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THE MOBILITY OF POLISH FAMILIES IN THE WEST
OF ENGLAND: TRANSLOCALISM AND ATTITUDES TO RETURN

INTRODUCTION

One of my interviewees had moved from Pszczyna to Trowbridge. As the title of this article suggests, the subject matter – broadly speaking – is 'Poles' in 'England'. However, my aim is to explore the significance of moving from specific locality within Poland to specific locality in the UK. What does it mean to migrate from Pszczyna to Trowbridge? Research among Poles in the UK and Ireland tends to ignore their localities of origin. Age, education, gender and family status are the usual demographic variables taken into account; differences between locations *within* the UK or Ireland are also understood to be significant. As for research in Poland, there are plenty of studies about differences between different sending locations, but these studies tend to identify the *countries* of destination which are popular is various Polish localities, remaining silent about specific destination localities. The failure to discuss migration from specific Polish locality to specific UK locality derives partly from the fact that to date there is rather little research which considers Poland and the UK together, as two ends of the same migration arc. However, given the geographical diversity of migration patterns which researchers have uncovered in both Poland and the UK, it is evident that each combination of sending and receiving locality is likely to produce a unique migration experience. To migrate from Pszczyna to Trowbridge (small towns of 25-27,000 inhabitants) is not at all the same experience as to migrate from Poznań to London or from Pszczyna to London.

Moreover, in addition to the 'realities' of geographical diversity, there is a subjective dimension of migrants' lives which is both significant and under-researched. This is their attachment to place, as opposed to ethnicity or the nation-state. Even if Poznań and Pszczyna were identical, the fact that a migrant had a specific attachment to one of these places in particular would remain important to that individual. I argue that the current interest in transnationalism – which often focuses on national and ethnic identities – obscures the fact that translocal attachments are powerful too. I am not saying that ethnic and national identity are

unimportant, merely that too much emphasis can be placed on the role of ethnicity and national belonging in the lives of migrants. This is especially true in the case of economic migrants whose motive for migrating was to find a better livelihood, rather than to escape persecution under a particular political regime, and family migrants who reunited for emotional reasons, to be in exactly the same place (not just the same country) as their relatives. Locality remains important to individuals, even if, as Appadurai (1996, p. 179) observes, 'it is one of the grand clichés of social theory… that locality as a property… of social life comes under siege in modern societies'.

The topic of migrants' connections and attitudes to specific places in the sending and receiving countries has a policy dimension, especially given the rather limited extent of internal mobility within Poland, discussed later in this article. People often migrate from Poland because of specific conditions in their home town or village; they migrate to specific places abroad where they have friends and family (the choice of country is often secondary); when abroad, they maintain emotional and financial ties with specific places in Poland, which they frequently return to visit on holiday; and, if they return to Poland to live and work, they are likely to settle again in their places of origin. In fact, post-2004 return migration to Poland is characterised by an even greater incidence of return to home locations than pre-Accession migration had been (Grabowska-Lusińska 2010, p. 56). For all these reasons the actual mobility of Polish migrants is quite limited, and, if public policy in the UK and Poland is to implement improvements to their living standards and opportunities, these improvements must take place in the location(s) *where they are based* in order to have an impact on their migration decisions. Hence the local dimension of migration is important to take into account.

This article explores some ways in which Polish migrants to the UK experience place attachment and construct local identities, both in the UK and Poland, trying to understand why it is that they feel rooted in just one location per country. This is not to suggest that Poles are unique, or that all Poles are the same. Clearly, for example, Polish families' experience of using local community resources in the UK may have similarities with the experiences of families of other ethnic origin, while young and childless migrants – of any nationality – will have different perspectives. Notwithstanding similarities with other groups of migrants, however, there are also ways in which Polish and other A8 migrants are special. Their unique opportunities for mobility across national borders means that in many respects their migration has ceased to be 'international' and can be compared with traditional *internal* labour migration, such as has occurred historically within individual European countries. Internal migration, around the world, is often rural to urban, and indeed, Okólski (2007, p. 3) argues that the 'root causes' of much labour migration from Central and Eastern Europe to the West lie

in 'the "underurbanisation" suffered by many of its societies' during the period of rapid industrialisation under communist party rule.

However, post-2004 Polish international migration is not necessarily *literally* rural to urban. Traditionally, many international migrants have congregated in big cities of the receiving countries: New York, Melbourne, London, and others. A special privilege of A8 migrants is that they do not have to go to a city to substantially improve their income or even to enjoy an urban lifestyle; indeed, many live and work in small towns and villages across the United Kingdom (Pollard, Latorre and Sriskandarajah, 2008: 62-71). I argue that this re-location outside the city is often a congenial arrangement for Poles from rural parts of Poland, and that the similarities they perceive between their Polish and British places of residence constitute a powerful translocal tie and do much to make them feel at home abroad.

