ENCOUNTERING FORMS OF CO-ETHNIC RELATIONS AMONG POLISH COMMUNITY IN GLASGOW

INTRODUCTION

The recent political and public debate in the UK is focused on the cohesion and integration of increasing cultural and ethnic diversity within British multicultural society (Robinson 2005). This appears to occur within the framework of possible instability of social cohesion caused by increased immigration and cultural diversity (Castles and Miller, 2003). The discourse on incorporating cultural differences emerged as a result of a breakdown of assimilation theory and understanding that the ‘melting pot’ did not always melt, as ethnic minorities were not completely incorporated into the British nation state. Instead, the ethnic and racial diversities have reproduced and reconstructed themselves, constructing not a single ethnic identity but hybrid ethn-o-national, ethn-o-local and ethn-o-national, ethn-o-local and ethn-o-transnational boundaries of social identity (Hesse, 2000).

The recent multicultural policy called Community Cohesion adopted by the British government is a new idea of setting and managing ethnic and cultural diversities by putting the notion of ethnic communities and shared relations and values within its central concern (Cantle, 2001). According to its agenda, the integration and cooperation between diverse cultures should occur between ethnic communities based on shared values and mutual intercultural dialogue. According to this meaning, the community is a frame through which the issue of cultural and ethnic differences should be understood and managed (Robinson, 2005).

Basing on the study of Polish migrants in Glasgow, this article will argue that the meaning of community exists in multiple and fragmented forms. As the concept of community is being constantly constructed, imagined, and reconstructed by human relations it does not explain itself but requires a fuller explanation (Cohen, 1985). Alleyne (2002) suggests a reflexive concept of community; one that focuses on the exploration of the process of community formation. This requires an analysis of how the meaning of community came to exist in the first place and how it reproduces itself. Consequently, this study is aimed at exploring the
dynamics of Polish communities’ formation within the Glasgow area. In particular, it will concentrate on an analysis of the meaning of ‘community’ among groups of Polish migrants living and working in Glasgow and how this varies in relation to gender, age, and social class. In addition, this study will analyse the dynamic of the social networks of Polish migrants within their ethnic group living in the Glasgow area and it will explore the factors (cultural, social, political, economic, etc.) and the ways in which social networks within the Polish community are mediated and developed. Finally, it will explore the types of activities (physical, emotional, material) that are performed by the Polish community in the Glasgow area and the attachment that Polish migrants feel towards the city and their sense of belonging and attitudes to living in multicultural diverse areas.

MIGRATION FROM POLAND TO GLASGOW.

Since 2004 and the accession of various countries from Eastern Europe into the Europe Union, Scotland alongside with the rest of the UK has experience the increase in the number of migrants coming from central and Eastern European (predominantly from Poland, but also from: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria known as Accession 10). According to Home Office data, between May 2004 and December 2004 there were 134,555 Work Registration Scheme (WRS)\(^1\) applications, following 212,325 WRS applications in 2005 and 217,970 in 2007 (Home Office, 2009). However, it should be emphasised that WRS data presented an incomplete picture of the net migration of A8 migrants to the UK, as it does not monitor the outflow of A8 nationals from the UK. The WRS data includes only those A8 migrants who register when they take up a job within the first year of their stay in the UK, however it does not monitor the duration of employment or if and when a return home occurs. The data thus give a cumulative total of those arriving but no information on departure and so cannot be regarded as migrant stock statistics. The second major problem with the data is that they do not record those migrants who are self- employed, students (unless they register to work), dependants, or migrants who simply do not register with the WRS. In addition, it can be argued that the WRS data monitors the numbers of applications for particular jobs that migrants possess during the first twelve months of their stay in the UK, not the number of applicants themselves. Apart from the WRS data, the number of

\(^{1}\) The Work Registration Scheme (WRS) was introduced in 2004 to monitored the influx of labour migration of A8 nationals to the UK. Each national from an A8 countries who wishes to take up work with an employer in the UK for at least a month is required to register with the scheme and to pay a registration fee (£90) to the Home Office. Applicants must re-register with the scheme if they change employer (but do not pay another fee) for the first twelve months of their stay in the UK.
National Insurance Number applications (NINo) made by A8 nationals also makes it possible to identify some of the major socio-demographic characteristics of the new EU post-accessed migrants. However, similar to the WRS data, these figures do not give a full picture of the scale of migration, but only indicate general trends and cannot be regarded as a definitive representation.

Table 1: Number of the WRS and NINo registrations made by A8 migrant workers in Scotland 2004-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WRS</th>
<th>NINo</th>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8,150</td>
<td>3,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>15,895</td>
<td>20,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>19,050</td>
<td>27,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>19,550</td>
<td>27,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 2008</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>5,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66,345</td>
<td>85,398</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


According to Home Office data Polish migrants constitute the largest group registering and account for 64.4 per cent (327,538 people) of the A8 migrants in total (Home Office, 2009). In terms of the geographic concentration of Polish migrants within the UK, it seems that Poles are being widely distributed throughout the whole country. However, some parts of the UK, in particular the Scottish Borders, Central Valley, and the industrial North East are the main areas of Polish migrant concentration when compared to other regions within the country. With reference to the same data, the number of A8 migrant workers who had settled in Scotland registered by the WRS up until the first quarter of 2008 was 66,345. However, the data from the Department of Work and Pensions shows that between May 2004 and March 2008, 85,396 A8 nationals applied for a National Insurance Number. Both data sources, although they contain different estimations on the influx of EU post-enlargement migration show an increase in the number of applicants over the same time period.

