Wall a year earlier had begun a new chapter in the history of Berlin after years of the division. Numerous residents of East Berlin, along with others from around the GDR—who until that moment belonged to another country—joined immigrants from various countries in moving to West Berlin. They were convinced of the huge potential of the metropolis. In 1989–1993, its population increased by 65,000 new residents (Kemper, 2003, p. 20). This had an impact on the deterioration of the situation of Poles in the city, who encountered even greater competition in the labour market than before. In addition, more waves of migrants continued to flow from across the eastern border and as the country transitioned to democracy, Poland, withdrew most of the existing barriers for crossing borders.

Meanwhile, Western Germany has tightened its policy of allowing in Eastern immigrants. Poles were deprived of the right to asylum and *Duldung*, now considering the eastern neighbour as a safe country. Authorities tightened the regulations regarding the reception of the so-called *Aussiedlers* (at that time called *Spätaussiedlers*), or migrants with

German roots. Among them were Poles who were able to show their German origin, and who carried out various abuses to obtain the desired status (Schmidt, 2009). Persons belonging to this group in previous years generally received citizenship without any major problems, and thus all the privileges associated with it, such as help in professional development, learning the language and further integration. In the 1990s, however, the authorities started to control the group of *Spätaussiedlers* more restrictive than before and demand higher requirements, for example, people who wanted to stay had to prove their knowledge of German language and history, which often caused them many difficulties (Bade, 1992, pp. 400, 409; Oltmer, 2010, p. 57). In the case of *Spätaussiedlers* from Poland such difficulties arose from the lack of knowledge and abilities in both, language and history.

Although there were more opportunities to take legal seasonal work, they were rarely used in Berlin. Most Poles worked illegally. Most often, immigrants came with a tourist visa—this was the easiest way to leave—and then they extended their stay. Most carried out a well-known residence scheme, starting from the simplest jobs, and then looking for more satisfying works. In the initial period, earned money still had to compensate for unfulfilled ambitions. At the beginning of 1980s, people had no networks of friends and relatives in Germany yet, so they were coming to Berlin first, and then looking for a job on spot. In later years the scheme changed: more people were using already existing in Berlin social networks to find a place to live and work. Some of these jobs were transferred directly to new arrivals by those returning to Poland. The “grapevine” method was also helpful on the spot (in Germany). Many immigrants, even in search for simple jobs, could only count on a bit of luck. Press reports were published, announcements posted in popular meeting places for Poles, new arrivals asked for example at construction sites or in front of a “Polish” church.⁴ Insiders knew where these points were located on the city map and which employers recruited workers illegally. It was estimated that in Berlin at the beginning of the 1990s, about 40,000 people worked illegally (Cyrus, 1994, p. 193).

As in previous years, in the case of persons residing in Germany legally, one of the obstacles in the search for a better paid occupation, or at least more consistent with a person’s education, were problems with recognition of diplomas. The exception were people needed on the local job market who could count for its quick recognition. One of the respondents mentions⁵ (BKJ 1989) that:

It was very strange. I went to the office, there were terrible queues and everyone said they would not recognize the diploma because I had never worked as a mathematician before, and I should not have tried at all [because nobody has succeeded so far]. And I stood in this queue and then in the second, to recognize the high school diploma. And after three months I received notice that my diploma had been recognized. I taught mathematics for two years [...], gave tutoring in an orphanage. Later I understood that it was not for me.

After finishing this job (as a teacher), the respondent was employed in a private company. Her duties included foreign visits, mainly in Poland, because her German managers were using her language competence and mathematical skills. Although she did not work in the profession she had learned, higher education turned out to be her advantage, because she could fulfill her high professional ambitions.

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⁴ On the Polish pastoral ministry in Berlin, see more: Szczepaniak-Kroll, 2017.

⁵ In the article I quote the respondents’ statements obtained during my own research. In accordance with the Personal Data Protection Act and at the request of the interlocutors, the data has been anonymized and coded. The date in brackets of the code means the date of arrival the respondent to Germany.