My article focuses on Poles moving to the West of England, to localities of different population size. These were the small towns of Trowbridge and Frome; a larger town/small city, Bath (population roughly 90,000); and Bristol, which is the tenth largest city in the UK, with a population of at least 380,000.[1] However, my understanding of Polish migration also owes much to insights gained from interviewing former and potential migrants in small-town Poland. In 2006-9 I conducted 33 interviews in the UK and 82 in Poland (Grajewo, Sanok, Ełk, Suwałki and seven locations in Wielkopolska).[2] The research project considered the situation of families with limited money and other resources, and the interviewees were women who did not have university degrees and were mothers of children under 20. The main research questions were why increasing numbers of families with children were migrating to Western Europe, and what factors influenced their thoughts about how long to remain abroad. I was particularly interested in factors specific to the particular places where interviewees lived: for example, I always asked the question 'What's the job situation like in your home town [in Poland]?'. The interview material is one of the main sources for the present article. However, I have only really appreciated the full importance of locality as a result of informal conversations with Polish parents, subsequent to the formal interviews, in my capacity as a voluntary teacher of English at the Polish Saturday School in Bath. Everyday conversations about matters which preoccupy Polish parents centre on

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[1] Populations are not for the 'urban areas', as given in the 2001 census data (http://www. statistics.gov.uk/downloads/census2001/ks_urban_sw&w_part_1.pdf.) but for the smaller area of the cities themselves. See http://www.ukcities.co.uk/populations/.

[2] The main part of the research was funded by the British Academy. It also included an opinion poll commissioned in Poland, to uncover attitudes towards migration by parents, with and without children. See White 2011, pp. 15-20, and Appendices 1 and 2, for more details on the methodology. This article also draws on one interview conducted with a Bristol mother in 2010, the first data from my current research project on return migration.

the actual places where people live in England and Poland, even if conversations are occasionally punctuated by moments of reflection and comparisons between 'Poland' and 'the UK'.

'TRANSLOCALISM' AND 'TRANSNATIONALISM': DEFINITIONS AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS

My research makes a small contribution to the literature which emphasises the continuing importance of 'place' in the contemporary world (see for example Appadurai 1996, Flusty 2004, Harvey 1993, Kennedy 2010, Smith 2001). The relationship between globalisation and locality exists on different levels, most of which are outside the scope of my article. In particular, the theme of the article is not the impact of globalisation on specific places. Instead, like Flusty (2004, p. 8), my starting point is that ties across national borders are 'the product of specific persons in specific locales'. In common, for example, with researchers who have analysed connections forged by migrants from particular locations in Latin America to cities in the USA (Smith 2001, p. 170), I focus on how ordinary people create links between places in different countries. In particular, I am interested in the extent to which they view their migration as being from locality to locality rather than nation to nation.

Since the article explores the relevance of the translocal respective to the transnational, it seems important to discuss the relationship between the two concepts. Since its 'launch' in 1990 (Glick Schiller 1992) the term 'transnationalism' has been extensively employed in migration scholarship, acquired a myriad of meanings and generated considerable debate (see for example Kivisto 2001, Portes 2001, Vertovec 2001). On the most general level, 'the literature on transnationalism generally underscores the fact that large numbers of people now live in social worlds that are stretched between, or dually located in, physical places and communities in two or more nation-states' (Vertovec 2001, p. 578). As Vertovec's formulation suggests, it is possible to view migrants' links with their sending communities as being translocal and transnational in equal measure. Some authors appear not to sense any tension between the terms, and use the term translocal as an occasional alternative to transnational, apparently for stylistic variation. However, the term translocal is also used more precisely to imply that *a distinction is being drawn* between translocal and transnational. Given that many scholars of transnationalism have been particularly interested in the impact of transnational ties on state borders, citizenship and migrant integration, it is hardly surprising if the term is often used with particular focus on the portability of 'national' cultural and political identities. This way of using transnationalism, implying that it is all about 'nationality' and not about 'locality', is so common

that it seems helpful to employ the term translocalism to restore the focus on cross-local links. However, the relationship between the concepts of transnationalism and translocalism is viewed differently by different scholars.

Translocal can be a sub-set of transnational: collectively, communities of fellow nationals span from nation to nation, but individual migrants experience the sending-receiving country relationship as local to local. For example, Smith (2001, p. 169) argues that 'recent research on transnationalism illustrates that the specific social space in which transnational actions take place is not merely local but often "translocal" (i.e. local to local).' (See also Grillo 2007, p. 204.) Viewed within this relationship, both translocalism and transnationalism are aspects of globalisation.

It is common, however, for transnationalism to be viewed as distinct from translocalism, and for (trans)localism to be identified with a narrower perspective. For example, Wessendorf, writing about Italian migrants to Switzerland and their return migrations, prefers translocal to transnational for the following reasons:

> *The connections Italians maintain to their homeland are translocal rather than transnational. Italian migrants' relation to place is localised in that they usually travel between the town of settlement in Switzerland and the village of origin in Italy. Most of them feel a strong connection to these places rather than to the nation-states.* (Wessendorf 2007, p.110, endnote 2.)

McGregor, discussing organisations of Zimbabweans living in the UK, describes a contrasting case: the surprisingly non-local frame of reference of these diasporic organizations, whose concerns are primarily national.