In terms of the geographical location of A8 migrants in Scotland, until September 2005 one out of every four post-accession migrants lived in Edinburgh, with slightly fewer in Perth (15%), Aberdeen (14%), and Glasgow (11%). In
2007, accordingly to the WRS data, 3,135 migrant workers from A8 countries lived in Glasgow. Similarly, figures from the Department of Work and Pensions show that between 2002/03 and 2005/2006 there were 3,730 registrations for a NINo made by A8 nationals (Blake Stevenson, 2007). Even though Glasgow City Council does not keep separate records of migration from accession states, their estimation on the basis of the WRS and NINo figures indicates the total number of A8 migrants being closer to 5,000 (Blake Stevenson, 2007).

DEFINING THE POLISH COMMUNITY IN GLASGOW. APPLIED RESEARCH METHODS

The aim of this project was to analyse the structures and dynamics of the Polish migrants’ co-ethnic networks that are being created within the Glasgow area. The quantitative analysis of WRS and NINo data, focusing on the extent of EU post-accessed migration flow and its geographical spread within and to Scotland, provides the context for the further exploration of Polish migrants’ communities in Glasgow. Subsequently, the migrants’ socio- demographic characteristics - such as migrants age, gender, employment status, undertaken occupations, and wage levels, have been analysed within the study. The qualitative methods, the in-depth interviews with Polish migrants, were use to grasp the relations, interactions, and other mechanisms that constitute and facilitate social networks creation. Indeed, it should be emphasised that migrants’ networks involve both meanings and actions that are placed within the context of specific geographic and symbolic locale, therefore this research only focused on post-accessed Polish migrants living and working in the Glasgow area.

The first stage of the sample selection was to define the characteristics of Polish migrants living and working in Scotland, particularly in Glasgow. The sampling frame based on the number of WRS or NINo registrations proved to be of limited use. Therefore the further in-depth analysis of the available literature, recent studies on A8 migrants in Scotland, particularly in Glasgow (Blake Steverson, 2007; Clark et al., 2008), Edinburgh (Orchard, Szymanski and Vlahova, 2007), Fife (Fife City Council, 2007), and Tayside (Scottish Economic Research, 2006) were required to identify the target migration population. Based on exploration of local studies and available data the contacts to Polish migrants communities and other service providers who provide assistance to the Polish migrants living in Glasgow have been identified. The service providers and members of established communities served as initial contacts that provided the researcher with the names and contact information of other potential Polish migrants living in Glasgow who fulfilled the research criteria.
In selecting interviewees attention was given to factors such as age, gender, migrants’ professional/working status, and area they were living in throughout Glasgow. However, to avoid the situation where the whole sample was narrowed down to one group of friends or relatives (Erikson, 1979), which is a possible result when using the snowball method of data gathering, the initial contact was differentiated with various contacts via the service providers, members of established migrants communities, or the dedicated migrants’ web sites such as www.emito.net, and www.glasgow24.pl, to ensure that subjects from different areas and subgroups appear in the final sample. In addition, each subject who agreed to participate in the research provided an additional number of respondents, this process continued until the desired number of names was reached (Goodman, 1961). At the final stage the sample of interviewed migrants included twelve Polish migrants of diverse ages, genders, professional/working statuses, and living in various areas of Glasgow.

Table 2: Sample of interviewed Polish migrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>between 40 and 50 years old</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between 25 and 35 years old</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionals/ highly qualified migrants</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low paid migrants</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of living in Glasgow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West End</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Centre</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East End</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sout Side</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the research includes two focus groups with Polish members of established Polish community groups in Glasgow, in particular with six members of Govan Residents and five Polish teachers from Polish Saturday School in
Glasgow. The aim of the focus group was to give insights into the mechanisms of groups’ practices and methods of establishing formal migrants’ organisations as one of the methods of maintaining migrants’ collective identity. In addition, attention was given to the range of factors that influence the foundation of migrants’ organisations and in the longer term its further aims and activities. Furthermore, the aim of the focus group was to grasp a better sense of complex dynamics and developments of relations that take place within Polish community.

Apart from interviews with migrants themselves, the study included in-depth interviews with particular key stakeholders who work in Glasgow and have an interest or concern with Polish migrant populations. The interviews with various service providers aimed to explore both the range of trust and distrust relations within Polish communities and the diverse forms of social networks created within it. Based on the in-depth analysis of the available literature, recent studies on A8 migrants in Scotland, particularly in Glasgow (Blake Steverson, 2007; Clark et al., 2008), Edinburgh (Orchard et al., 2007), Fife (Fife City Council, 2007), and Tayside (Scottish Economic Research, 2006), five service providers from already established migrant communities and several non profit organisations which provide assistance to Polish migrants have been identified: the Polish Saturday School in Glasgow, Sikorski Polish Club, St Simon Church, Resident of Govan, and the West of Scotland Regional Equality Council.