If someone managed to overcome the diploma recognition obstacle, there another problem immediately around the corner: the priority rule for unemployed German citizens (Miera, 2007, pp. 72–73). In practice, many migrants did not have the opportunity to compete with Germans, and, consequently, to use their qualifications. They were not able to develop a professional career, understood here as a sequence of successive changes in occupational situations, especially promotions (Grabowska-Lusińska & Okólski, 2009, p. 163). Such problems were not faced, as in previous years, only by representatives of the most-scarce specialties, like nurses, doctors, engineers, and IT specialists. The rest of educated Poles still had to show not only competences, but a lot of inventiveness, persistence and flexibility to achieve their goal.

At the same time, new opportunities emerged for migrants resulting from the ever-wider economic relations between Poland and Germany and agreements between governments. One of the respondents (ZKA 1990) went abroad because she won a competition for a diplomatic post. Previously she had worked at a university, but as she recalled:

In those turbulent times [in the 1990s] everyone suddenly started to leave, [...] everyone began to work first in opinion-forming [services], to write [...], as if life had moved elsewhere, where it was more truly, interesting [...]. I applied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I was accepted and sent.

Small entrepreneurs appeared (setting up a small business was one of the few ways to legalize a stay), who were adapting to the needs of the local market. One interviewee (KKB 1990) stated:

I had a construction company. We [with her German husband] hired Poles, fifty people.

Funds for the establishment of an enterprise, e.g. a small restaurant, came from people's own savings or money from German spouses.

During that period, employment in industries using transnational links, for example in the trade of native food products or in gastronomy, was not yet developed on a larger scale. At first, Poles thought that their native cuisine would not be attractive to Germans, because in many respects it was too similar to the local one. Polish consumers were not taken into account either because they did not have the funds to use this type of offer. However, the first attempts were made, including "Wawel," "Staropolska," and "Breslau" restaurants. They satisfied the need for special services, both among migrants (celebrations were organized: baptism, communions, "eighteen") and in local society (customers of those places were often Germans who had lived before the Second World War in areas now belonging to Poland). The beginning of the activity was mentioned by one of the respondents (PKU 1992), today the owner of a restaurant:

One was going to work, after work, if there was any cleaning, one was cleaning up. We tried to collect money as much as we could. And one day I was so tired of working for someone that I said to my husband: 'Come find an *imbis* for our old age'. And we had an *imbis*. There was the announcement. When we saw it, we went there for a coffee [...]. I did not like it. [The ceiling in] the bar was high, there were some pipes and a glass, it looked terrible. But I looked around, imagined how I wanted it to be, and we took it.

Gradually, the potential was also recognized in other similar industries that could meet the needs of Polish clients in Berlin. As a result, there were shops with Polish food, some specialized in, for example, meat products and confectionery. As in the Polish restaurants, sellers had to know both Polish and German. A network of services aimed at both

Polish and—over time—German recipients, such as kindergartens, transport companies providing transport to Poland several times a week, language schools teaching Polish and other foreign languages, branches of Polish enterprises and colleges, was also formed.

In the 1990s, the chances to work in German companies based on developing cross-border contacts increased. German employers, eager to invest beyond the eastern border, noticed that Polish migrants who knew the language, culture, and norms of Poland could be very useful. The values of professional and cultural competences of employees, both well integrated in Germany and those who knew Poland, were recognized. One of the women (BKJ 1989) mentioned:

I worked [in the 1990s] in a company that dealt with clinical trials in Eastern Europe. I traveled and controlled hospitals in Poland, Ukraine, Russia [...].

Another respondent (GMJ 1982) commuted from Berlin to Warsaw in the 1990s, where he worked for a foreign television industry company. Another migrant (WMP 1987), currently the owner of a company, recalled:

I was only looking for a job [in the 1990s] in my profession. I was afraid that if I looked for in another one, I would not do any progress. But I managed to be an engineer within a year [...]. I was an advisor in a large company. I did not like this company, they did not have money for my salary, so I started my own business. As the moment [in connection with the business] I have a presence in Poland, Germany and Ukraine, but I plan more countries.