> *Hometown associations, which have attracted attention in Africanist and broader migration studies literature, are absent among Zimbabweans in Britain, while burial societies, which were (and are) important in migrations within the region, are less prevalent in the British context.* (McGregor 2009, p. 186).

Translocalism can identified with a kind of insularity and inability to appreciate the wider context of the receiving country. For example, Gustafson (2001b, p. 383) identifies 'translocal normality' as a lifestyle pursued by some Swedish retirees to Spain:

> *The difference that these respondents appreciated in Spain was associated with the friendly social climate in the Scandinavian community (in addition, of course, to the weather) rather than with Spanish culture. Also, place attachment*

in Spain was generally directed towards the respondents' residential area or town, and the Scandinavian community there, largely excluding the Spanish people, Spanish culture and Spain as a country.

(Trans)localism in the sense of insularity is often contrasted with cosmopolitanism and openness to new cultural experiences. Individual migrants may sense that they are under some pressure to choose between insularity and openness: Gustafson's Swedish migrants to Spain 'could be sensitive about seeming to be culturally insular' (Gustafson 2001b, p. 389) and middle-class British migrants to France, discussed by Benson (2010), are conscious of a 'need' to choose cultural adaptation over insularity. However, as Benson also illustrates, even these migrants feel an emotional need for the company of fellow-nationals. The same individuals can display 'cosmopolitan' and 'local' attitudes in different contexts (Roudometof 2005, p. 127).

Individuals have a degree of choice as to how cosmopolitan their lives will be. Nonetheless, social and economic structures also determine how much cosmopolitanism is possible for individual migrants. Some have more agency than others: the Swedish and British lifestyle migrants described above enjoy opportunities to integrate which are inaccessible to many economic migrants. Werbner (1997, pp. 11-12), drawing on Hannerz 1992,[3] distinguishes between ordinary labour migrants and privileged and wealthy cosmopolitans, whom she describes as

multilingual gourmet tasters who travel among global cultures, savouring cultural differences as they flit with consummate ease between social worlds. Such gorgeous butterflies in the greenhouse of global culture are a quite different species from the transnational bees and ants who build new hives and nests in foreign lands… [and whose] loyalties are anchored in translocal social networks.

With reference to UK Poles in particular, there has been a tendency to set up typologies contrasting migrants with narrower agendas to those with more cosmopolitan attitudes. Garapich distinguishes between 'storks', labour migrants who fly back and forward between countries for the narrow purpose of seasonal labour, and 'searchers', whose plans are more open-ended and who 'are keen to raise their own social and human capital in both countries simultaneously in order to keep their options open... They represent the best example of a *de-localised* [my italics] social class where social position and status depends on several reference

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[3] Hannerz, Ulf (1992), *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Organization of Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press.)

points in more than one country' (Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich 2006, p. 17). Fomina (2009, p. 1) writes about the 'parallel worlds' of Poles in Bradford, UK. 'Educated, upwardly mobile, confident Poles' live in one world. Quite separate, according to Fomina, is the 'world of less successful Polish immigrants, stuck in one place'. Both Garapich and Fomina are interested chiefly in social, rather than geographical mobility; however, the two are interlinked, since migrants with less human and social capital often have reduced geographical as well as social mobility, particularly if they are inhibited about migrating except to be with close friends and family (see below).

Fomina emphasises that well-educated Polish migrants in Bradford want to integrate into British society, and that – in their eyes – this is a key difference between them and working-class Poles, as well as British Pakistani Bradfordians. Clearly, less well-educated and confident Polish migrants, who do not speak much English and work in sections of the labour market dominated by migrant workers, with weaker ties to the receiving community, are likely to socialise more with fellow-Poles (White and Ryan 2008, White 2011). If 'transnationalism' is used in the sense of 'doing Polish things in the UK' – watching Polish television, eating Polish food, etc. – then (like Gustafson's more insular Swedes in Spain) working-class labour migrants may possibly be more transnational as well as more translocal, more ethnically oriented as well as more oriented towards their particular dual places of residence, than highly educated Polish migrants. However, this is a complex topic, dealt with in greater depth in my book (White 2011, ch. 9), where I show the range of attitudes towards maintaining Polish identity found even among working-class Poles with poor English.

A more helpful approach to transnationalism, for the purposes of this article, is to remember that Poles in the UK since 2004, unlike earlier generations of migrants, have such easy access to Poland, and to Polish goods and services, that 'they do not particularly need to worry about maintaining their Polishness' (*szczególnie dbać o swoją polskość*) (Fomina 2009, p. 28). If Polish identity can be taken for granted, then local preoccupations may have space to take precedence over national ones. It is this sense that locality is in some contexts *more important* to Polish migrants than ethnicity which is the chief focus of my article and the main way in which I understand the distinction between translocal and transnational.