US’ VERSUS ‘THEM’. THE DIVERSIFICATION OF POLISH COMMUNITY IN GLASGOW

Community, as a specific unit of sociological studies, is arguably one of the most ambiguous and vague terms in sociology (Day, 2006). In general, the idea of community refers to a body of resemblance and ties that people have between each other that binds them together and creates their sense of belonging. In general, the idea of community is about collectiveness and various links that construct its internal relations. The idea of community is understood as a framework within which people experience continually repeated personal contacts with the same people, where ties can be created around a group of close friends, family or neighbours, who are in regular, usually daily and face-to-face, contact with one another. As community can be perceived as a contested idea, attention can be drawn to the way it is defined by social actors. This means that community is constructed around aggregate relations that its members can feel, identify and describe. As such, the community, and the ties within it, is something that members are conscious about and these brought into being through the interpretative activities of their members. The idea of community and its internal ties are constructed
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via the members’ awareness, based on the symbolisation of the group boundaries by which the group differentiate themselves from the others (Cohen, 1985). Community is composed as a set of symbols, norms, values and moral codes, and ideological awareness which provides a sense of identity for its members.

The Polish migrants in Glasgow experience a complex range of relations within their community that involves different levels of trust and reciprocity. As such, Polish migrants maintained a diverse range of social contacts that were made through personal relationships including kinship, friendship, and community ties. Such networks vary in commitment and feelings of trust, solidarity, and reciprocity. Those personal ties in which Polish migrants were embedded, vary in terms of in complex and multi-stranded levels of personal confidences and emotional support, as well as common interest and companionship. Indeed, migrant feelings of commitment and trust towards other groups or individuals determined the way in which migrants gradated their personal relations from strong ties with a high level of commitment and trust to weak ties. Interviewing migrants suggested that most of their strong ties were concentrated around their family relations.

*I live with my partner here, and apart from that in Glasgow I have my parents and my brother and sister. Those are the people I can count on, and vice versa. I can say that I’m lucky because I have my closest people with my here in Glasgow.*

(Kasia, female, 29, on maternity leave)

Polish migrants define family relations through blood relations, marriage, or partnership and tend to feel a high sense of obligation towards each other. The research on illegal Polish migrants in Belgium suggests that social networks among Polish migrants based on common ethnicity began to lessen in value in comparison with family networks (Grzymała-Kozłowska, 2005). As Polish migrants settle within the host community they often brought their family, thus family networks steadily replaced broad ethnic cooperation and relationships on the basis of kinship began to play the most significant role. Family relations provided an important instrument and construct of social capital that could be used in order to pursue migration and facilitate adaptation within a new environment. The presence of the family in Glasgow for many Polish migrants provided emotional, informational, and practical support like arranging accommodation, employment, or helping with access to public services. Most of interviewed Polish migrants interact with members of their families or specific groups of friends and while those groups of networks are based on varying numbers of co-ethnic relations, they often distinguish their close ties and communities from the wider perceived
and more generalised ethnic community, as a different and trustful one. Indeed, interviewed Polish migrants in Glasgow suggested a lack of cooperation between closed, small kinship, and friendship network groups. Thus, it could be argued that Polish migrant daily life was bounded among specific, trusted, and close groups of networks between members of the family and close friends (Evergeti and Zontini, 2006). In addition, those close, trusted relations were not created within the host country, but they were transferred from their home country and acquired upon arrival. This was especially true in terms of Polish migrants’ strong ties, which were relocated and carried from the migrant home country than acquired upon arrival. Migrants often indicated the fact that they had already established close and trusting relations either with their family and friends in Glasgow or back home, thus they did not have a need to search for a new ones.

*I’m staying with my partner, and apart from that I have a few good friends here, and some, back in Poland, and to be honest it is enough for me.*

(Agnieszka, female, 25, PhD student)

The Polish migrants in Glasgow tend to distinguish two types of co-ethnic relations, those organised around small kinship, and friendship network groups and others, more generalised one that were perceived as a mistrustful one. Polish migrants in Glasgow tend to report a lack of solidarity within their co-ethnic community and a general feeling of distrust towards other Polish migrants. The interviewed Poles in Glasgow emphasised the general suspicion towards the Polish ‘imagined’ community living in Glasgow and they tended to be mistrustful of other Polish fellows.

*In general, when you meet other Poles on the street you have this distance. I remember three years ago when we went shopping and we heard Polish voice, it was something great, but now, when we hear Polish voices we go to another direction, you know how the Poles are here.*

(Kasia, female, 29, on maternity leave)

The findings are consistent with other research on Polish migrants in London (Eade et al., 2006; Ryan et al., 2008; Ryan and White, 2008). In should be emphasised that the increasing number of Polish migrants coming to Glasgow

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2 Concept introduced by Benedict Anderson (1983) which states that a nation is a community socially constructed, which is to say imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. As such the nation is an “imagined political community”: imagined because the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. A nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves or, in other words imagine themselves as to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one.
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Introduces competition for employment opportunities. For example, while between 2003/2004 there were thirty Polish NINo registrations in Glasgow, while in 2006 the number of Polish NINO registrations reached 2620 (Blake Steverson, 2007). It was especially true in terms of low skilled migrants for whom co-ethnic ties were the only source of support in terms of employment or accommodation. That is, the Polish migrants’ co-ethnic relations often provide the support for other relatives living in Glasgow, but at the same time the appearance of the numbers of Polish migrants in Glasgow constitute the source of competition over limited resources on the labour market. This often caused the broken expectation and lead to conflict between Polish migrants. In fact, this sets up discrepancies in perception between particularly close, personal Polish communities and the general population of Polish migrants living in Glasgow who were often recognised as competitive and threatening. From the interviews, it could be argued that Polish migrants had a dichotomous perception of their own community, ranging from close and trustful relations with their close family and friends to suspicion and distance towards other Polish follows. The research in London (Ryan et al., 2008) suggested that in the longer term migrants tend to rationalise their distrust relations and balance them with on-going reliance upon co-ethnics.