Some educated migrants, starting from the 1990s, also took up employment in companies operating on the basis of increasingly intense Polish-German contacts, i.e. on the editorial boards of magazines, such as "Dialog" and "Inter Finitimos," in the Polish Institute in Berlin (Polnisches Institut), the Polish Social Council (Polnischer Sozialrat) or in foreign branches of Polish enterprises, e.g. PKP.⁶ Others could use their knowledge of the Polish language and situation of Polish migrants by working in German institutions dealing with, for example, women's problems, career counselling for young people, mediating Polish-German scientific cooperation, inter-school and professional cooperation, and in recent years in institutions dealing the integration of foreigners⁷.

Children of immigrants from the 1980s and 90s became involved more and more often in the activities of companies and organizations based on Polish-German relations. Knowledge of the two cultures and societies was their advantage in the labor market. It was the basis for professional promotion as well a social one. It also gave them the opportunity to choose their country of residence. As one of the respondents (PKU 1992) said:

Although my son-in-law is a German born in Berlin, he loves the countryside, and he and my daughter begin to think more and more that there are more opportunities in Poland. [...] He sells computers, laptops—they are leased. He sells more in Poland than here. It would be easier for him to move to Poland.

In the 1990s, the first spectacular successes of Poles who had come to Berlin earlier and were able to manage their career well, became visible. One example is Henryk Kulczyk (the father of Jan Kulczyk, a well-known Polish businessman). He was the owner of his own foreign trade enterprise, while being a representative of several renowned German and Polish companies. Krzysztof Olszewski, the founder and current chairman of the supervisory board of the Solaris Bus & Coach company, also started his career in the city.

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⁶ PKP – Polskie Koleje Państwowe – Polish National Railways.

⁷ The information comes from interviews I conducted with respondents.

Currently, the company has a branch in Berlin. Neurosurgeon Jan Zierski, a member of renowned scientific bodies and societies, and prof. Michał Giersig a famous mathematician, gained fame, also outside of Berlin.

The professional and financial successes of this group of emigrants from Poland in West Berlin, as well as the professional activity of other migrants with less effective but reliable and solid achievements, have led to a slow change in the opinions of some circles of Berliners about the abilities and diligence of Polish migrants. They contributed to a change in long-held stereotypes about Poles, i.e. *polnische Wirtschaft*, “the Polish mismanagement”.⁸

As I have already mentioned, many people living abroad expected that Poland’s accession to the European Union in 2004 and joining the Schengen zone would solve the problem of legal employment in Germany. However, this did not happen. Restrictions in Germany were abolished only on May 1, 2011. Until then, there was a transitional period, because the authorities were afraid of a massive inflow of immigrants from Poland.⁹ Employment permits were still required, and industries or professions were temporarily unavailable to foreigners. The government assumed that such obstacles would help to recruit selected employees and stop the representatives of professions who were not lacking on the market.

In 2007, barriers for certain engineering specialists and university graduates were removed.¹⁰ In both cases, obtaining a work permit was no longer conditional upon the employer confirming the lack of a local candidate. A year later, the citizens of the “new” member states, including Poland, who were graduates of universities (not only German ones) could take up employment without local market survey. The maximum period of work for a foreign seasonal worker was extended from four to six months in a calendar year (Frelak, 2009, pp. 12–15).

In 2011, all restrictions were lifted and Poles gained the same rights and access to work as other residents of West Germany. They were given the right to choose their place of residence, the right to social security, and employers were obliged to equal treatment of candidates for work regardless of their nationality (mainly in terms of remuneration).¹¹

Due to these changes, a mass inflow of employees was expected. However, by May, just after opening the market, it turned out that only 7,000 people had arrived. By the end of July that year, this number had increased to 15,000. The Institute for Labor Market Research (IAB) in Nuremberg determined that in the whole of 2011, a total of 79,000 Poles arrived.¹² Meanwhile, as Justyna Frelak (Frelak, 2011, p. 15) wrote, referring to the Institute for Research on the Labor Market (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung),

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⁸ On the subject of stereotypes more broadly in the article, see Szczepaniak-Kroll, 2013.