A further reason why the national may seem less salient than the local to Polish migrants in the UK is simply to do with travel patterns. In the days of visas and limited air routes, the journey from Poland to the UK required a Polish passport, a UK visa, and usually also travel between Warsaw and London, the capital cities and symbols of the nation-state. Today, it is simply necessary to take one's identity card and drive from Pszczyna to Trowbridge, or fly from Kraków to Bristol, i.e. from regional centre to regional centre, avoiding capital cities.

A final use of the term 'translocalism' is to refer to links between locations within a single nation-state, for example in the book title *Translocal China*.[4] Mobility within a nation-state can promote a greater sense of connectedness among inhabitants of different localities, and therefore contribute to the building of national identity and nationalism, as, for example, Uimonen (2009) illustrates with reference to contemporary Tanzania. Since travel is easy within the European Union and it consists of a single labour market for all its citizens (except those from new member-states subject to transitional arrangements), it makes sense to understand within-EU migration as internal, not international. This suggests that – by analogy with Tanzania – some kind of European identity might be built as a result of migration around Europe, identity focused not on identification with EU institutions in Brussels, but on people in Pszczyna learning about the existence of Trowbridge, and *vice versa*.[5]

THE LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY APPROACH

Internal migration is commonly migration for work, connected to the pursuit of better livelihoods. As used in the international development literature, the livelihood strategy approach tries to understand the whole range of resources available to households (including human and social capital), in the context of their perceptions of what livelihood options are available and socially acceptable in their local area. To understand how and why people migrate for work, we need to know the *choice* of livelihoods available in a given location, why these are rejected in favour of migration, and the local migration culture, in the sense of conventions about 'who goes where when' (M. White 2009, p. 7). The livelihood strategy approach is not a theory which explains why people migrate, but more like a checklist of different factors which have to be taken into account in order to explain migration decisions. Above all, it focuses attention on the '*local* [my emphasis] resources that shape livelihood… options for households' (Findley 2009, p. 35). Despite the fact that livelihood strategies are commonly studied in international development projects, 'migration studies… rarely take in-depth research into specific livelihoods as their point of departure' (Olwig and Sørensen

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[4] T. Oakes and L. Schein (eds.), Routledge 2006, reviewed in Li 2008.

[5] On the other hand, such translocal ties may not be conceptualised as 'European', given that Britons do not 'feel European' (Eurobarometer 2009 QE4.1) and that Poles in the UK can easily come to the same conclusion and decide that the UK is not Europe. As a Polish parent complained at a recent meeting of Poles with the Bath police: 'Why does everything in England have to be different from in Europe?' A further problem concerns difficulties of pronunciation (for both sides) which make place names hard to remember. Trowbridge, for example, is pronounced like 'grow', not 'brow'.

2002, p. 1). Insofar as a literature exists on migration as a livelihood strategy, it tends to focus on the unfashionable topic of internal migration (e.g. Deshingkar and Farrington 2009, Hossain 2003, Mosse et al (2002)*, Sørensen 2002). Moreover, even scholars who apply the concept to international migration often write about continents other than Europe and North America (e.g. Jacobsen 2002 or Mandel 2004, on Africa) and perhaps the European/American preoccupations of many Western social scientists help explain their disregard for this literature about the rest of the globe. With regard to Europe, the narrower concepts of 'survival' or 'coping' strategies are sometimes invoked to explain migration, but these are a poor substitute.[6]

Like my earlier work on Russia and Poland, this article applies a livelihood strategy approach to understand migration, in both the sending and receiving localities. In particular, the article explores: migration cultures in certain Polish towns which limit migrants' choice of destination to localities accessible *via* social networks; dynamics of household decision making and the role of wives in determining the suitability of certain locations for family migration; how family settlement in the receiving location is seen through the lens of expectations brought from the home town or village in Poland (creating a 'good' local livelihood in the UK, but according to Polish criteria); and how even in the UK migrants keep a close eye on livelihood options in their Polish home locality, with a view to potential return to that place in particular.

CHOICE OF DESTINATION TOWN AND TRANSLOCAL NETWORKS

Although the use of commercial agencies for migration is increasing in Poland (Anon 2007) and although a minority of Poles migrate *w ciemno*, with nothing fixed in advance, personal connections are still considered essential by many Poles. This is especially true for people from locations with strong migration cultures of moving to close family and friends; indeed, I was told by a number of interviewees in Sanok and Grajewo that – out of their vast acquaintance of migrants - they knew no one who had migrated through an agency (White and Ryan 2008, White 2011). If would-be migrants only choose migration as a livelihood strategy if they can go to someone they know well, this clearly limits their choice of destination. A typical situation was described by Jagoda, a lone parent from Silesia currently living with her child in Frome.

> *I could never get a decent job [in my home town] and in the end I decided to migrate. I was supposed to go to Ireland, because I have friends there, as well*

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[6] See Pickup and White 2003 for fuller discussion.

as here. But somehow it turned out I came here… Because it was here that there was a room to rent, the first that came up, it was by chance it happened. This was the first place where a friend said that now you can come, there's a room, there's a job, you can come [to Frome].

