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HOMECOMING OR ADVENTURE? MOTIVATIONS OF POLISH RETURN MIGRANTS WHO GREW UP ABROAD AND THEIR DETERMINANTS.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the article is to analyse the variety of motives and circumstances of return migration present in the narratives of Polish migrants, who grew up abroad and returned to their country of origin as young adults. I am interested in the reasons for which they came to Poland and how the decisions were made – whether they were individual or collective, which biography determinants influenced them. I will pay particular attention to the role of the national factor in decision making and the meaning attached to the planned migration.

The research consisted of 17 in-depth interviews with representatives of this category. The interviewees had spent a great part of their childhood in different countries of the western cultural sphere. Among them were three individuals who had spent some time in Arabic countries, although they had attended international schools. The length of their stay abroad varied from 6 to 20 years, and the age upon return to Poland was from 16 to 27.

The main characteristics of the interviewees are presented in the table below:

The empirical material – the migrants' narratives – was the starting point in the analysis process. In the next phase I considered issues of more general nature and referred to some theories and categories, existing in social sciences. It should be emphasized that they were collected narratives which guided me towards some references. The theoretical concepts were not taken *a priori*. This approach, inspired by the grounded theory and ethnography (Konecki 2000, Charmaz 2009), made it possible to look at the phenomena which interested me from the perspective of interviewees and allowed me to preserve serendipity – crucial in qualitative research. I was able to discover some phenomena, which

at the beginning of the study I hadn't expected and I hadn't search for (Konecki 2000: 27).

Table 1.

Main characteristics of the interviewees

Number/ Name of the interviewee*	Age	Country of emigration	Length of migration
1- Gabriela	24	Australia	20
2- Bartosz	27	Italy	6
3- Małgorzata	28	UAE, Belgium, Netherlands	9
4- Robert	23	Italy	10
5- Barbara	30	USA	20
6- Joanna	30	Italy, Syria	12
7- Hanna	26	Russia, USA	10
8- Monika	24	Denmark	16
9- Izabela	24	Germany	13
10- Kamila	23	Romania	14
11- Michał	30	Sweden, Germany	18
12- Natalia	24	Germany	17
13- Karol	24	Sweden	18
14- Maria	19	France	18
15- Justyna	29	Germany	18
16- Wojciech	28	UAE	7
17- Weronika	24	Australia	7

*Names of the interviewees have been changed

MOTIVATIONS OF RETURN MIGRANTS – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The answer to the question when and why migrants decide to return to their country of origin is one of the main areas of migration studies' interests (Cerase 1974, Gmelch 1980, Iglicka 2002). Getting to know the motives of return is interesting in itself and it is also crucial to understanding the subsequent experiences of the adaptation and identity processes.

The most cited classification of returns is probably the one created by Francesco Cerase in 1974. He identified four types of returns based on their reasons: return of failure, return of conservatism, return of retirement and return of innovation (Cerase 1974). Taking into account the current knowledge and the increasing complexity of migration processes, this typology seems to be insufficient. Its usefulness is limited to the description of the first generation of migrants, who left as adults and because of economic reasons. However, it is not adequate to analyse the category which interests me – children raised abroad, just starting their adult, independent lives. The hitherto research on the second-generation migrants shows that their experiences are exceptional, different from both those of their rooted peers and from those of their parents – the first-generation migrants (Conway, Potter 2009). These people have much easier starting point in the country of emigration than their parents had – they graduated from the local schools, have high cultural and linguistic competences and social networks. Therefore, it is even more intriguing why they decided to return to their country of origin – usually less economically developed.