I think that Polish community is not well organised. I think that we are too lazy and egoistic for that. However, in general my experiences with other Poles are rather positive. I try to avoid the contact with other Poles who I don’t trust […] I think that Poles are meeting only with their own friends and families.

(Renata, female, 45, cleaner)

Respondents tended to emphasise their supportive and trustful relations, mutual help, and support from their relatives or other circles of Polish friends, which often comprised their main source of emotional and informative support. In addition, based on research of undocumented migrants in London, Jordan (2002), suggested that while there is a general low level of social trust within post-communist societies the networks of friends and family are highly trusted. It should be emphasised that many Poles during the communist era relied on a wide range of kinship and other informal social networks to obtain desirable goods and services, compensating inadequacies in official provisions (Sztompka, 1999). According to the Public Opinion Research Centre in Poland (2008), almost three out of four Poles indicate a low level of trust towards the people they do not know, compared, to one out of four who indicated that they should trust most people.

Apart of my husband, I have some friends from my college and from my home town. They are all Polish. Apart of those people there is Andrzej, my husband’s
work colleague. He is this kind of person who you can trust and count on, he is always willing to help whenever we ask for it.

(Renata, female, 45, cleaner)

In addition, the low level of trust among the Polish community was associated with widely-recognised stereotypes of ‘immoral Poles’, who were perceived as those migrants who compete between each other, live on social benefits, have a tendency to emphasise their economic status, and in particular have a tendency to show off their economic status and wages, but at the same time they complain about a lack of social justice. The reinforcement of this stereotype often justified migrants’ dichotomous perception of the Polish community and gives a reasonable explanation for selectivity in terms of given support.

Sometimes I feel ashamed of Poles behaviour; for example, I’m standing in the grocery shop and I can here 3 Poles behind me buying vodka and swearing all the time. I know that Scots swears too, but we, Poles, are here as a guest, this is not our country. This is Scotland, and this is their [Scots] country and we suppose to respect their law and culture. I don’t like those Poles who are coming here with this demanding attitude, looking only for occasion to apply for social benefits.

(Kasia, female, 29, on maternity leave)

The rationalisation process of mistrust and competitiveness was strongly referred to the notion of ‘immoral Poles’, meaning ‘benefit abusers’ or ‘dodgers’. The previous research on undocumented Polish migrants in London (Jordan, 2002) and Brussels (Grzymała-Kozłowska, 2005) indicated that the increased competitive situation in the informal labour market resulted in frequent examples of exploitation throughout the Polish community. Low levels of cultural capital and limited access to economic resources of undocumented Polish migrants resulted in little assistance and cooperation within their ethnic community. However, the legal status of post-accession Polish migrants in Glasgow and their migration experience differed from that undocumented ones, although the notion of competitiveness and exploitation among Polish community in Glasgow was still an issue.

No, I wasn’t deceived by Poles personally, I don’t have that experience maybe because I can count on my family, but I heard from other Poles the stories like that.

(Barbara, female, 50, cleaner)
Migrants tend to adopt strategies to rationalise the support that they receive from other Polish migrants, simultaneously distinguishing it from imagined Polish community. As it was anticipated above, many Polish migrants in Glasgow receive various support from other Poles despite the widely recognised rhetoric of suspicion and lack of trust. In addition, ascribed and shared meaning of ‘immoral Poles’ was often used by Poles to interpret the various relations within the Polish community.

_When I meet other Poles on the street I keep the distance, I don’t know why it is like that, it is stupid, because we should help each other as one nation and what is more, we should not feel ashamed of each other._

(Kasia, female, 29, on maternity leave)

It should be emphasised that the lack of solidarity amongst Polish migrants living in Glasgow was also associated with social class stratification. The Verdaguer (2009) argues that scholars who concentrate on the ethnic solidarity often overlook class stratification among co-ethnics groups. Indeed, compared with migrants who have little knowledge of the English language, the Polish students or professionals indicated that they had little contact with the Polish community, apart from their close relatives and friends. Their social networks branched out from their co-ethnic relations and often included various networks with other nationalities. In addition, they often stated that their perception on the general Polish community in Glasgow did not change due to their migration.

_I don’t work with Poles and don’t study with Poles, and I don’t go to the church, and I don’t think that because of the fact I’m from Poland I need to find a friend who is Polish. I don’t have a need to meet with other Poles. Maybe if I didn’t have Polish partner, I would have this need to meet other Polish people, perhaps just to talk in Polish language._

(Daniel, male, 25, architectural assistant)

Polish migrants level of cultural capital, mainly their proficiency in English language, limits their social networks to co-ethnic ones. Indeed, those migrants tend to depend on their co-ethnic relations as a source of emotional, informational and practical support. It should be emphasised that Polish migrants define the meaning of support mainly in terms of provision of various information on employment opportunities, arrangements of accommodation in Glasgow, and other information referring to accessing public services, health, education, or leisure. For some Polish migrants in Glasgow participation in co-ethnic networks strains their relationship with other Poles and often results in conflict and broken expectations.
This could support Evergeti and Zontini’s argument (2006) that theory on social capital tends to overemphasise the positive role of co-ethnic networks, in a sense idealising its cooperation nature and overlooking its diverse power relations. On some occasions Polish migrants perceive helping other migrants as a burden.

