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OLD “EURO-ORPHANS”? MIGRATION OF ADULT CHILDREN AND SOCIAL SECURITY OF THEIR ELDERLY PARENTS

Abstract

One of the broadly discussed issues, in particular in societies with poor infrastructure of formal care of dependent people (i.e. Poland), is the effect of the ageing process on the efficiency of informal care of the elderly by family members, friends, neighbors, and local communities. The complex situation of elderly care resulting from dropping fertility is further complicated when the emigration rate is high in a given country, such as Poland. The problem is often conceptualized in terms of moral panic. It needs to be emphasized that intergenerational transfers are not unidirectional and not always necessary, as exemplified by parents often helping their children working abroad, and not all elderly parents need care.

In this article, I will emphasize the point of view of the parents of migrants, by focusing on the functioning of the transnational system of social security that consists of different actors (migrating and relatively immobile) in both sending and receiving societies. Quantitative and qualitative data from the field studies carried out from 2010–2012 will be used for the purpose of this text.

Key words:

transnational social security system, intergenerational relations, migration, old people

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1. Introduction

Cultural necessity for personal fulfillment of the obligations of children to elderly parents, including care activities, is a relatively permanent element of the Polish regulatory system. It is additionally supported by the institutional weakness of public support. It needs to be emphasized that intergenerational transfers are not unidirectional and not always necessary, as exemplified by parents often helping their children working abroad, and not all elderly parents need care. Additionally, we should remember about the dynamics of these obligations during different phases of a transnational family life and about conflicts that may arise. In this article, I will focus on the perspective of parents who have had at least one child migrate².

To avoid engaging in moral panic on leaving the older people without support, it is necessary to look at care as a socially constructed system of socio-cultural practices causing a number of tensions and ambivalent attitudes of involved individuals. For example, on the one hand, care for elderly people by migrants can be seen as an expression of intergenerational solidarity, accompanied by positive emotions, by the actors involved in these practices. However, for some individuals, the need for personal fulfillment of family obligations can be seen as a sustained (and supported by the state) system of oppression. In this case, familialism, as a default care system³ for dependents, including elderly people, is in conflict with the dominating practices in the individualizing societies in which this system is legally and culturally applied.

In this article, I would like to focus on the three main characteristics of the transnational system of intergenerational support. Firstly, the expectations of parents are usually legitimized by their earlier support for their children. Secondly, the parents that receive support from their migrant children usually compensate their children by helping them. Thirdly, the migration of one child rarely contributes to the social exclusion of elderly parents. On the contrary, the results of my research revealed that it often increases the social security of elderly parents, who, together with the support of migrant children, may help the ones who are not migrating.

² This paper is a part of a PhD thesis, which presented the transnational intergenerational welfare system, taking into account the perspective of both the generation of adult children and their elderly parents.

³ C. Saraceno, W. Keck, *Can We Identify Intergenerational Policy Regimes in Europe?*, "European Societies" 2010, No. 5, pp. 675–696; Ł. Krzyżowski, J. Mucha, *Opieka społeczna w migranckich sieciach rodzinnych. Polscy migranci w Islandii i ich starzy rodzice w Polsce* [Social Protection in the Migrant Family Network. Poles in Iceland and Their Elderly Dependents in Poland], "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" [Culture and Society] 2012, pp. 191–217.

The latter part of the paper consists of the five parts. The first one is a brief review of the literature describing the migrations from Poland as a strategy for the provision of social security to households. The section that will present the methodology of research follows this. Quantitative and qualitative data from the field studies carried out between 2010–2012 will be used for the purpose of this text. This is followed by two parts, which present the results of the analysis of my own field studies. Lastly, the paper concludes with the summary of the results.

2. Migration as a strategy for the provision of social security to a Polish family after 1989

After 1989, migration has become one of the most significant life strategies of Poles. By limiting the risk of unemployment and social exclusion, this strategy has reduced the uncertainty associated with the change in the labor market after the systemic transformation.