The issue of return migrants' motivation is also interesting in the context of the discussion on the relationships between individuals and the territory and the importance of national divisions in the contemporary world. Over the last decade the thesis of deterritorialization has gained popularity. According to them, the individual's bonds with the native ground get weak, and the importance of transnational communities increases (Appadurai 1996). However, the voices opposing these theses are strong and vivid as well. Many researchers claim that home and place, rooted in a national territory are vital to the individuals as a source of identity, values and social relations (Gupta, Ferguson 2004). Return migrations are considered as one piece of evidence. Andrew Steffanson claims that among migrants dispersed around the world the desire to "return home" is not only a reaction to the difficulties of the emigrational life and the minority status. It is an expression of a deep psychological need to return to the roots, their own place in the world. According to the author, this phenomenon is becoming increasingly common, taking the form of a comprehensive social project, defying to the dominant paradigm of global mobility and cultural hybridization (Steffansson 2004:3). Therefore, the question arises whether these observations are adequate to describe the experiences of young people raised abroad? To what extent the return migration is for them "a return to the roots" – a real or imaginary home, to what extent the decision is made due to some other criteria (e.g. economic, educational, family)?

Having analyzed the collected material I distinguished four types of returns, based on the main motive that guided migrants in making this decision. It should be emphasised that these are declared motivations – those that interlocutors

wanted to tell the researcher and were able to articulate, and often – to rationalise (Nowicka 2010: 195). Usually in the narratives a number of reasons coincided with each other. However, interviewees attributed to one of them a decisive importance.

RETURN AS A FAMILY STRATEGY

The first type of return is to follow the plans of the whole family. In this group, the parents took the decision to return, and their children, although theoretically had the opportunity to stay in the current place of residence, accepted that choice and adapted to it. This situation occurred mainly among people who emigrated as children or teenagers with parents who received an offer to work abroad (usually in international or diplomatic institutions). The migration was therefore planned as temporary. This led to the formation of a specific attitude – the readiness to return. These people usually remembered Poland well and stayed in contact with it through regular visits. As a consequence, they were connected with it, at least in a symbolic, but very often also – a realistic way. Although they felt good in emigration, they perceived themselves as “guests”. This role seemed to them permanent and they did not try to change it.

As a direct reason for the return, the migrants from this category usually indicated financial and organizational difficulties that would arise if one family member remained abroad. The statement of Robert, who had lived for seven years in Italy can be recalled here. He graduated from middle and high school and began the study at University there. To explain how he came to Poland, he says:

I returned to Poland with my parents when their work contracts expired. There was no possibility for them to stay in Italy, so I returned with them. As I would then have had to pay for an apartment, cover the expenses, it would have been quite expensive .. even very expensive, so it wouldn't have been a sensible choice. If the whole family had decided to settle down in Italy, no problem, I would have been happy to stay there as well. However, in this situation – I preferred not to.

The interviewee raises pragmatic reasons first. Independent living in Italy would be in his opinion too expensive for the family. However, it seems to be a kind of rationalisation, while the key element was the need of relationship with relatives. It is worth pointing out his idea of home:

For me, home is wherever me and my parents live. Really, it's a place where we can meet, eat together, talk, watch TV and that's all and it doesn't matter

where ... the place is really abstract. (...) and the location doesn't matter. The most important thing is that we're all together – my mum, dad, brother and me. In fact, that's all. Nothing more.

For the interviewee, home is primarily the relation with the family, based on the shared time and space. He assigns no importance to the place where it is located. In the further part of his narrative he declares that he would have wanted to stay in Italy (he has very positive memories of emigration), if the whole family had taken the same decision. However, leaving this country with his family caused neither regret, nor fear, because the relatives ensured him security and a smooth readaptation.

The experiences of Bartosz are similar. He had lived with his mother more than six years in Italy too. The end of his mother's work contract coincided with his graduation from high school. In contrast to the previous interviewee, he decided to stay in Milan and start his studies there. Remembering that time he says:

During my final years of high school, I considered staying and studying in Italy, despite the fact that my mother was returning to Poland.