*I used to work in recruitment agency, so I met a lot of Poles whose English was rather poor. I was trying to treat them professionally and equally. Some of them were coming and crying that they need a job, and they are desperate to get it. It was this kind of psychological blackmail that because I’m from Poland I should treat them differently than other nationalities, what was not fair. And when I managed to organise something for them and I called with information that they can start the new job on the next day, sometimes, of course, they appreciated it a lot, but there were some occasions that something suddenly has happened that they couldn’t take the job. There were some situations like this. I know that I’m from Poland, but some people tried to use this, thinking that I should give them the job, just because I’m from Poland, not because they have sufficient qualifications. It is not like that.*  
(Weronika, female, 29, HR assistant)

From interviews it could be argued that many Polish migrants in Glasgow assumed that it is moral obligations that arise from the fact that all Polish migrants belong to imagined Polish community to help each other. As migration to host community place Polish migrant in different social and cultural, the fact of belonging to imaginary Polish community oblige other Polish migrants to provide support to those fellow Poles who are unfamiliar with social rules and norms in host community. Surprisingly, the Poles who relied the most on the co-ethnic networks were very critical about other Polish migrants living in Glasgow, indicating a lack of solidarity and support within Polish community. A high level of dependence was sometimes evident due to lack of fluency in English and this created unequal power relations between Polish migrants and often led to unrealistic expectations toward other Poles in Glasgow.

*Sometimes you can help people not because you want to have financial benefit from it, but just to feel good about it. Sometimes when you refuse to help other Poles, or that you are sorry but you don’t have time, you can get really negative reaction, something like, ‘this is how it is’, or ‘you can’t never count on other Poles’.*  
(Maciek, male, 28 factory worker, photograph)

Indeed, lack of proficiency in English language limited Polish migrants abilities for developing social networks to those within the Polish community. Different
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expectations, needs and migrations aims result in the difficulties in exchanging and accumulating the trustful relations within the Polish communities in Glasgow. Solidarity of immigrant networks is not only contingent on structural forces in the context of reception, but also on specific pre-migration characteristics and the demographic traits of a particular immigrant community (Verdaguer, 2009). It should be emphasised that within groups of post-accessed Polish migrants we can distinguish diverse groups with different demographic and social characteristics such as Polish professionals, business people, students, low skilled migrants, families/single parents, and other Polish migrants who came to the UK and who stay abroad for various period of time. Polish migrants social structures such as gender, class, age and proficiency in English language embody different needs, expectation towards the social relations causing the difficulties in exchanging the trustful relation. As it was indicated above migrants’ social status, and language proficiency created internal social boundaries that influenced the process of social network creation between Poles in Glasgow. Again, different migrant trajectories constitute the important factor creating further social boundaries differentiating and influencing Polish social networks within their ethnic community. Those differentiations amongst Polish migrants living in Glasgow shaped their social relations and influenced their experience of forming and maintaining ethnic ties. Indeed, different migration experiences, migrants’ social class, age and gender lesser the mutual, co-ethnic relations within Poles living in Glasgow. In addition, some of the respondents emphasised that they have no need to meet other Poles in Glasgow as they have little in common regarding social and cultural capital.

Here, Polish community is very diverse, people need to have common aims or links to feel this solidarity between each other, but as I said there are various aims, class, social habits and needs and even though we are all from Poland it is not enough. In Poland you would not make friendship with someone with who you have nothing in common apart from your nationality, same in here. However, here it is much more possible that you will meet other Poles with whom, apart from being Polish you have nothing in common. Ok, we have the same history, tradition, we speak the same language, but it is very general. To make strong ties you need to have something else that you can refer to on daily basis. Yes, I meet many Poles on the street, but I won’t jump to each of them and say ‘hi I’m from Poland, let’s become friends’; it is so unnatural and rather weird.

(Agnieszka, female, 25, PhD student)

It seems that for Polish migrants the process of negotiation, maintenance, and construction of their ethnic identity was complex and includes diverse migration
Emilia Pietka

history, social class position, age, and gender. Everget and Zontini (2006) suggest that it is not enough to define what ethnicity is but also ‘when’ and ‘how’ it is mobilised as communicative resources. In addition, Fenton et al. (2002) argued that the character of ethnic minorities’ distinctiveness is marked both by their culture and their specific position in the social class hierarchy. It means that ethnicity often corresponds with other markers of social stratification such as gender, social status, age, and religion that often overlap within each other and are constituted by processes of formatting and maintaining social boundaries that arise in particular contexts and construct significant factors influencing individuals’ social identity.

One of the teachers in Polish Saturday School indicated the complexity of factors that construct identity of Polish migrants.

There are many different Poles coming to Glasgow, thus it is hard to describe them as one ‘Polonia’. Those people are bringing with them they habits, customs, language, culture, networks, social class, that are different among all Poles. Thus, even those we [Polish migrants] are using this same language, there are many things that make us different. I mean, some Poles will never get a chance to meet within each other, because they work, live in a different places and they have a different aims, values, perspectives, that as well define who they are.