Numerous studies⁴ show, that the situation in the labor market in Poland, similar to other Central and Eastern European countries, was the most significant push factor during the transformation. The particularly high level of long-term unemployment and the lack of significant improvement in the labor market have led many of Poland's residents to perform the "unemployment export", or to migrate looking for work⁵. In this sense, migration is a consequence of the lack of equilibrium in the local and regional labor markets. As a member of the wider kinship, migration for an individual is an uncertainty reducing strategy that minimizes the risk of marginalization while maximizing the social security of an individual. One of the key changes in the area of mobility during transformation was the shift of focus from the settlement and long-term migrations to the temporary, circular, or even transnational ones. It was the result of changes in the area of the migration policy and the impact of purely economic factors. The research on current trends in the international migration of Poles, conducted between 2004–2008⁶, showed

⁴ *Polityka migracyjna jako instrument promocji zatrudnienia i ograniczania bezrobocia* [Migration Policy as an Instrument of Promotion of Employment and Reduction of Unemployment], P. Kaczmarczyk, M. Okólski (eds.), Warszawa 2008.

⁵ W. Łukowski, *Polscy pracownicy na rynku pracy Unii Europejskiej na przełomie wieków* [Polish Workers in the Labor Market of the European Union at the Turn of the Century], Warszawa 2004.

⁶ E. Kępińska, *Recent Trends in International Migration. The 2004 SOPEMI Report for Poland*, Warszawa 2004, E. Kępińska, *Recent Trends in International Migration. The 2006 SOPEMI Report for Poland*, Warszawa 2006; M. Anacka, *Najnowsze migracje z Polski w świetle danych* [Recent Trends in International Migration of Poles in the Light of Data], Warszawa 2008.

that the dominant form of mobility is economic migration related to taking up employment abroad.

Polish studies on emigrants conducted by researchers before the accession of Poland to the European Union were mainly concerned with the social consequences of economic migration.

Most research emphasizes the positive impact of migration on the quality of life in the migrant households that were faced with structural unemployment. Research conducted in the early 1990s proved that the main motivation to emigrate was to improve the quality of life. 30% of Polish emigrants said that they had a higher standard of living (taking into account accommodation and personal goods) in comparison to non-migrant households. The willingness to emigrate was manifested most by people of a working age under 39 years old (59%). Since the early nineties, research on migration emphasized that a family is the basic decision-making unit in the context of emigration plans. Furthermore, the family is also a basic migration income-consuming unit. Even before 2004⁷, research conducted within this paradigm indicates that the majority of emigrants are men (70%) in a stable marriage. The aim to improve the family's quality of life, particularly among people who were receiving unemployment benefits in Poland, was the main motivation to emigrate. 50% of migrant respondents were unemployed during this time (1996) in Poland. Economic activity abroad provides higher incomes than in Poland, but also results in higher costs of living. The optimal strategy in this situation seems to be working abroad and spending the earned money in the country one is residing in. This type of strategy was dominant during the period of transition and has not lost its importance after the Polish accession to the EU⁸. Furthermore, this kind of strategy has become more popular and easier to realize within the EU after 2004 due to the "lack of borders". More importantly, after 2004, migrants became more rooted in the host society and their pattern of mobility became more transnational than before⁹. Just like before 2004, the main purpose of repetitive migrations was the accumulation of savings and its subsequent transfer to Poland, which was to be used for investment and current consumption. Unfortunately,

icznej Aktywności Ludności [The Newest Migrations from Poland on the Basis of Economic Activity of Population Research], Warszawa 2008.

⁷ E. Domaradzka, *Polacy zatrudnieni za granicą i cudzoziemcy pracujący w Polsce* [Poles Working Abroad and Foreigners Working in Poland], "Polityka Społeczna" 1996, No. 11–12, pp. 15–18.

⁸ P. Kaczmarczyk, *Migracje zarobkowe Polaków w dobie przemian* [Labour Migrations of Poles in the Era of Changes], Warszawa 2005.

⁹ M. Moskal, *Transnationalism and the Role of Family and Children in Intra-European Labour Migration*, "European Societies" 2011, No. 1, pp. 29–50.

there is a lack of research describing how (and precisely on what) money is spent in the context of social security in a transnational social space. From previous research, we can draw only very general conclusions that most earnings in migrant households are spent on household equipment, food, and better health care¹⁰. There is a lack of research describing the strategies for enhancing this security and rationalizing life choices in the context of migration.