However, after a few months he stopped his studies and at the age of 20 returned to Poland:

I was alone. The situation made this plan impossible and I had to come back, I had no choice. I didn't manage to get a room in the student dormitory and unfortunately, I was forced to rent one. It turned out that the room was outside of Milan, not very cheap – 350 euros, an expensive commute(...) There're economic issues, and other things. Because I realized pretty quickly that student life in Italy, maybe not everywhere, but at least at the faculty of law, didn't seem that interesting to me. (...). On the other hand, I am known for not being very independent, so dealing with everyday things such as the laundry, shopping, preparing food. I wasn't used to it, unfortunately.

It seems that once again we can observe a kind of rationalisation – the statement “I had no choice” is an attempt to explain in pragmatic terms the decision, which was determined emotionally. The thing that bothered him most was the homesickness, the lack of support and close relationships in the country of emigration. Moreover, despite being an adult, he was not ready to live independently. Coming to Poland was an expression of the need to return home:

I was looking for... or rather, I needed this home to finally feel free, without any extra responsibilities. Because, you know, especially at the end of school, I really felt these responsibilities, and I really needed someone to tell me "Tomek, you're at home, nothing wrong can happen, you don't have to do anything. Be yourself, do your thing, feel free"

In this statement there is a clear motive of familiarity, which is for the interviewee the essence of the home. This brings to mind Alfred Schütz's reflections about familiarity and intimacy based on the direct relationship (Schütz 2008: 216). The narrative shows, however, that the interviewee connotes the state of "being at home" not only with the family, but also with a place – his home country. The combination of these two elements provides him a sense of authenticity and safety, as the environment is understandable and predictable. Life in emigration required constant learning of a new culture to gain social acceptance.

The return can be a family strategy, even when the individual arrives to the country of origin alone. One example is the biography of Joanna who as a five year old went with her parents to Italy for six years, and then after a year in Poland, for the next six years – to Syria. After graduating from high school, she was not determined where she wanted to study. She did not see perspectives for herself at university in the Arab culture and considered education in different countries. In her opinion, it was the parents who decided about her arrival to Poland:

Finally, I think it's my mum who decided (...) It just so happened to be, that, in that year, my grandmother died and the apartment where she lived was reclaimed (...), so we didn't inherit it. So they planned to buy me a flat as it would then be easier for everybody, as if anyone came to visit Poland, they would be able to stay at my place. I think that these practical issues were very important.

The quoted statement indicates that the needs of the family decided in large extent about the interviewee's situation. The grandmother's death and the loss of the family house probably violated her parents' feelings of being rooted in Poland. They decided to tie up another family member with the homeland, creating an "anchor" there. It should be noted that the interlocutor's parents throughout emigration period kept close relations with Poland and encouraged their daughter to get to know the Polish culture. The interviewee also had a positive attitude towards the country of origin (although she knew it mainly from holidays with the grandparents), so she didn't oppose to that idea. Upon arrival to Poland, however, her situation was more difficult than of the previous interlocutors. In

contrast to the other people from this category she had to start her life in Poland alone. She had no family support, which can be crucial, especially for very young people. She didn't experience the arrival to Poland as a return, as she did not know the reality of the country and had no family or social networks. For her, it was rather just an educational migration with no definite expectations and visions.

SENTIMENTAL AND PATRIOTIC RETURN

Sentimental and patriotic return is a desire to find oneself in the home country due to the perceived (despite the years in emigration) strong ideological and sometimes also habitual bonds with Poland. It was mainly the experience of the interviewees who were born abroad or emigrated as small children and whose parents had been planning to settle permanently in the country of emigration. Although they had high competences in the local language and culture, they could not avoid the feelings of strangeness or even alienation. They were looking for their source in their ethnic background. Gabriela, who had lived in Australia for 20 years, says:

In Australia, it was good, but I'd never felt at home there as the Polish people are a cultural minority. I didn't maintain close relationship with the Polish community there, so for a really long time I didn't have anyone to talk to.