⁹ The existence of tools (bilateral agreements) allowing the selective recruitment of employees from abroad was pointed out. Trade unions expressing concerns about rising unemployment played a significant role in the discussion. The justification was based on the fear of serious and deepening distortions in the labor market resulting from the economic crisis. German GDP was projected to decrease by 5.3% in 2009 and therefore unemployment would continue to grow, approaching 12% in 2010. An increase in crime and social dissatisfaction was also feared (Danecka & Kęska, 2010, pp. 169–200; Frelak, 2009, p. 17).

¹⁰ Similar facilitations have already been attempted in earlier years: in August 2000, the Green Card Regulation was introduced, allowing an inflow of 20,000 specialists in the IT industry. Migrants who were granted this status were entitled to stay and work for a maximum of five years. In 2001, the card was extended to medical personnel. At that time, this idea did not bring the expected results. Due to time constraints and lack of employment opportunities for family members, the “Green Card” did not meet with the expected interest and it was discontinued in 2003 (Gibki, 2008, p. 131).

¹¹ Detailed terms of employing Poles in Germany are discussed in the article titled “Niemcy to wielki, ale trudny rynek pracy” [“Germany is a big but difficult job market”], published on 29.05.2013 (“Niemcy to wielki, ale trudny rynek pracy”, 2013).

¹² “Polacy nie wyjeżdżają masowo do pracy w Niemczech” [“Poles do not go to work in Germany en masse”], published on 27.04.2012 (“Polacy nie wyjeżdżają masowo do pracy w Niemczech”, 2012).

in 2011 up to 134,000 immigrants were expected. Their number, however, was much smaller. Not much changed in the following years; according to the Statistisches Bundesamt, only 13.6% more Poles came to Germany in 2012 than in 2011 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016).

Today, the decision about the transitional period in which immigration was restricted behind the eastern border is often assessed negatively. Professor Klaus Zimmermann, director of the German Institute of Economics (DIW) in Berlin and head of the Institute for Research on the Future of Labor in Bonn, in an interview for "Deutsche Welle" stated:

We made a big mistake in our migration policy by not immediately opening up the labor market for Eastern Europe. [...] People from Poland emigrated to those countries that have made their markets available. And Poland is after all the most important new member country of the Union, has the fastest growing labor market and close relations with Germany when it comes to tradition. We closed the market because of alleged disadvantages for our society. The best professionals from Poland are long ago in England or Ireland. Now we can only count on the fact that those who have lost their jobs will come to us.¹³

In 2004, however, it was not expected that the limitations would have such an effect.

The most important factor hampering migrations after 2011 was the information gap. Many people did not know how and where to look for information about employment in Germany. Other important reasons for not migrating included: ignorance of the language and the incompatibility of the teaching systems, and the dynamic development of the Polish economy, which affected the level of readiness to leave as well as smaller differences in earnings.¹⁴

Migrants coming to Berlin in the post-accession period continued to undertake traditional, heavy, physical work. It was still the answer to the local needs, but also the result of various limitations and barriers, above all ignorance of the language. As estimated by the Work Service,¹⁵ among job offers in Germany, job offers that do not require German or experience were easy to find (e.g. warehouse workers, production workers, packers, welders, painters, locksmiths, hotel workers, catering service), along with offers with more specialist work (e.g. for engineers, IT specialists, nurses, carers of the elderly, logistics industries). However, in contrast to the pre-accession period, local employers offered Poles more favorable remuneration and a complete social security package. In Berlin, according to statistics published in 2014 by the Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung (Jost & Bogai, 2016, pp. 37–39), Poles (entitled to social insurance) after 2011 most often found employment in cleaning, construction, office work, production, and other technical work in enterprises, in warehouses, at post offices, in delivering parcels, catering, hospitality, child-raising, home care, in sectors related to health, and management in different companies. At the same time, a large increase in the number of employees with higher education was noted. In 2014, it grew by 69% compared to 2011 (Jost & Bogai, 2016, pp. 37–39). This points to the potential of this group of immigrants.

Young Poles among new arrivals also turned out to be very active small entrepreneurs. In the post-accession period, more Polish restaurants appeared in Berlin (including "Mały Książę," "Filafood," "Pierogarnia," and "Taktak"). They specialize in dishes associated with

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¹³ "Niemieccy eksperci: zamknięcie rynku pracy dla Polaków było błędem" ["German experts: closing the labor market for Poles was a mistake"], published on 13.08.2010 ("Niemieccy eksperci: Zamknięcie rynku pracy dla Polaków było błędem", 2010).