The key factors (no matter whether before or after EU accession) in the entire process of migration, which increases social security in both the host and departing country, are social networks¹¹. Social networks not only allow a faster adaptation to new surroundings in a host country, which significantly increases chances for migration success, but are decisive in the context of the choice of direction of the migration. Research conducted by Romuald Jończy¹² shows that, in addition to a potential high salary as a reason, an existing support network of relatives and friends is also an important factor for the choice of a country. This factor determines the increased migration to the countries with the largest Polish diaspora—Germany, the United Kingdom, and Ireland¹³.

The high percentage of people migrating with a partner or siblings, and the relatively small percentage of people migrating with children, brings to mind the question of who provides care and support to migrant families members that remain in the home country (particularly to children and old or ageing parents). However, this issue is not analyzed sufficiently in the Polish subject literature. The exception is analysis conducted under the slogan “euro orphanage”, which refers to both children staying at home in Poland¹⁴, while parents and grandparents migrate. In this article, I am interested in the latter. Using perspective of transnational social spaces¹⁵, it is possible to show that older parents are not only not

¹⁰ M. Drozd-Pasecka, M. Wieruszewska, *Dom, gospodarstwo domowe, miejsce życia codziennego* [House, Household, Place of the Daily Life] [in:] *Tu i tam. Migracje z polskich wsi za granicę* [Here and There. Migrations From Polish Villages Abroad], M. Wieruszewska (ed.), Warszawa 2007.

¹¹ Ł. Krzyżowski, *Między gminą Radgoszcz a resztą Europy. Ku antropologii transmigracji* [Between the Radgoszcz Community and the Rest of Europe. Toward Anthropology of Transmigration], Kraków 2009.

¹² R. Jończy, *Warunki powrotu zagranicznych emigrantów zarobkowych do województwa opolskiego* [Conditions of the Return of Foreign Migrant Workers to the Opole Province], Opole 2010.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ It is interesting that this term is defined in the public debate as a situation when a) both parents migrate or b) mother migrates. H. Lutz, E. Palenga-Möllnbeck, *Care Workers, Care Drain, and Care Chains: Reflections on Care, Migration, and Citizenship*, “Social Politics” 2012, No. 1, pp. 15–37.

¹⁵ T. Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, Oxford 2000.

“abandoned” by migrating children, but, thanks to their mobility, their social security increases. What is more, they often help their children (both migrating and non-migrating).

3. Methodology

The research took into consideration three countries: Poland, Iceland, and Austria. These countries establish two transnational social spaces, Polish-Icelandic and Polish-Austrian¹⁶. The starting point is Poland, with its different organization of social life, family care, culture, as well as a long tradition of emigration. The migration of an individual to a society with a different social life organization, different system of social protection, and different intergenerational relationships, can cause some modifications in the attitude towards obligations. In Poland, these attitudes are usually taken for granted by social actors. Furthermore, the socio-cultural practices related to the implementation of these obligations can be modified as well.

The two countries that were selected within the frame of research, Austria and Iceland, represent different social security systems from Poland. The supporting argument for the analysis of these countries is also the different socio-economic situation of the sending Polish society, and the host Icelandic and Austrian societies. Significant differences can be found in the Polish-Austrian and Polish-Icelandic transnational social spaces. Most notably, the differences involve the implementation of mobility and the characteristics of individuals and networks involved in constructing and maintaining these two social spaces. The common point in these social spaces is the migration motivation of Poles, which is initiated to provide social protection to their households.

Empirical studies are conducted within the frameworks of the methodology of multi-sited ethnography¹⁷ using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Selection of a *multi-sited ethnography* perspective can be explained by the acceptance of assumptions on the dynamics of intergenerational relationships, and the ongoing transformation of social relations in transnational social spaces. Qual-

¹⁶ The extended explanation of the research methodology (with description of the reasons why the two countries were selected for research) is described in my PhD thesis „Opieka transnarodowa i relacje międzygeneracyjne w kulturach migracji” (*Transnational Care and Intergenerational Relations in Migrant Cultures*) that was defended at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at Polish Academy of Science in 2012.