As Jagoda's story illustrates, the country of destination was all the same, as far as she was concerned – she could equally well have gone to somewhere in Ireland as to Frome. My interviews in places such as Grajewo and Ełk, where there is huge migration to every west European country, from Iceland to Cyprus to Finland, suggested that it was often almost a matter of chance which country people chose. They went to the location where their network took them; often, even language knowledge was not a criterion. The globalisation literature tends to focus on 'global cities', but Polish towns like Grajewo are 'global' in their own way, at the centre of a web of international links.

If the migration culture in some Polish locations encourages migration to personal contacts in general, in the more specific case of chain migration by families the destination location is more or less dictated by the location of close relatives. This is not the same as chain migration which occurs when female relatives and friends find each other domestic work in countries like Italy or Greece, leaving their families in Poland.Today, increasing numbers of whole families, with children, are moving abroad. If more families are moving to the UK, this is sometimes because sisters and best friends are already settled in specific places where they feel comfortable living with children. For example, Marianna's sister suggested to Marianna that she should come to Bath with her daughter Wiola. The fact that Wiola would be going to her aunt and grandmother made Bath a kind of 'home from home'. In Bristol, Olga asserted that she would never have risked coming to the UK with her husband and baby if her sister had not persuaded her. In other cases – the majority, among my sample – wives and children came to join their husbands, again, moving to be in precise locations dictated by personal networks. Only rarely did the family settle in a UK location which was not where the husband had first worked in England, a place which in most cases he found through family or friends.

Family migration was also often translocal in the sense of the home town in the UK being similar to the home location in Poland. In other words, the place was chosen because it was a familiar size and seemed safe for children. This was a definitely observable trend in the case of those husbands who had an element of choice over their destination. The sample included seven women married to bus drivers, who had been recruited by the company First Bus, trained in Poland and offered a small choice of UK destinations. For example, Patrycja explained:

He didn't like London at all, because it's too big…. If he he'd been sent to work in a city he wouldn't have lasted out. He would have gone back to Poland at once. But Bath is really quite a pleasant little town, very pleasant, it isn't big…. We're from a small village. For us, the quieter the better. Bristol is too noisy. Here is better.

Wives also had a say over the destination of family migration, in the sense that they definitely had a right of veto over whether to join their husbands abroad. (Many interviewees in Poland described instances where this veto had been used and the family did not reunite.) Usually the wife made an 'inspection visit' to reconnoitre, before the family settled abroad. This gave her the opportunity to see if the UK town was suitable for her and the children. Hanna described her inspection visit to Trowbridge from Pszczyna:

Before we moved here I came to visit him, in December. I liked it,… it was just a kind of normal town… I realised it wasn't different in any way from [Pszczyna], in fact it's smaller in size, well, a kind of big village. You can feel safe here.

Naturally it is the specific place which is the wife notices most, not the English way of life or England in general.

Anne: So you already knew what England was like.
Marzena: My first impressions were really positive. It was the town I liked... The town is really pretty.

In this conversation about Marzena's holidays to see her husband before she settled in Bath, I referred to her visiting 'England', but she immediately pointed out that it was Bath she liked. England, by implication, was not a relevant category. Although I had expected my interviewees to comment on the differences they encountered on arriving in England from Poland, it was striking how often they pointed out the (attractive) similarities between their points of destination and arrival.

I like Bath. It's a beautiful city, old. It's like Grudziądz … Overall, it's a pretty place. And it has lovely countryside around. I like it and I can't imagine moving to another town. I'm used to it.... I feel at home, relaxed about things. (Jolanta)

PERSPECTIVES OF FAMILIES ON SETTLEMENT AND PLACE
ATTACHMENT

As Jolanta's comment illustrates, similarity finding is part of the process of
settling in and making migrants feel that they want to stay in the place where
they live in the UK. Gustafson (2001a, p. 14), writing about the process of place
attachment, suggests that 'the attribution of meaning involves distinction: the
definition of similarities and differences, and therefore often comparisons with
other places.' When I asked UK interviewees whether they would consider moving
to a different destination in the UK, all but one asserted that they would stay where
they were, frequently stating their identity as small town to small town migrants,
and their dislike of cities such as London.

> *Kinga: We'll stay in Bath, Ełk is small. In Bath you can walk everywhere.*
> *Anne You could earn more in London.*
> *Kinga But prices are also higher, it's not worth it. This is where we are, I have*
> *a job, she has her school, I more or less know my way around, Auntie has been*
> *helping us.*

Bernadeta, the only interviewee who said she would not mind moving in
the UK (following a city-city trajectory from Elbląg to Bristol to Cardiff) was
younger, less sentimental about place and more rootless than most of the others.
She claimed that *all* her friends were 'in England', so England had to some extent
succeeded Elbląg as her point of reference. Even Bernadeta, however, could by
no stretch of the imagination be described as a 'searcher' or nomad, since she had
very limited aspirations.

If interviewees felt attached to their UK localities, this could partly be simply
because they were attractive places. A 2009 survey identified Bristol as the 'best'
city in the UK, in the sense of being the place whose residents had the most
positive opinions about it,[7] while Bath is a world-renowned tourist attraction and
World Heritage Site. By contrast, some research into UK Poles living elsewhere
(e.g. Kaczmarek-Day 2010) has found respondents who were not at all happy with
the place they lived.