The sense of alienation and uprooting provoked the desire to find her own place in the world, among people who are similar to her. Although she was in Poland only a few times during her childhood, and her parents tended to assimilate, she created strong ideological bonds with the country of origin. Its image constructed from a distance had become a basic point of reference in her identity construction. She was convinced that the symbolic relation with the homeland and the awareness of her roots will translate into a sense of familiarity, not available in emigration. It is expressed in the phrase:

I always thought that in Poland people would understand me.

This sentence reveals the superficiality of the relationships experienced in Australia. We can recognise the longing for deep relations and the belief that they can be found only in Poland, in contact with compatriots, which she imagined as being similar to her. This idealized vision motivated her to get a scholarship in Warsaw, and then – transfer herself to a Polish university.

Michał, who had changed his country of residence four times, declared similar motivations. Narrating how he found himself in Poland after almost 20 years of living first in Sweden, then in Germany, he says:

It was also the homesickness I think. And that patriotic thing – the lack of the culture and being around those people with whom I could joke about the same topics. In my case I noticed people were very important, especially the family; maybe because I lost it so early – departures and constant movement meant that I couldn't build relationships. And I think homecoming, the need to be closer to my family, was the first reason.

The interviewee emigrated from Poland as a ten year old, so the homesickness was mostly of sentimental nature. Poland was associated with the period of his childhood – a carefree time, a big family, which he missed after years in emigration. He was also tired of the life typical for “a modern nomad” – cosmopolitan, not related permanently to any community or place. Although for a long time it gave him freedom and satisfaction, then he experienced “the state of homelessness” – the lack of rootedness, fixed points of reference, consistent meanings which could constitute a permanent source of identification (Mikołajewska for: Melchior 1990: 264). Choosing Poland for the place of settlement was motivated by a longing for the family, but also by the belief, that although he lived and adapted in many places, it was only in Poland that he could experience complete familiarity. It was supposed to manifest in a number of small, everyday matters, common meanings, comprehension of all nuances and understatements (Schütz 2008). It is symptomatic that during the interview, the interlocutor consistently emphasized the importance of differences of mentality and relationship patterns. They were, in his opinion, the barrier to rooting in emigration regardless the fluency in a language or a good professional position. The principal motive of his return was therefore the need to settle down in a place where he would be a member of the community unconditionally. This need played a crucial role also in Hanna' life. The girl emigrated with her parents, who were working in diplomacy, twice – first to Moscow, then after a few years – to New York. Having graduated from high school, she gave up the opportunity to study in the USA and returned to Warsaw alone:

I don't know how to explain it without falling into pathos, I just really like to live here, I really like this place. It's the feeling that I am more at home here. I was not interested in a college kid's life, I really wasn't. I don't like this idea of community activities. I wanted to go to a normal Polish university, to normal classes, to have my own life, and to live in the city, this city. I like this city

much more than others. (...). Here in Poland we can have friends for twenty years and not much has changed. Americans are not used to creating such deep bonds, because they have the tendency to move constantly, (...) They are just good friends, but here it's not so... you know when you have friends here, you can feel that you have a second family, right? And there you cannot have this feeling, because it's just a different type of relationship.

The interviewee perceived the American model of life as strange, not consistent with her needs and temperament. However, an emotional bond with Warsaw was also essential. She avoided the word "patriotism", stipulating that she did not want to fall into pathos, but in her statements there were vivid feelings towards both the city of origin, which despite many years in emigration remained her private homeland and the whole country. In addition, she was convinced about the uniqueness of emotional relationships in Poland, rooted in the childhood and adolescence period, and the cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 2007). However, the desire to live in Poland could also be a reaction to the trauma caused by involuntary leaving the familiar environment in childhood:

The scar that it [migration] leaves is a constant struggle for a sense of security and for conditions that are controllable and dependent on me. In my case it's a reluctance to change. For me, it was all very exhausting mentally and caused some problems. This is a really difficult experience, as someone takes you and leaves you somewhere.

The uncertainty experienced in the early stage of life, made her strive for rooting and leading her adult life in a familiar, Polish environment.