¹⁴ "Rynek otwarty ale niedostępny" ["Market is open but not available"], published on 02.08.2011 ("Rynek otwarty ale niedostępny", 2011).

¹⁵ "Od czterech lat Polacy wybierają niemiecki rynek pracy" ["Poles have been choosing the German labor market for four years"] ("Od czterech lat Polacy wybierają niemiecki rynek pracy", n.d.).

Poland: dumplings, bigos, borscht (although sometimes given a up-to-date twist), and have quickly gained popularity. It is worth noting that they are also appreciated by German clients and tourists (which was one of the effects of the opening of borders). Some restaurant owners informed me that many Germans and foreigners in Berlin visited Polish restaurants, because they liked Polish cuisine when they had traveled around Poland.

Migrants were involved in setting up companies in other industries as well. An example can be one of the respondents who after a short period of work in Germany connected with his higher education, said that using the contacts he gained, he would deal with the work for Poles. Another respondent, running one, developed a second company employing Polish nurses. Another interlocutor decided to open a cafe. Today, there is also a store with Polish goods operating successfully. Some young migrants came with a ready idea for their own business. Before coming to Berlin, they made a reconnaissance, recognizing the conditions needed to implement the plans.

Educational migration has significantly increased. In 2007, as many as 40.2% of all Polish students abroad were selected by German universities, where 15,347 of them studied.¹⁶ The motivations for studying abroad were: the lack of the possibility of undertaking specialist courses, not offered in Polish universities, a stronger link between teaching and practice, and the experience of intellectual adventure. Most often, studies were undertaken in the following fields: economics, law and administration, journalism, medicine (Mydel, 2011, pp. 128–129). Two Berlin universities, and especially the Freie Universität, were very popular. In the 2006/2007 academic year it was the second most popular university in Germany after Viadrina in terms of the number of Poles studying, making up 5.1% of students¹⁷ (Wolfeil, 2012, p. 168). As the students who talked to me claimed, the high level of education, geographical proximity, no tuition fees, the possibility of combining studying with work, and learning about another culture, all while maintaining constant contact with home, were important factors in their decision.

New possibilities have already activated long-resident migrants. Their successful integration, biculturalism, bilingualism and in many cases transnationality turned out to be key. The accumulated financial capital has, in many cases, been used to develop their own businesses. The service network has developed significantly. For several years there have been Polish insurers, doctors of various specialties, dentists, psychologists, lawyers, midwives, hairdressers, and beauticians. People can hire a Polish band for a wedding, organize a funeral (including transport of corpses to the country), obtain a driving license with the help of a Polish instructor, buy flowers at a Polish florist, etc. Today, many entrepreneurs also serve German customers, for example, in Polish kindergartens they teach children of Germans and other foreigners; Germans also take Polish language courses, are patients of Polish doctors and midwives, and customers of beauticians or hairdressers.

Another very new group of Poles in the city are the very highly qualified Poles, finding employment at prominent positions related to business (e.g. in finance, banking, HR). Many of them have been invited to work in these institutions by the employers themselves. My interlocutors argued that in their nationality played no role as a barrier, and sometimes it was even an asset, a fashionable element of the modern philosophy of these companies: openness to diversity and multiculturalism. Above all, however, high qualifications were important.

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¹⁶ In second place were British universities selected by 17.7% of students (6,768 people), the third French – 10.0% (3,396 people) (Mydel, 2011, p. 128).

¹⁷ In 2009, Polish graduates were the third largest national group in Germany, after Chinese and Turks (Wolfeil, 2012, p. 171).

In the opinion of the respondents, the above changes affected the perception of Poles living in the city. The interviewees pointed out that in the last few years Germans have noticed an *atypical* category of migrants from Poland—an increasing number of well-educated workers (or students) who know languages and take up jobs that require high qualifications. Respondent (WKA 2000) stated:

However, more Poles have the opportunity to make them big, appear and show from different sides [...]. The Poles show themselves here [...] as having a resilience, they set up companies, [...] they do not come here to live off of state handouts, they just want to create something, something to work with [...].