Despite the objective attractiveness or otherwise of different localities,
however, places are constructs, and the perceptions of Polish parents are shaped
not just by the environment but also by their own preconceptions about acceptable
family livelihoods. In particular, the mothers I interviewed definitely subscribed
to the view that it was normal for children to lead settled lives. Ní Laoire et al
(2010, p. 156) suggests that this a Western (but not global) commonplace:

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[7] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bristol/8330514.stm

It is assumed in western societies that children have a natural need for stability and security which can be provided by the domestic and familial environment. This has resulted in much research and policy towards children being underlaid by assumptions that associate ideal modern childhoods with residential fixity.

Having uprooted their children once already, and often exhausted after the period of intense mobility by all parties while only the husband was working in the UK, mothers felt anxious about the prospect of uprooting children twice. Ewa, in Bath, made a typical comment:

It wouldn't make sense to go back to Poland once our daughter had got used to being here, to her school, her friends, the language, and to tear her away from that and take her to Poland. So if we don't leave now, before she gets really attached, well later it will make no sense.

Similarly, Magda, whose family had experimented with return to Poland before coming back to Bristol for a second time, said that, having returned to Bristol, they would probably stay for a 'long, long while… because, well, it's well-known, children can't keep chopping and changing'.

Everyone creates their own mental map of the place they live. Polish domestic workers in Rome make the streets and parks of the city their own because they do not live in their own homes (Malek 2010), just like the Filipino women in Hong Kong described by McKay (2006). Similarly, Noussia and Lyons (2009) discuss how migrants congregate in specific places in central Athens. The towns in my sample are too small to have such areas, and the parents I interviewed lived in their own homes. Nonetheless, Sunday outings for the whole family were an important part of their lives and involved a kind of mapping of the local region. They would take their children to the seaside (later recommending to one another their favourite beaches), or find a river for swimming, as they might do in Poland, despite the fact that British people – who never live more 72 miles from the sea[8] - hardly ever swim in rivers. One mother, for example, described her delight at finding a riverbank near Bath which was 'just like in Poland'. They also felt that they 'knew their way round' their immediate neighbourhood, to refer back to Kinga's comments cited above.

One can argue that by following everyday routines – going to shops, banks, work, playgrounds, using public transport and familiarising themselves with

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[8] http://www.bbc.co.uk/coast.

*the surroundings and its inhabitants – newcomers domesticate the local
landscape and create a sense of neighbourliness, a sense of possession of
space, of being "at home"(Osipovič 2010, p. 174)*

Like Osipovič's London Polish respondents, but unlike many labour migrants
across the world, my interviewees self-identified as consumers, who had money
to spend and used the local shops and banks: in this respect, they had a sense of
membership of the local area which contrasted with their sense of marginality in
Poland, where they had scraped by from week to week and often fallen into debt.

With regard to livelihoods, probably the most important anchor keeping
interviewees in specific locations was steady employment. Interviewees in Polish
small towns constantly complained about insecurity of employment in much
of the private sector; by contrast, people employed by 'solid' local employers,
such as the bus factory in Sanok, were not likely to migrate. UK interviews often
had bitter memories of feeling exploited in small private firms in Poland or by
unreliable hotels and agencies during early months in England. They treasured
jobs, even cleaning jobs, in institutions such as universities and hospitals or in
big companies. Agnieszka, for example, explaining why her bus driver husband
would not change jobs even to earn more money elsewhere, pointed out that 'it
would be a shame to change jobs, a risk. It's a solid company (*pewna firma*). If you
work for a big company it's more secure'. In this regard, many of my interviewees
differed sharply from the long-term agency workers described by Thompson in
Llanelli, Wales, who never have control over their own lives. Thompson (2010)
suggests that 'the obstacles of breaking into the mainstream economy ensure that
their life in Llanelli is seen as a temporary phase.' By contrast, my interviewees
did have a measure of control and security in their British locations: they had
arrived at places where their Polish livelihood aspirations for a 'good' job had
been realised.

The interviewees also had a sense of being in control in that, by their own
efforts, they were leaving their mark on the local community. This can be viewed
as part of the process of place attachment.

*Over time, places may acquire new meanings, sometimes because of external
events or developments, sometimes through the conscious efforts of the
respondents. In this perspective, place and meanings of place stand forth as
an ongoing process. Indeed at times, the respondents take an active part in the
process of giving places meaning. (Gustafson 2001a, p. 13)*

As other research also suggests, Poles often have a sense that they are valued
by local British people because they are viewed as good workers (see e.g. Parutis

2009, p. 197). This feeds into their perception that they have a positive influence on their UK localities. They are changing the community for the better by doing jobs which the local population does not want to do, or does badly. Ewa, for example, reported that she and fellow-Poles had been discussing strikes by British workers in protest against migrant labour in 2008 and imagined what would happen if Poles in Bath had gone on strike. 'It would be paralysis, simple paralysis! At least here in Bath. And there are Poles in every town. Buses wouldn't go, restaurants would be shut!'