(Beata, female, 32, teacher in Polish school in Glasgow)

The symbolic meaning of Polonia refers here to imagined Polish community as a community of fellow Poles whose contact and networks are constructed on ethnic and cultural bonds. However, from the interviews, it could be argued that some of the traditional or well established boundaries of social identity such as social class, religion, gender, age and so on, construct as well important components of migrants’ sense of belonging. Again, Polish migrants tend to maintain the different forms of community consciousness and solidarity that were embedded and brought from their home country. In addition, Polish migrants suggested that despite their transnational citizens’ status they tend to reproduce and reshape their values carrying some of their cultural and social attachments across borders, thus social class, age, and gender are seen to be important factors diversifying migrant communities.

There are two Poles working in our factory who know English language, but they don’t work with us, they sit with Scots in the offices, they are different than us.

(Wojtek, male, 30, factory worker)
Polish migrants tend to position themselves with relation to a range of categories including class, ethnicity, age, gender, and religion. Migrants’ day-to-day experiences of working, studying, looking after children, and their experience of the communities they live in appear to be critical in influencing their attitudes to Glasgow and the extent to which they feel part of it.

From the interviews, it could be argued that Polish migrants experience and understanding of their ethnic community results from the interconnection of a migrant’s social status, perception of their ethnicity and migration experience. Those social boundaries constitute the criteria that shaped the access and maintenance of social relations of Polish migrants in Glasgow. Indeed, the differences in obligations towards various co-ethnic relations help to grade diverse networks in terms of migrant personal commitment. Polish migrants based their close, intimate, and trustful relations with high level of obligation within their family relations, mainly those relations between a migrant and their partner, siblings, or parents. It should be emphasised that those relations were not spatially bounded, as most of the interviewed migrants’ experienced close and dense transnational networks with their family and close friends back in Poland. Again, the high level of commitment within the close ties involves a high level of trust and solidarity. The interviewed migrants revealed the dichotomous perception of Polish community, as they tended to perceive their own community as a competitive and threatening one, simultaneously distinguishing it from their close and dense co-ethnic ties with specific groups of their friends and family members. In addition, the low level of trust was associated with the widely recognised stereotype of ‘immoral Poles’. This category of certain modes relating to particular Polish migrants justifies the selectivity in terms of given support.

From the interviews, it seems that Polish migrants tend to operate within different social spaces and economic opportunities that from their social networks and influence community formations. The internal social divisions of Polish migrants in Glasgow position their social relations and influence their experience of forming and maintaining their ethnic collectivises. As such, it could be argued that Polish migrants’ sense of belonging depend on their overall experience of living in Glasgow and has the multi-faced nature that apart of ethnicity also include a complex combination of other characteristics such as social class, religion, gender, age, and marital status. There are great diversity of understanding regarding what it means to be a Polish migrant and how this identity is experienced. Multiple representations of Polish migrants’ identification reflect multiple ways in which people define themselves and present themselves to others. This brings a question about how strong the category of being Polish migrant is to become as individual
identity marker. By saying this, identity become a form of relationship and it is expressed situational (Parekh 2006; Kymlicka and Norman 2000; Hall 2000).

It could be concluded that the Polish community in Glasgow can not be defined as an aggregate of a certain population of Polish migrants living in Glasgow, but as a range of personal and institutional relations diverse in strength and extent, that migrants experience and maintain both in Glasgow and back in Poland. Indeed, migrants tend to maintain diverse personal relations with particular circles of Polish friends and family, with certain characteristics and common aims, values, and experiences. The degree of commonality of migrants aims, migration experiences, values that strongly relates to a migrants social class, age, and gender, helps to determine migrants’ co-ethnic relations. This study revealed that the Polish migrant community can be described as several personal communities defined as a set of various networks within which individual migrants are embedded. In addition, Polish migrant’s personal communities and their own social networks were built among groups of friends and family and were different in relation to internal variations such as age, gender, class, internal structures of marginalisation and feelings of trust or distrust (Alexander et. al, 2007). Interviewed migrants indicated social stratification within their ethnic community that came along the social class, age, and gender, and tended to influence both their co-ethnic relations, thus diversify and define their personal communities.

INSTITUTIONALISED NETWORKS, POLISH ORGANISATIONS IN GLASGOW

Apart from personal social networks, the voluntary and ethnic organisations as well as the profit driven institutions such as travel and recruitment agencies, schools, dedicated diasporas websites were important agents in responding to the Polish migrants needs, providing the informational support, initiating institutional networks, and assisting in assessing host-society institutions in Glasgow. It should be emphasised that increased migration from Central and Eastern European Countries have made migrants a highly profitable type of consumers, therefore many advisory institutions or recruitment agencies constitute their activities based on migrants economic, social, and cultural needs creating specific migrant industry (Garapich, 2008). In addition, for some of the respondents, organisations that were established mainly by those from the generation of Polish post Second World War migrants did not reflect the needs of new waves of post-accessed Poles in Glasgow. In fact, those organisations that were established by Poles who migrated to the UK after the Second World War, and thus within a different context of migration and with the migrants having different experiences, constituted a
distinctive migrants’ community that differed from the new post-accession one. As such, most of interviewed migrants remained detached from and wary of this community.