According to the interviewees, not all Germans have been to such meetings and changes prepared:

Germans are also 'in trouble' with this new generation of people [from Poland] who have no inhibitions, travel around the world who see what is happening outside [the country]. They have trouble with these people, because their idea of Poles is the man with a mustache, who cleans home or guards [...], the one who conscientiously works in the field with strawberries, the man who lays tiles and some lady, Zosia, who looks after a child or, an old person with alzheimer or cleans flats. Everyone is nice, friendly, but at this level their professional activity and social usefulness end. And when [the flow] of people with good education increases [...], who do not need anything [from the state], they do not apply for 'social welfare', they open companies themselves, they cope, they are a surprise in a sense. I think [Germans] have a problem with how to deal with it (SKK 2006).

Sometimes the emergence of this new group triggered the stereotypical mechanism of thinking in the categories of 'exceptions to the rule'. This is a typical feature of stereotypes that are difficult to change. The ease of organizing the world that they bring with them frees one from the necessity of a deeper analysis (Schaff, 1981, pp. 69–80).

The observations of the interlocutors concerning generally improving the image of Poland and Poles, have been confirmed by the studies of other researchers (Łada & Woidelko, 2018; Ruchniewicz, 2008). Admittedly, the first spontaneous associations of Germans with Poland and Poles, even in recent years, have more often been negative than positive, and in 2006 (after two years of Polish accession to EU) Germans less often associated Poland with a distant and backward civilization country than they did in 2000. Perception of Poland in a positive way became even more visible after 2011, when Germany opened the labor market for Poles entirely. What was more often talked about was the diligence of Poles and economic growth. Educated people and those who knew Poland from their own travels had more positive picture of the "others" (Falkowski & Popko, 2006).

The favorable change was also the result of changes in the attitude of the authorities regarding the inclusion of foreigners into German society, which took place at the beginning of the 21st century. At that time, the Germany "that was not an immigration country," became convinced that it was actually a Germany that needed immigrants, not just for the economic reasons but also for the value of their cultures, which was finally appreciated, on the crest of a wave of positive multiculturalism. As a result, a number of measures have been taken to facilitate the inclusion of newcomers (Gibki, 2008, pp. 132–133; Ptak, 2011, p. 173). This is a significant novelty, because for many years the failure to observe the constant presence of foreigners has meant that national governments did not undertake extensive activities to integrate them. Instead they were ceded to Länder authorities and non-governmental organizations, which made clear that these were not matters of great, Federal-level, importance (Blumberg-Stankiewicz, 2007).

The new approach to migrants was very important for the well-being of Poles, which was reflected in respondents' statements. In the case of young people, it prevented the emergence of complexes that occurred in migrants from previous migratory waves. In the case of older migrants, the new approach contributed to the development of a sense of pride in their origin, and in increased efforts to preserve their own culture and deepen relations with the country. The greater openness towards migrants eliminated the feeling of being "inferior." It also stimulated them to take up professional activities more in line with their competences. In the statements of interlocutors who were could be considered as "successful," two main ways of perceiving success were revealed. For three out of the fifty respondents, i.e. a very small minority, success appeared as something spectacular, outstanding, a work that crowned activities in a field that requires specific competence. In the opinion of these people, success could only be achieved in certain select fields, for example business, science, or art. It had to be associated with popularity, admiration, and the desire to imitate others. In this way, it corresponds to the definition of Janusz R. Sobczyk (Sobczyk, 2009, p. 86), who claimed that success is the result of the implementation of a specific type of unique task, assessed positively because of its importance. According to these assumptions, it should be considered as an exceptional achievement, the result of high competences and special effort.

The respondents who shared this opinion (two physicians who run their own practices and a well-known media worker) did not recognize themselves as "successful people", despite the fact that, in the opinion of external observers, they belonged to such people. One of them (JT 1983), stated:

Success is when one achieves something great, above average, e.g. if someone plays with the Berlin Philharmonic, or directs the presentation of his life. I am not a successful man. I am an ordinary, average person.