¹⁷ G. Marcus, *Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography*, “Annual Review of Anthropology” 1994, No. 24, pp. 95–117.

itative research, individual in-depth interviews, and participant observation covered adult children migrating to Iceland (IDI = 36) and Austria (IDI = 20), as well as their elderly parents living in Poland (IDI = 35). The quantitative studies of migrants in Iceland (N = 454) and Austria (N = 383) were carried out with the use of an internet questionnaire and, among the elderly people living in Poland, with the use of a computer-assisted telephone interview (N = 500¹⁸). In this article, I will use both qualitative and quantitative data showing mostly the parents' point of view.

4. Family support in the situation of old age – the legitimacy of expectations

The various phases of a transnational family life involve different obligations. Members of kinship networks socialize them and each individual in the network is (or will be) involved in intergenerational support. The first issue to point out is the fact that the elderly parents often mentioned investments made in their children, hoping that their commitment to improve their living conditions will be refunded to them when serious health and living problems arise:

We have devoted our time to our children...We sacrificed much of our own entertainment for the sake of our kids, then. I think that maybe they [as adults] should not give up everything, but they should take care of their parents [TPM_M_3]¹⁹.

Within the support frame, it is important not to ask for help, or verbalize expectations, because the children should know when to help and what to do on their own. The crucial category here is readiness to care for parents. Elderly parents sometimes test the willingness of children to care for them when they are still relatively fit, saying they wish to return them to an old people's home when they will not be able to cope with their daily life and will no longer have control of their

¹⁸ In the CATI part of the research was used purposive sample. Interview were conducted with people whose at least one children migrate. The sample was divided into two age group within both man (N=200) and female (N=300): 55–74 and 75 and more.

¹⁹ When citing the informants, I will use three symbols: a) TPM – it means that the quotation comes from parent with migrating children; TA or TI means that I quote migrant from Austria or Iceland, b) F or M – which refers to female or man informant, c) the number – which means the identification number of interview transcription.

bodies. In this context, the reaction is outrage to such a statement and this reaction is a guarantee of social security in the situation of a loss of independence:

One day, we sat and I said: 'When I am old, please take me to an old people's house – I don't want any mercy'. Then, I was shouted at by the eldest son, 'I didn't build this house for that!' At the bottom, is a room with a kitchen, completely separate entrance, separate everything with the thought that when we get old and we are disabled, we we'll live down there. Well, he was very offended and then told me, 'Mom, what are you talking about: going to an old people's house?' Well, I have got my old age provided for [TPM_F_20].

In relation to daughters, unlike in the case of male children, the expectations of parents are thoughtless, recognized as obvious ones. This is partially due to the standards according to which grandparents, primarily through the work of grandmothers, more often assist their daughters than they do their sons in caring for their grandchildren:

Well, these grandchildren departed, (who were taken care of by the informant during the migration of their parents – Ł.K.), the [other] daughter got married and I want to take care of her children to help her somehow. On the other hand, if I need care, I've got it from my daughter or son-in-law. Cooperation is needed in some form of the family life [TPM_F_2].

The following quote (TPM_F_4), in which the informant, living a few miles from her son, describes the problems associated with keeping up of the house from the angle of jobs that are socially assigned to women. Both daughters of the individual migrated and help is expected only from them:

There is a period of time when a person becomes less efficient, and needs more and more help, even to keep up the house. This is not a museum, but you have to wash the windows and change the curtains. I have got problems with arthritis, so it is often problematic for me, even, let's say, with general cleaning. If they were here, it would be easier, because, you know, a daughter is a daughter [TPM_F_4].

There are big differences between what is expected from a daughter and a son. Personal care, especially hygienic help, was almost always referenced as being the duty of a daughter. In the case of practical help, parents often organize the familial division of labor to siblings in the way it is usually done in Polish society. In

a household, duties that are traditionally performed by a woman are the responsibility of a daughter, and duties of a man are the responsibility of a son. When a daughter migrates, the expectations of parents do not decline. However, in such a situation, the respondents' parents often emphasized that due to the geographical proximity of their son, it should be commonly accepted to allow him to help with the housework activities:

I would expect more care from my son because he is here, not abroad. However, as it is anonymous, I would say that I have not got the proper care I need, although my son lives here. My daughter visited me twice while he came only two times this year. Now, I would like my son to come here to help with something. Since there is so much to do, such as the grass itself, and cutting the grass is so much work. I did everything on my own once and now I do not have the strength to do anything. I need somebody to help me [TPM_F_1].