Families, in particular, could also have the impression that the local community was accommodating to their presence. Service providers such as the police and National Health Service, who have a duty to improve local community cohesion, use toddlers groups and Saturday schools to contact Polish parents. The Communities Advocate from the Bath police force confessed to me that she often found it hard to locate 'communities' (i.e. minority groups) for which she was responsible, hence the Saturday School was a convenient point of access. Many childless, English-speaking Poles in Bath are scattered individuals whom it would be hard to reach; families, however, easily become identified as 'the Polish community'. (See Gill 2010 on similar assumptions by UK authorities about Catholic organisations as contact points for Poles.)

A further reason for families to feel comfortable locally was because of their perception that, by 2009 (unlike a few years previously), there was a critical mass of Poles – it was simply normal to be Polish in their new home town. Their impressions were of meeting more and more Poles locally. Again, there may be a difference between their perceptions and those of other types of Polish migrant. Toruńczyk-Ruiz (2008, p.37), writing about the Netherlands, observes:

> *The difference in the perception of the number of Poles even in the same city was quite astonishing: individuals with pre-existing networks, or working in manual jobs that were popular among Polish migrants, felt that they were surrounded by Polish people, whereas skilled workers usually stated that they would hardly ever meet compatriots.*

On the whole, my interviewees were in the happy position of being able to choose their own Polish friends: it was not the case that they were simply thrown together with random compatriots, as migrants might be when they first arrive in a locality. Rather, as in their home location in Poland, they could pick and choose with whom to socialise.

> *We have quite a circle of Polish friends. When people ask us, Poles, whether we are on our own in Bristol, I say no, we have a group of friends, we meet*

up. If we were here on our own we wouldn't like to stay here, not for a long time. (Monika)

Having Polish friends compensated for the fact that many interviews had extremely limited contact with the local non-Polish population, mostly because they did not work with British colleagues and/or were not confident about speaking English. Malwina, for example, complained about how she was unable to befriend fellow parents at her daughter's school:

We stand together but I'd have to know English well. That's why not. So I just collect my daughter and go home… [In the playground] someone will come up to me, ask me something, and then I say I can't speak much English. Obviously they'll say a few things to me, but after a while, since I can't say anything [back], they don't try to talk to me.

Women could sometimes have a vicarious sense of connectedness to the local community through family members; they recognised that at least their school-age children had such links, as did their husbands, if the latter were bus drivers or had other jobs which brought them into contact with the public. Overall, however, they had little sense of how British people lived, making comments such as 'I don't know what people cook for dinner in England'.

Hence, in terms of *national/ethnic* attachments, the mothers I interviewed were most often not very integrated into UK society. They pursued a range of 'transnational' activities, speaking Polish, cooking Polish food, socialising with Poles and frequently working with them as well. On the other hand, considering *local* ties (especially looking beyond the mothers themselves and taking into account the local ties of other members of the household, children at school and husbands who had more contact with English language) it is evident that the interviewees did have many causes to feel increasingly rooted in their UK locality.

RETURN TO SPECIFIC LOCALITIES

As already mentioned, many Polish return migrants return to the places they left. Most of my UK interviewees tended to feel that for the time being they were likely to remain in the UK, although they often thought about return. It frequently seemed to be the case that some family members were keener on return than others, so any return migration strategy would be decided as a result of family discussions and arguments. Insofar as they discussed return as a real possibility, the UK interviewees assumed, apparently with only one exception, that this would be

return to their home locality. This was mostly because – like most return migrants (King 2000, p. 15) – they expected to go home for emotional reasons, to be with their extended families. It was also because of their habit of seeing livelihoods in local terms. As already argued, many Polish migrants prefer to migrate abroad to places where they have something already fixed up. By the same token, they will not return *w ciemno* to a strange place in Poland. Knowledge about the economy of their specific home location is important, given that some parts of Poland are more flourishing than others. It is not enough to watch Polish television: my interviewees were not impressed by media reports of Polish economic growth, perhaps partly because of an inbuilt suspicion of journalists, but also because they had such firm ideas about the specificities of their *local* economies in Poland.

Their continuing perceptions of local economies were partly formed as a result of telephone and internet conversation with Poland-based friends and family. These may sometimes emphasise positive developments in an attempt to persuade migrants to return (as suggested by some of my interviews in Poland), although, overall, pessimism seemed to be more common. Fairly frequent visits back to the home locality in Poland also enabled interviewees to keep an eye on local conditions. Ilona, for example, reported:

> *There's a bit more than there was, when we were there in summer, on our holiday, we found out that it was like that because lots of people had migrated, so now there is a little bit more, but I don't know how it will turn out… and earnings are a bit higher than when we left, it's got just a tiny bit better, but it's nothing like as good as here in England, where you can leave one job and find a new one.*

Having housing in each locality clearly created dual local identities, and over a third of the UK interviewees had their own flat or house in Poland. This gave them a special sense of 'going home' to a particular place in Poland, when they returned on holiday. However, although they often talked about their Polish housing, either to reminisce fondly about how nice it was, or alternatively, to worry about the repairs it needed, the presence of a house (even one bought with money earned in the UK) was not in itself a reason to return.