However, the vast majority of respondents did not see the need to meet such high criteria. The interviewees were close to the definition of success contained in the Polish Language Dictionary, saying that it is a successful result of any undertaking, achieving the intended goal, although it may (but does not have to) be fame, property, high position, etc. (Doroszewski, 2016).

As it appeared from the statements of Poles, success can be compared to Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, which is to achieve what is worth the effort. Only what is worth taking extra effort for, which is compatible with the human nature (*daimon*, or "real I"), allows us to utilize the potential inherent in it and deserves to be called success (Czapiński, 2004, p. 15). For the majority of respondents, it was a broader and more vague concept, not reserved for "the chosen ones," although undoubtedly also linked to effort and closely related to social mobility.

The conversations showed that each person perceives their personal success in a separate way, depending on the individual criteria adopted. In addition, the scope of this concept has changed over time and depending on the circumstances. While for emigrants in the 1980s, it was a success to go abroad alone (in the face of passport difficulties) or to legalize the stay, today the bar is set much higher.

The success, according to the respondents, consisted of intertwining factors, forming various configurations. Most often, according to interlocutors, however, there were two dimensions: professional and private, which complement each other. The first measure, the professional, included:

- professional promotion,
- job satisfaction—especially for people with higher education who work in the profession they have studied,
- social prestige (although not in every case),
- financial achievements, not necessarily huge, but ensuring a decent level of life.

All these elements were closely associated with social advancement.

Many interlocutors emphasized that the determinant of success in Germany was not—as it is in Poland—a question of money, because in Germany money enabling a person to live a dignified life can be earned even in unskilled jobs. Other markers were valued more, not related to external material manifestations of abundance. These included the possibility of pursuing aspirations, dreams, and even freeing one's self from the pressure of getting rich, which they said was more felt in Poland. The young interviewees often mentioned that they had eschewed the popular “middle class” life model, which included a mortgage for, two cars, and other luxury goods.

By contrast, the measures of success in private life included:

- a successful family life,
- a sense of integration with their current environment,
- a feeling of being accepted,
- functioning in a democratic society with strictly defined, clear rules,
- physical health, and in case of its loss, the possibility of using professional healthcare,
- implementation of goals, plans.

Poles valued stability and peace in Germany, talked about the lack of fear of unemployment, or the possibility of self-financing in a job loss. The first two aspects were noticed by one of the respondents (KM 1991):

I'm in a doctor's waiting room and I think it's a success. The fact that I do not have to wait for months to be admitted, I just sign up and I'm accepted. In Poland I could not count on it, so this is my success. I am insured and I can demand, and these requirements are met.

All these elements comprised life satisfaction, a sense of happiness and fulfillment.

To sum up my research, it can be stated that in the opinion of migrants, a person in emigration achieves success when their expectations are realized. Additionally, a balance between work and private life is particularly desirable. The thus defined success was not only reserved for a small group of people, as several of respondents think. However, it was closely associated with good integration with the local society. To attain and maintain a feeling of happiness and satisfaction, it was also necessary, in the opinion of respondents, to be able to keep contact with Poland, and often also transnationality, consisting of building cross-border networks of connections on as many levels as possible.

During the research, several different residence strategies leading to success were selected. The respondents themselves indicated that the following were necessary to achieve it:

- hard work,
- openness to the host society, manifested in a quick mastering of the language, establishing contacts with the environment, etc.,
- recognizing and accepting the rules that prevail in it.

Migrants emphasized that success is the result of a process, a long-term activity, and that there is no one pattern for achieving it. Rather, everyone develops their own strategy of realizing their needs, expectations, aspirations and ambitions.

Many of the respondents from the latest migration wave had a plan on how to achieve success before they emigrated. For example, the owner of a language school, going to Germany, assumed that she would work in her studied profession—German philology. After the birth of her child, she began to conduct Polish language courses in one of the cafes where she met with her friends. Then she implemented her plan and a well-functioning school was established. In 2017 she opened a second branch in a different district. The woman is extremely proud of this, in her opinion unquestionable, success and the social advancement that comes with it. Her success was the fact she works as a teacher, additionally manages own school.