Another motivation is a desire to get to know the country of origin, to experience living in a place of ideological identification. This attitude is presented by Kamila, who after 14 years in Romania (between 2 and 10, then 14 and 20 years of life) and finishing French school there, resigned from the opportunity to apply to University in Paris and returned to Poland:

I'm planning to work as a press attaché, so I'll move – changing where I live every four or five years. I'll only know Poland from holidays and occasional trips. So it would be good to also have some memories related to different places and to stay here for some time so as to know what it's like to live in Poland. So I came back. I decided that I would see what studies and life in Poland are like.

Although her life plans involve multiple migration, the interviewee wanted to live in Poland, at least for a couple of years to get to know her homeland from the perspective of everyday life. According to her, only a long term stay could

allow her to get attached to the homeland with a private (habitual) bond through personal memories and experiences.

The patriotic attitude, sometimes took the form of not only the hopes and sentiments, but also a duty towards Poland. The aforementioned Michał, who emigrated to Sweden in the late '80s, encountered a widespread negative image of his country – perceived as backward and primitive. This experience has formed his belief that he represented the country of origin and was personally responsible for its image and situation. One of the important factors was therefore, a sense of mission:

That was – an inner hope or even a duty, to contribute, to improve the picture of Poland. [wyw.11]

The key role in shaping this attitude was played by his teacher, who just before his migration said: “Michał is leaving, but one day he will come back and build a new school for us”. This apparently minor situation had been interpreted as a commitment which accompanied him during all years abroad. The awareness that he gained resources and competences unavailable for his compatriots resulted in a sense of responsibility toward the whole society:

Then a kind of resolution started to build in me... that I would return and contribute to improving, making the situation here somehow better. Maybe not necessarily to build a new school, but that I would help somehow. On the other hand, I was ashamed, because I am a rather shy person and I didn't know how to do it, but I thought that I could be helpful.

The way in which the speaker perceives his role brings to mind the concept of a migrant as a social innovator (Weinar 2002), who can transplant western ideas and experiences onto the Polish ground. His return to Poland was supposed not only to change his personal situation, but also to contribute to the country's development.

Although in this category, the emotional and ideological dimension plays a dominant role, a more pragmatic aspect of decision can be also identified. Observing the changes in Poland – economic development and opening to western influences, the interviewees predicted their chances for professional career and success, difficult to reach in western countries. The experiences acquired abroad – education, cultural and linguistic competences were examined in terms of the capital (Bourdieu 1986 for: Weinar 2002: 41), which could bring the greatest benefits when located in Poland:

I also thought that since a lot of people left, and I'd gained this knowledge, this experience, it would allow me to get a good job here. And in ten or twenty years, when Poland would reach this western standard of living...by this time, I could have a managerial position, or my own business. But will I have a career? This would be very difficult for me to achieve abroad.

In this narrative, we can see elements of the return of innovation from Cerase's typology – motivated by the belief in professional opportunities and relatively better starting point in the home country. Due to the more or less direct barriers posed to second-generation immigrants, it would be difficult to the interviewee to achieve similar position in Sweden:

In Sweden it is like that – it is not talked about much, but in most cases if there is a firm, and there is a discussion about who should take over a position, you can live there from early childhood, but the fact that you come from somewhere else matters subconsciously.

This fragment illustrates the opinion, widespread in this group, about prejudices of western societies towards immigrants and their exclusion from certain positions. The Return to Poland, being “at home” was a chance not only to experience familiarity, but also, thanks to competences and language skills, to have a successful career.

ROMANTIC RETURN

A special kind of motivation for return migration is the desire to build a relationship with a Polish partner. It was possible among migrants who visited Poland regularly, and therefore they had an opportunity to establish contacts with young compatriots. These acquaintances were usually developing over several years, but encountering difficulties in maintaining a relationship in spite of the spatial distance. After some time the partners reached the conclusion that they had to take decisions about their future. For example Natalia says:

We started dating again and eventually we had to decide either he goes there or me -- here.