*I was in Sikorski Polish Club, maybe once or twice, because there is a Polish restaurant there, but it is not a place for me.*

(Daniel, male, 25, architectural assistant)

Polish migrants did participate in a wide range of migrants’ organisations in Glasgow of certain characteristic aims and interests that reflected the complexities of identities within Polish diasporas society in Glasgow. Garapich (2008) argued that private and profit driven migrants’ industries in London have a positive impact on migrants’ process of integration into the host community, as for many Polish migrants a limited knowledge of English language created a significant barrier to accessing public services, thus the migrant organisations provided a desirable source of support and information. The wide range of profit based institutions such as travel and recruitment agencies, interpreting services, tax and benefit advisors, money sending agencies, Polish shops, and Polish restaurants construct a wide range of activities that offers their services to Polish migrants and facilitate setting migration networks in Glasgow. In addition, Polish migrants were offered health service, hairdressers, beauticians, mechanics, electronic specialists, baby-sitters, transport services, interpreters, lawyers, and photographic services that often provided a common communication platform for Poles in Glasgow (Garapich, 2008). Even though Polish migrants still strongly relied upon their social networks, formal recruitment agencies were important actors in initiating migration processes. For example, the transport company First Bus or the Turner Group Company have actively recruited from Poland as a means of filling workforce vacancies.

Apart from stimulating migration flow the profitable organisations often provide information support on migrants’ employment rights and entitlements or assist in migrants’ social and economical incorporation. However, on some occasions migration institutions had an exploitative character towards Polish migrants (Castle and Miller, 1998). According to the service providers there were some examples of exploitative activities towards Polish migrants in Glasgow.

*I remember it was I think in 2006, there was one organisation called ‘gang Bachy and Kachy’. They advertisement themselves as recruitment agency in Polish newspapers, and they were charging people for accommodation and employment arrangements, so people [Polish migrants] were pre-paying for...*
the service around £500, and when they were arriving in Glasgow, there was no job and no accommodation.

(Anna, female, 30, Sikorski Polish Club)

After 2004 a wide spectrum of media dedicated to Polish migrants started to appear in Glasgow. Apart from the two main diasporas web sites\(^3\) that are dedicated to Polish migrants in Glasgow, the post-enlargement migrants have also set up their own newspapers (‘Szkocjapl’, ‘Emigrant’) and radio stations, ‘Szocjafm’ and the ‘Sunny Govan Radio’ in Glasgow which was the first in Scotland to broadcast the Polish language program called ‘The Rainmen’s Land’ (‘Kraina Deszczowców’). Those institutions provide information and practical support about employment, housing, health and education in Glasgow. In fact, as a result of regular media information, Polish migrants could learn about free of charge English classes, how to claim benefits, how to sign up for trade union membership, and other help and support that before could be obtained only among migrant social networks. In addition, the dedicated diaspora websites bring forth external links to other organisations that provide further support for immigrants. In addition, most of diasporas websites provide public forums where Poles are able to share their migration experiences, acquire support and advice, or arrange meetings with other Poles in Glasgow. The public forums construct and develop migrants’ social networks and establish mutual communication and relations between Polish migrants in Glasgow. It should be emphasised that the social capital that emerged from the public forums often creates a specific form of social control, as migrants used the public forum to exchange information of exploitation experiences in order to prevent and to protect other migrants from similar situations.

Dear All, Please pay attention, and be aware that the Mr Jacek, aged 28 and Mrs Basia, aged 27 are offering false services. Their company is calling ‘Repair service’, and I paid them in advance to do some repairs with my bathroom. After I have paid them, they never called me back.

(Joanna, female, public forum user)\(^4\)

For many Polish migrants dedicated diaspora websites were one of the key sources of social networks. By using the public forums Polish migrants tend to arrange regular meetings. In particular many young Polish mothers often use the website to communicate with other Polish mothers in their local area to meet in the local park or go for a walk with their children. The maintenance of the networks

\(^3\) www.glasgow24.pl www.emito.pl

\(^4\) Both quotations are from the public forum on the dedicated diaspora web site www.emito.net
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within diaspora dedicated websites refers only to those migrants who were living in Glasgow, or who were about to come to Glasgow. It should be emphasised that the dedicated websites were not used to maintain transnational networks. In addition, the use of the public forums often helps to establish the range of relations with migrants of similar interests or needs.

Apart from the private and profit driven institutions, the Polish Catholic Church was a traditional institution that created social networks within the Polish community. In Glasgow, there were three Catholic Churches that provided masses in Polish, St Patrick and St Simon located on West End area and St. Constantine’s Church in Govan. The Church creates a space where Polish migrants are sharing a particular action that is the same, common action that constructs the common experience for them all. Similar to the study of Hindus in Southern California (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2009), the maintenance of religious places by Polish migrants in Glasgow helped to create co-ethnic, social networks. Indeed, maintenance of the same space and participation in place rituals on a regular basis often encourages individuals to form and sustain casual relations.

I think that lot of Poles knows each other from the church, you can see those same faces each Sunday.

(Anna, female, 30, graphic designer)

Church activity was mainly concentrated on supplying migrants with religious services such as masses in Polish language, sacraments, or religion lessons for Polish children. In addition, the Polish priest often assists migrants in critical moments of their lives such as serious illness, accidents, or death. For many Polish migrants participation in Polish masses and Catholic religion played an important part in maintaining their identity. Some of the migrants chose to attend the Catholic masses given in the Polish language on purpose in order to experience the Polish tradition. In addition, the church helps to strengthen migrants’ ethnic and cultural identity, as during the masses the priest often refers to the Polish traditions, history, and literature, or provides current information from Poland.