It might make sense to 'return' to a Polish city where there are jobs available, but, as a recent CBOS poll suggests, Poles (other than young people who move to cities to study) rarely migrate within Poland (Kowalczuk 2010, pp 1, 3-5). There was almost universal agreement among my small-town interviewees in Poland that it made little sense to move permanently to a city in Poland, rather than going abroad. Iglicka (2008, p 65) suggests that 'the relatively low [geographical] mobility of the Polish workforce is caused both by cultural factors and also

by the inflexible housing market. Changing one residence for another is very expensive, which discourages people from moving in search of work, or better work. This is especially true for people who earn only average wages, or less.' My UK interviewees voiced exactly the same attitudes. When I asked Marianna, for example, why she came to Bath with her child instead of moving from her Polish small town to a Polish city, she said 'I didn't feel like changing my place of residence in Poland, I'd learned English at school and I liked it and perhaps that was why I didn't feel like going to a Polish city, I don't know, I didn't consider it… and it's more expensive to live in a city.' Dominika, another lone parent from a small town, said that Gdańsk had, in theory, been an alternative destination (to Bath) but that it would have cost so much to rent a flat that it would not have made sense.

In theory, Polish small-town and rural migrants might become more favourably disposed towards living in a Polish city as the result of information garnered from Poles in the UK. During 2009, different Polish cities took it in turn to advertise themselves to Poles in the UK, holding meetings to inform migrants about employment opportunities, but these meetings were in London, so not very accessible to people like my interviewees.[9] Of course, simply by being in the UK, Poles from small towns and rural areas came into contact with other Polish people from a range of Polish cities. However, judging by the pessimism of my UK interviewees and acquaintances from cities (including the Tri-City, Poznań and Wrocław) the accounts of these migrants were not likely to persuade their small-town compatriots that it would be worth moving back to a city in Poland. The city migrants were very conscious that not everyone even in the cities with the best economic indicators could access a well-paid job.

CONCLUSION

The Polish mothers I interviewed in the UK had differing attitudes towards how to maintain their Polish identity and it would be wrong to assume that, despite being 'bees and ants' rather than 'gorgeous butterflies', their attitudes were insular or that they had no interest in British culture or associating with non-Polish people. Nonetheless, in most cases their poor knowledge of English did make access to the non-Polish community quite limited, and they tended to socialise with fellow Poles and lead Polish lives in the sense of speaking Polish at home, eating Polish food, watching Polish television, communicating with family and friends in Poland, etc. Hence they could be said to engage in a range of 'transnational'

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[9] Poland Street (2009) 'Projekt 12 miast',
http://www.polandstreet.org.uk/index.php?page=sekcja_ogolna&dzial=7&kat=11

activities, if transnational is understood to refer to migrants' maintaining national cultural identity in the receiving country.

At the same time, however, their frame of reference was often local rather than ethnic or national. When thinking about where they were and where they had come from, they referred to their specific cities, towns and villages in Poland and the UK. Like all migrants, they were 'agents of globalisation' (Kennedy 2010), but in the sense of being people weaving local to local links from Pszczyna to Trowbridge, Elbląg to Bristol or Grudziądz to Bath. They had usually come to the UK *via* migration networks which took them from one location to another, and, in the UK, their eyes remained fixed on their locality of residence in Poland. This was where most of them had extended family and about a third had houses or flats: this, therefore was the place to which they considered return. It seems to be common in Poland for internal migration not to be considered as a livelihood strategy, and, in keeping with this culture, my interviewees did not envisage return to a new Polish location. Instead, they studied the livelihood options available in their places of origin, forming their perceptions of whether they were improving by communicating with friends and family, and on visits home.

Using a livelihood strategy approach, the article has shown how cultural factors – expectations about 'good' livelihoods – are brought from Poland to the UK and facilitate family settlement in places like Bath and Bristol. On the one hand, there is the common Western assumption that it is 'good' for children to lead settled lives, and this facilitates settlement in the same towns where families first arrive in the UK, as well as shaping the original choice of UK location (which should, if possible, be similar to the home location in Poland). On the other hand are attitudes created by life in Poland, particularly a preference for the security of state employment or a job at a major local factory. Finding a job at a 'solid company' or state institution in Bath or Bristol – a goal which had eluded interviewees when they lived in Poland – was a good reason to stay in those locations. The livelihood strategy approach also involves investigating the resources of the entire household and thus helps the researcher understand not only the migration decision – e.g. the wife's role in choosing the family location abroad – but also the integration process. At first glance, for example, it seemed hard to understand why some of the mothers interviewed did feel a sense of local attachment, especially those who did not have paid employment and spoke little English, but if one takes into account their husbands and (particularly) their children's stronger ties, their sense of anchoring in the UK place of residence is easier to explain.

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