Karol had a similar conviction:

I came to Poland every summer, and she also came to me in Sweden once, but it was a long-distance relationship. We got to the point, where either we try something together or we split up.

In both cases, the relationship reached a critical point and required reevaluation. It should be also noted that because of the romantic experiences, the image of the home country itself could undergo some transformations. Natalia, who emigrated with her mother to Germany at the age of two recounts how Poland gained a special charm in her eyes, after meeting her future fiancé:

For a really long time, I thought that Poland was so backward. Maybe it's because I always came to the village, to my aunt, and the house was never finished – especially inside, if the boiler wasn't turned on, there was no hot water, which I had never experienced in Germany, I opened the tap and the water was always warm. And my aunt worked in a bakery, very hard. I saw her get up at 4 am, and return in the evening or late in the afternoon, so everybody was working hard – that is how I saw it.. And only then, I started dating my current boyfriend, and we started to travel around (...)I got to know a different Poland and then I started to look at it in a different way. (...). So it was like that: when I came for a week, I visited everybody for three days, and then, we went for example to Zakopane.

Poland seen from the perspective of the family village and Poland showed to her by her fiancé are two different realities. Under the influence of new experiences the interviewee began to perceive the country in a different way. The emotional involvement and the attraction of the newly discovered image of Poland facilitated the decision to migrate, start studies and a family here. Probably, if not her fiancé, she would have remained with her former image of homeland and not treat the return to the country of origin as an alternative to life in Germany. Justyna, who also lived for more than 15 years Germany, was even more impressed:

I was so delighted with everything that I had no problem to change the place of living.

All positive emotions experienced in the relationship were transferred to the surrounding reality – Krakow seemed to her a magical city, full of possibilities. Although her family did not cultivate Polish traditions, and the interviewee almost did not know her country of origin, she did not perceive the migration as a sacrifice, but rather as an exciting adventure.

The decisions of all interviewees from this group had an individual character, they took them because of the partner and the desire to share life with him or her. They attributed much less importance to the fact that they moved just to the country of origin. If not for the relationship, they wouldn't have found themselves in Poland at this stage of their lives. They had planned their future in the countries of residence, appreciating the higher standard of living. The long-term and deep commitment changed their priorities and initial assumptions.

Despite the dominant romantic motive in the narratives, the pragmatic aspects appear as well. Since the decision to live together was taken, it was almost “obvious” that the interviewees would join their partners in Poland. They thought it would be easier for them to adapt in Poland, than for their partner in their countries of emigration. They assumed that because of their specific biography and skills they would manage much better also on the labour market. Although they had not lived in the homeland for years, they treated the knowledge of a mother language and their Polish origins as a guarantee of smooth adaptation. Moreover they perceived their parents as much more related with the local environment:

He has his own company, as a carpenter, and he doesn't know any foreign language, well, he can communicate in English, but very poorly. And I didn't have anything there.

The respondent does not assign much value to what she had left in Germany, she graduated there from high school only, so she could continue her education anywhere. In contrast to her partner, despite having spent many years in Germany, she did not have a sense of rootedness or stability. She also observed significant differences between the German and the Polish society, which were a source of alienation. The bilingual girl assumed that she could cope with everyday life with no problem, and her skills could be an asset in the professional life. A similar belief that for the partner relocation would be a much larger “revolution” than for him is expressed by Karol:

The choice was – either I move, I have already begun my studies, but I can move and start some part-time studies here... or Basia will move, but it wouldn't make any sense, as law is really related to one country...she would have to start her studies again, learn the language at the same time and it would be extremely difficult when it comes to law. So I moved back.

Throughout the emigration the interviewee had maintained regular contacts with his grandparents in Poland, and as he stated “in Krakow he felt at home”. The relocation did not mean for him having to start everything from scratch. It was rather the return to a place that was already largely known, because as he claimed, he already lived between the two countries:

In my life, each time I was either leaving one or coming to the other. I've moved so many times between Sweden and Poland to live here and there that my life has never really fallen apart. And maybe that's why I have become immune. I've never had any barriers and it [self-identification] has never really troubled me much.