Again, establishment and participation of Polish migrants in their co-ethnic organisation set up a binary opposition between a particular trustful Polish networks and general population of Poles in Glasgow who were often perceived as competitive and threatening. Even though some of the migrants clearly suggested some concern about the lack of trusting relations amongst the general community of Polish migrants, on a day-to-day basis many of the Polish migrants in Glasgow were often interacting with each other. This was especially true amongst older
migrants and Polish mothers with a little knowledge of English language and who found life in Glasgow slightly challenging as moving to a new place had had a large effect on their personal relations. Indeed, migrants suggested that on some occasions they felt lonely in the city and they missed their social life back in Poland. This need often became a strong push factor for participation in Polish organisations that brought them a little familiarisation in a new social and cultural environment:

Some people feel lonely here, and even though they may live with their partners, they miss those relations that they have back home. This creates the need for meeting other Poles. It especially true it terms older people, for example my dad

(Marta, female, 25, NGO worker)

From the interviews it seems that participation in Polish organisations was one of the coping strategies used by migrants in response to the social, cultural, and institutional environment of their new country of residence. Thus, it could be argued that such strategies and experiences both support and create opportunities in gaining improved control over determinants of migrants’ welfare and wellbeing in the host community. In addition, the feeling of loneliness and the need for social and cultural familiarisation gave a strong foundation for the creation of Polish migrants’ organisations. Indeed, Polish migrants set up organisations to create, express, and maintain a collective identity (Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005).

SUMMARY:

Looking at the example of Polish post-accessed migrants in Glasgow, this study has argued that ethnic communities construct diverse and fragmented communities that are based on a range of dense but autonomous networks of social relations that are differentiated by migrants’ age and social status, involving various levels of social trust, reciprocity, and obligation. The aim of this study was to investigate the meaning and the mechanism of community formation among Polish migrants living in Glasgow. With regards to post-accessed Polish migrants in Glasgow, the data indicates that Polish migrants did not constitute an integrated or ‘one’ ethnic community, but rather a range of different ‘personal’ and ‘casual’ communities that were constructed either around common aims, interest and mutual linking that appears in a certain time and space or via their kinship ties and close friendships that they experienced in Glasgow as well as back in Poland. The Polish migrants were bounded among specific, trusted and close networks between members of their family and close friends that distinguishes this group from the wider and
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more generalised ethnic ‘community’. From the interviews, it can be argued that migrant feelings of commitment and trust toward other groups or individuals determined the way in which migrants gradated their personal relations and what constitutes the base of migrant personal communities. In addition, interviewed migrants revealed a dichotomous perception of the Polish imagined community as they also described some Poles in Glasgow as being competitive whilst, at the same time, distinguishing this wider community from their own personal (trusted) community that were constituted via particular co-ethnic ties with specific groups of friends and family members. It is interesting to note that this finding corresponds with previous research on post-accessed Polish migrants living in London (Eade et al., 2006; Ryan et al., 2008; Ryan and White, 2008; Garapich, 2008) and Amsterdam (Elrick and Lewandowska, 2008). Apart from different ‘personal’ (trusted) communities the Polish migrants in Glasgow did participate in a wide range of migrants’ organisations with certain characteristic aims and interests such as education (Polish Saturday School), information/support (Sikorski Polish Club, Govan Residents, private institutions), religion (Catholic Church) that reflected the complexities of needs, interests and expectation among Polish diaspora society in Glasgow. Indeed, Polish migrants tend to group themselves around common experience, values, and interest that construct the commonality, mutual linking and internal relations between them. The relations that arrive in such contexts can be described as ‘casual’ friendships and communities, which arrive in a certain time and space. Whether at work, college/university, at Church, in the park or shop Polish migrants experienced various strengths and frequencies of relations with other Poles and in which common experienced and links were created. It should be emphasise that the study was limited to the analysis of community formation of Polish post-accessed migrants in Glasgow context. The study only focused on of social networks and notion of trust and reciprocality as agencies of community formation, however further research on mechanisms that constitute ‘community’ is required. Indeed, as has been argued here, Polish migrants did construct a range of social networks within their ethnic communities in Glasgow. The city itself does become a place and the framework for Polish migrants’ personal, tight, institutional, or instrumental relations simultaneously influencing their sense of belonging. With regards to critical debates on globalisation, it can be suggested that the communities become more internally divided, being socially stratified via issues such as gender, ethnicity, or class that tend to overlap each other. Therefore, we can consider Polish families, Polish low skilled workers, or Polish women but not a Polish community as a whole. It is suggested here that when it comes to assessing or simply trying to make sense of migrant identities and feelings of belonging in a ‘new home’, then a holistic view is required and essential. From the interview data, it seems that Polish migrants sense of belonging
is largely determined by their overall experiences in new surroundings, including the complexity of characteristics of their ethnicity, age, gender, and social status that remain flexible and fluid in constructions of migrants’ perception of ‘self’ and ‘other’ when faced by changing circumstances and situations, both geographically and economically. As we have witnessed throughout the commentary and interview quotes above, feelings of security, acceptance, bonding, and trust were lively and endurably shared among specific groups of Polish personal communities. The experience of Poles in Glasgow illustrates that some migrants create their own communities within specific groups of close friends and family members. In this regard, community is ultimately family for many of those Poles whose voices are heard in this paper.

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