Taking into account a life course perspective in the analysis of empirical data allows one to draw three important conclusions. First, family responsibilities may change over time. The process of becoming a dependent person is generally very long and the critical situations that require very rapid changes within the family network are relatively rare. The parents' expectations do not appear suddenly, but they are verbalized earlier. Second, family obligations do not arise only from the actual problems faced by parents, but also from the evaluation of past relationships, including the assessment of care given by parents to their children. Women (daughters) evaluate these relationships much better and the scope of assistance from their parents than men (sons). Based on these assessments, it can be assumed that daughters are charged with more obligations to their elderly parents than sons. It sometimes leads to some tensions between the siblings when a sister, due to a migration to another country, does not fulfill the expectations of her parents. In this situation, the son referring to the actual or alleged greater support given by his parents in the past to their daughter reacts negatively to his parent's expectations. Parents quite often use an intermediate solution by, for example, hiring additional domestic help at home. Migrant children, who usually pay for the assistance, often participate in the help of elderly parents. The third conclusion can be drawn from the previous two. Intergenerational relations in societies dominated by familism as a default care system and recognized as the obvious family model include striving for balance within the support network.

5. Support granted to migrant and non-migrant children by their parents

Support to the migrant and non-migrant children is for the researched parents not only an expression of concern, but also a kind of investment that can be potentially paid back in the situation of an emergency threat to their social security during old age. This part of the paper will first mention the issue of aid and care to migrant children. The second is about those who do not migrate. Qualitative research has shown that the practice of helping adult children is an important factor in determining the shape of the subsequent intergenerational relationships. However, the researched individuals emphasized that it was very rare when parents were in a comfortable position to equally help all of their adult children. Inequality in the range of support causes the emergence of tensions within a family network. In what way do elderly parents help migrants?

Although older parents generally negatively assess their children's decision to migrate, they try to understand the economic motives of migration and explain that it was the only reasonable solution to ensure family well being. Aid for migrant children is for parents, above all, an expression of concern for their welfare, but also (more or less consciously) the basis for their future family expectations in crisis situations. The quantitative research (telephone interviews), conducted among older people who have got at least one child that migrated, shows that, as in the case of qualitative research, the situation of a migrating daughter, not a son, is more common. This fact certainly raises serious consequences in the face of Polish familialism as a default elderly care system. Regardless of the gender of the migrating child, almost 30% of parents declared that over the last twelve months that they helped their migrant children. The support provided by adult children is more often carried out by a younger group of respondents, who rarely declare that their condition of health is poor. Respondents often help migrant children with childcare.

The data in the table above (see Table 1) show that parents are generally more likely to help migrant daughters than sons. However, in some dimensions of support, these differences are not significant. A little more than 40% of respondents – among those who have declared that in the last twelve months they have given support to their migrant child – help migrants with the care for a grandchild when the parents (or at least one of them) migrate. The difference between the frequency of such support to daughters and sons is the consequence of the Polish culture in which the migrant woman (a daughter who has her own children) is replaced in the caring responsibilities by her mother, even if in the household has a man (or

Table 1. Forms of support provided by the parents and gender of the migrant child (percentages for the answers "yes")

| Daughter | | Who migrates | |
|--|---|--------------|-----|
| | | Son | |
| Forms of support provided by the parents to the migrant child | Care for grandson / grandchildren abroad | 25% | 26% |
| | Care for grandson/grandchildren in Poland during a time when his parents (or one of them) are (is) abroad | 42% | 33% |
| | Care for grandson / grandchildren during visit of daughter / son in Poland (e.g. during holidays) | 54% | 41% |
| | Support in the form of food, clothing, purchasing of household appliances, etc. | 36% | 45% |
| | Financial support | 39% | 21% |
| | Another form of aid | 15% | 16% |

Source: Own research (telephone interview) N = 150 Multiple answers – percentages do not add up to 100%.

son-in-law). This strategy of transnational reorganizing family life has been well described by Rachel Salazar Parreñas²⁰ in the context of the migration of women from the Philippines with the concept of "mother away families". If a son migrates, then a model of "father away families" is implemented, which has his own family of procreation in Poland. In this model, his wife fulfilled most of the caring responsibilities while the role of a mother is limited to occasional help.