What is interesting in the quoted account is the use of words ‘moving’, ‘leaving’, ‘coming’, which blurs the traditional distinction between leaving and returning. None of the places was defined as a fixed point of reference, which would organize the world as known space and strange space. Moreover, the specificity of his studies allowed him to continue them in another country, while his girlfriend’s legal education could bring tangible benefits only in Poland. Again, we are dealing with calculation – a rational analysis in which country the couple have a chance of a more comfortable and affluent life.

It seems that the interviewed people also wanted to prevent the other person from the shock of adaptation in a completely foreign country, which they often observed in their parents or among friends, as Natalia says:

He wants to stay in Krakow, but I also didn’t want him to move to Germany. I know Polish, I can speak Polish, so I will improve it faster than he take learning a new language. He also doesn’t speak English very well. He is such a man that wouldn’t have a lot of problems and my colleagues are also really cool and they would take care of him. But it’s not that easy, because for them it would also be hard work and I didn’t want to make anybody’s life harder . I did not want to teach him something in this relationship, but just to live with him and see if it’s good, if it fits me.

The interviewee was aware of the difficulties, which every emigrant experienced at the beginning, and expressed the concern that they could also adversely affect their relationship. Her partner’s migration would be an unnecessary disturbance of the normal rhythm of life. Like the other cited interviewees, she did not foresee that in Poland she would encounter problems typical for emigrant. Polish environment, though almost unknown, was not perceived as strange by her. The fact that she was coming to her country of origin gave her the sense of confidence and inspired to take a risk and start living with a beloved person in a new place.

ESCAPIST RETURN

In some, though relatively rare cases, the return to the country of origin was the result of some rapid and sometimes dramatic changes in the interviewees’ personal lives. They were accompanied by a need to “get away” from the current environment, forget about difficult experiences. It seems that the interlocutors wanted just to change the place of residence, to find new goals. The destination – Poland has, at least in on the level of declaration, secondary significance. An example is the attitude of Barbara, who describes her return to Poland:

It was a coincidence, I graduated, I went to California, where I worked for a while, then I moved to Hawaii, also for a really short time. My relationship with an American fell apart. Actually it had been falling apart a couple of times. I knew that we had the strange tendency of going back to each other, even though it wasn't a good idea. And at the time when I came back from Hawaii, I didn't have an anchor anywhere in the USA. I was going to New York, but I had too little money to start there. And I hadn't seen my family for quite a long time. So I decided to come to Poland, to visit my family, to get a job somewhere, and live at my mom's place, save some money and move to New York. It was supposed to be such a temporary adventure.

As a result of migration and multiple moving houses, the interviewee did not have in the USA any fixed point of reference or any close group where she could find consolation after her difficult experiences. When the relationship ended, she suffered from a strong sense of loss and loneliness, so she decided to come to Poland. It was motivated mostly by the need of the contact with the family, who returned a few years earlier. Standing at life's crossroads, she chose the loved ones, looking for a sense of security and stability. The fact that she found herself in Poland was the consequence of the fact that her parents were just living there – in this sense the place alone did not matter. However, it was certainly not accidental that she turned to the family – to her roots – the only stable structure, which she had in her life. She returned home, defined not as a place, but as a system of relationships.

A similar mechanism – an escape from personal problems is present in the relationship of Maria – born and raised in France. She wanted to distance herself from the troubles in the family home. The stage of her life favoured taking on new challenges:

My mum said that ... she actually gave me the idea that it would be nice, for example, to go to Poland, get to know it (...), I wanted to have a little break from them, because at this age, you know... My parents were divorcing, I mean –they were together and they were not together. I was fed up with all this... and I thought that it was a good idea, because I've heard that it's valuable to spend some time abroad, to have such experience. I'm a person who likes experiments, so it didn't scare me... I willingly came here, because I thought "I'll get to know a new culture", because while in France, I'd never had such a possibility.