Most of the strategies aimed at achieving an ambitious goal, however, were created only once arriving. One of the respondents, unable to find a job after graduation, came to Germany to do manual labor. During this time, observing the market, he planned that he would open a cafe with the money he earned, then he added a shop with Polish products to it. He successfully realized his aspirations and today, he considers this a success.

Many migrants, who in the 20th century undertook actions to implement their plans, are now bearing their fruits. The personality profile of these people is typical. They are active people, stubborn in pursuing their goals, not afraid of failures that in the past motivated them to act. Interestingly, many Poles with these qualities successfully implemented their life plans before arriving in Berlin, even in the difficult reality of communist Poland, and a trip to Germany merely “transferred” them to another country and enabled further development. All the respondents agreed that despite a good strategy, qualifications and skills, they would not have achieved success if it were not for a successful combination of various favorable events that took place in a specific place and time, and with the participation of certain people, i.e. “sheer luck.”

Many interviewees also emphasized the specificity of Berlin as a city that facilitates success (manifested in social mobility) as defined not only by material criteria. They pointed to the multicultural character of the city, praising the openness and tolerance prevailing in it, which provided a sense life satisfaction in an interesting, diverse environment and led to bolder life decisions. The territorial proximity of the city to Poland was also significant, removing, or at least, minimalising the feeling of foreignness abroad. It gave them the opportunity to implement individual strategies without a sense of losing important values, such as native culture, family ties, friendship, etc. which influenced the well-being of migrants and convinced them of the rightness of the decision to emigrate, and thus the success of their life.

Studying Poles in Belgium, Aleksandra Grzymała-Kazłowska (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2001, p. 292), wrote that the success of Poles abroad is more decided by individual cultural capital, which in the case of her respondents consisted of: knowledge of French, professional qualifications, possession of appropriate tools and the ability to use them at work, and finally social predispositions, such as the ease of making contacts, arousing sympathy and trust. Similar conclusions can be drawn from my research in Berlin. The so-called post-accession migrants were from the beginning in an incomparably more favorable legal situation than their predecessors. First of all, they could look for a job legally. It is also the case that many of them knew German or English at the time of their arrival, which was rare before. The ability to use English at least at the beginning of the stay was enough to function. The migrants also had a different attitude towards society than their predecessors from a decade or two earlier, free from a complex of coming from a “worse, eastern part of Europe.” These changes in the characteristics of the group certainly cre-

ated better prospects for success abroad, allowing us to suppose that the group of “successful Poles” will continue to grow. This does not mean that migrants who have lived in the Federal Republic of Germany for several decades will not also contribute to this success. These people, encouraged by the example of the young, and with the added benefit of already having a significant cultural capital, have been willing to make successful attempts to “reach for more” for several years and are unlikely to give up anytime soon.

The issue of social mobility, presented in the article shows an increasingly visible tendency in the migration of Poles to Germany, manifested in growing aspirations to go beyond the usual level of functioning abroad, based on meeting basic needs and not moving much above the average. This is a new but dynamically progressive phenomenon. It has been influenced by changes in the political and social positions of migrants in Germany after Poland’s accession to the EU, entry into the Schengen Zone, and the opening of the German labor market in 2011. The current success of this group is mainly due to the growing economic, social and cultural capital of Poles¹⁸ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001).

The resources of knowledge, skills, and even predispositions (flexibility, the ability to cope with difficult situations) that the migrants brought to the host country had never before been utilized in order to obtain the understood capital in such an intense way as it is today. The success is reflected in their work and lifestyle. It is also visible in the ways Poles think about themselves and, by the same token, how Germans think about Poles too. The group of “migrants of success” will probably continue to grow, unless the conditions of its functioning deteriorate. That said, this does not mean that such levels of success will become the dominant trend in coming years. As well as these migrants, there are still many people who do not cope with basic stay-related problems and do not try to enact, or cannot count on, the slightest improvement in their situation. It is worth noting, however, that the group of successful migrants among Polish Berliners also distinguish and has a tendency to grow.

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¹⁸ Relations between various types of capital were discussed extensively by Tomasz Zarycki (Zarycki, 2009).

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