The implementation of the strategy of simultaneously raising children in Poland and in the host countries takes many forms and is practiced in a variety of situations. The qualitative research shows that, above all during the holidays, grandparents temporarily take care for migrating children. In some cases, the child was sent for a longer period of time under the care of grandparents (usually the grandmother) while a woman worked casually abroad. An interesting socio-cultural practice, activated when a second child appears in a migrant family, is to take care of the older children during the stay and to take care of the daughter in the hospital and after birth. This is due to the fact that migrant (the parents of migrant

²⁰ R. Parreñas, *Children of Global Migration. Transnational Families and Gendered Woes*, Stanford 2005.

children) men usually work during the post-natal period and do not leave their jobs, explaining it as necessary for the financial security of the family.

A lot of difficulties may arise depending on which country a child is raised in. The frequency of „caring grandmothers migration” to countries of immigration and the length of their stay in this country is basically similar to „migration to be cared by a grandmother” in Poland, which is made by the child of the migrants. Despite the difficulties with a clear indication of how to implement the strategy of transnationally raising children by migrants, we can point out the example of a scheme practiced by one of the respondents of transnational migrant networks²¹. The opportunity to be protected with free health care is a valuable economic resource in a situation where migrants do not have to give up work to care for their children. Now, we focus on the childcare strategy implemented in the Polish-Austrian sample of transnational social space²².

The whole process of the transnational organization of care for a grandson in Austria starts at Christmastime. Polish migrants from Austria usually travel with children in their own car. The length of stay, when mostly grandparents care for grandchildren from Austria, is about two to three weeks. After this time, the migrants come back to Austria without their child (or children) while the children stay with their grandparents for a month or two. Then, the children travel to Austria (usually by mini bus), along with their grandmother, who takes care of them until Easter. At Christmas, all come to Poland (usually for one or two weeks), followed by a short break in the care of the children by grandmothers ([DI3] and [DII2]) and the kids come to Austria only with their parents. During the holidays, the children are brought to Poland and the grandmother takes care of her grandchildren ([DI3], [DII2] sometimes [DIII2]) for a month. Then, the children are taken back to Austria. The grandmother’s visit in Austria is possible only from October. As we can see, the grandmother’s visits to Austria are practiced in the winter months because then she does not need to work outdoors on the land.

²¹ As part of this qualitative research network (individual in-depth interviews and participant observation in Poland and Austria), the following actors were researched: parents (mother – 59 years [M59], the father – 65 years [O65]), their daughter (34 years [C34]) lives in Vienna with her husband (38 years old [MZ38]) and two children (3 years [DI3] and 2 years [DII2]), their son (31 years old [SI31]) lives with his wife (31 years old [SAI31]) and the child (2 years [DIII2]) in Vienna, and the son (33 years [SII33]), living with his wife (33 years [SAII33]) and the son (2 years [div2]) in Poland, distanced twenty kilometers from the parents . This network will be the example of the transnational distribution of care work in the three generations: grandchildren, adult children (migrant and non-migrant) and grandparents (non-migrant and implementing the strategy of the transnational migration care).

²² I have not found this childcare strategy in the Iceland case.

The above description of the intergenerational support system basically shows that intergenerational transfers (in this case mainly the time) are unidirectional and proceed from the „up” (parents) to the „down” (children), but sometimes they change direction and more adult children help their parents more than their parents help with their migrant children. However, when parents help their adult children, it sometimes leads to tensions in the family, which results in limited possibilities for parents:

My mom took care of my and my sister's children with pleasure. The sister, who has had never worked, left her child to my mom. The grandmother is flexible and she had three children during holidays. My sister did not want to participate financially in this care; I had to sponsor everything and I don't earn a lot of money here [TA_F_8].