At the time of family breakdown the interviewee needed to separate from problems. Moreover, the quest of new experiences is also expressive in her narrative. She actually did not know her country of origin – she rarely visited her family, her parents did not cultivate national traditions, so she had no access to

the Polish culture. As a result she treated migration to Poland as “travel abroad” – a kind of experiment, adventure:

Arriving in a new country, a new adventure. When I'd already booked the ticket, then I couldn't wait any longer, I was thinking – Oh my God, I'm coming to a new country, I'm getting to know new places, new people, new language, everything in Polish. And I really treated it as a some kind of super-adventure, that not everybody can experience.. I was really happy about this, such an adventure! (...) For me it was just a trip to a foreign country, not a return or even a trip to the country of my parents' origin. This was a new country for me. A country just like England or the USA.

An important role was played by a desire to understand the culture, language and customs better, although the respondent did not feel any emotional connection with Poland, she identified herself only as French. That striving was rather of cognitive than emotional character.

For migrants from that group the arrival to Poland was just a stage in a longer cycle of migration and the stay here was intended to be temporary. One of the interviewees, however, decided to settle down permanently when she got an attractive job offer and then met a partner with who she started a family.

A big spontaneity of the decision and a short period of preparation were characteristic for most of the researched migrants, especially for those who came to Poland on their own initiative and without the family . Natalia remembers that:

Now, as I recall it, it's all in a terrible hurry was. If I was about to take the decision now, I would probably think it over more, these pros and cons. And then (...) For me it was a rush and I didn't even really think about it. When I'm thinking about it now, it was like this: “it's ok, I'm going, I'll start some part time studies here, it gonna be all right.

The relation of the cited girl reflects the experiences of other interviewees. Many of them, admit in retrospect that they should have thought over their choice better and get ready for such a radical change. Natalia, only in retrospect estimates that she made a mistake relying entirely on the spontaneity:

I was looking for some advice on the Internet, but in general I was thinking “and why do I need this advice as I'll simply try myself?.” But still, there was one piece of advice not to go out from your environment and not to have any

substitute, not to go into emptiness .. One thing was – searching for a job before arriving anywhere – getting a job first and then moving out. Because it's about social relations or about the money, or formal procedures in the offices that you need to follow(...) First, take care of things just like these that are not too cool and then, when everything's done, take care of yourself and your life in this place. First – organize, then have fun, and not vice versa.

It seems that unique optimism and the belief that in the country of origin all things will “naturally” work out were the main source of troubles experienced after the arrival – a sense of alienation, the difficulties of adaptation¹. Most of the interviewed people had not expected any problems, regardless of the strength and nature of their bonds with Poland. People associated ideologically with Poland had planned their migration as a return – in the traditional sense of this word – to what is familiar. For those who had experienced a sense of alienation in emigration, this expectation was a result of longing for a cultural intimacy and undisputed affiliation. Migrants who had managed to build abroad close relations with people of different ethnic origin, did not expect that they can feel a distance in contacts with compatriots. Although the interviewees' family home and environment of the first, important events and relationships were rather in the foreign country, upon coming to Poland many of them had expectations of Schütz's *Homecomer* (Schutz 2009). The symbolic relation with Poland and the belief that it will automatically become their private homeland, distinguished them from typical newcomers – immigrants. Usually, especially among the people who emigrated very early, the confrontation with the homeland was a source of frustration. A few migrants whose ideological bonds with Poland were weak, perceived this movement as an adventure or an experiment. Initially, it bore all the hallmarks of the “reconnaissance migration” – was a kind of attempt with a possibility to withdraw to the previous country of residence (Weinar 2002: 67).

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¹ Complete results of the research are presented in my MA thesis, written under the supervision of prof. E. Nowicka-Rusek, defended at the Institute of Sociology, Warsaw University in 2010

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