The above quote is an example of the explanations which migrants use to justify the validity of their expectations for the parents to look after their children. The first condition is a professional activity. A woman who works, regardless of migration activity, is „right” to seek the assistance of her mother in the care of their grandchildren. Second, if the parents' help is financially rewarded, so when the network comes to a relatively simple and direct balance of exchange, it is a more valid argument for migrants receiving help from the mother than it is for a child who does not migrate. The expectation of the non-migrating children on their parents to care for their grandchildren is based solely on the accumulated time commitment to care for their parents when they need it. However, from the perspective of older parents, an unwritten promise to have care in old age by the non-migrant child is more attractive than short-term financial support. It is interesting that these parents, who took part in the qualitative research and who believe that their migrant children will not come back to Poland, usually help their non-migrant children more often. It does not change the fact that the assistance provided “from a distance” is highly appreciated, even if the real value is much lower than the daily support provided by a non-migrating child.

The confirmation of these results is also provided by the quantitative research conducted among the older people of which at least one child migrated. They show that parents are more likely to help the children who permanently live in Poland than those who migrate. As we remember, nearly 30% of elderly parents said that they helped their migrant children over the previous twelve months. The percentage of respondents providing support to the non-migrating child is 60%. Similarly, as in the case of support to the migrant child, parents are more likely to

support their daughter than son. In the case of support to a child who does not migrate, the forms of support are also different:

Table 2. Forms of care provided by the parents and gender of the non-migrant child (percentages of positive answers)

| Daughter | | Gender of non-migrating child | |
|--|--|-------------------------------|-----|
| | | Son | |
| Forms of aid provided by parents to non-migrating child. | Taking care of grandsons/ grandchildren | 46% | 40% |
| | Material help: food, clothing, household appliances | 63% | 58% |
| | Financial support | 64% | 60% |
| | The other forms of aid | 14% | 15% |

Source: Own research (telephone interview) N = 150 Multiple answers – percentages do not sum up to 100%.

As we remember (see Table 1), the parents of migrant children helped them mostly by taking care of their grandchildren – both in Poland and in the host country. In the case of non-migrant children, forms of aid are changing and parents very often help these children who permanently live in Poland by providing them with financial and material support. The data contained in the table above (see Table 2) confirm the attitude of Elżbieta Tarkowska²³ that, on the basis of many studies, she has found that elderly people in many Polish households are often the only persons with a permanent (albeit low) income. In this context, the migration of children exempts their parents from the obligation to provide aid. In other words, the migration of the children when the family social security network is based largely on their parents' pensions is a rational behavior from the point of view of the entire household. Financial migrations not only relieve parents of migrant children of the burden of providing them financial and material support, but also provide help from those children in the form of postal orders and material assistance. It increases opportunities for parents to help non-migrant children, from whom parents expect greater personal care (assistance with hygiene) commitments, which can be directly implemented only by those children who live with their parents or within a close distance. Migrants can assist parents in this regard

²³ E. Tarkowska, *Oblicza polskiej biedy* [Faces of Polish Poverty], "Analizy Laboratorium Więzi" 2009, No. 2, pp. 1–10.

only indirectly by covering the costs of hiring professional assistants. Therefore, it is one of the modified forms of intergenerational support that results from the functioning of migrants in the transnational social space.

6. Summary

Migration, in spite of increasing individualization of many societies, is very often not a kind of a manifestation of egoistic thinking about own fortune, but the strategy undertaken collectively to ensure the social security of a wider family. Its fate is to big extent dependent on transnational ties which connect mobile and relatively non-mobile kinship network members. Needs both of them change in the course of a life of an individual. Although usually more of public attention is concentrated on the problems of children (who are not only in Poland but also in many other countries in the greatest risk of poverty) than elderly people (who sometimes are the only breadwinners of all family), a growing share of the second group in the demographic structure of the most of the highly developed (postindustrial) and developing (industrial) countries makes the attention of many scientists and politicians who focus on this category of age. Within the transnational social spaces an intergenerational contract is in the process of many modifications, but is not solved – it regulates the functioning of a transnational social security system. In the course of its implementation there are numerous, but usually ostensible contradictions, and usually real ones which rarely lead to open conflicts and tensions. They appear in the context of transnational reality of caring for the elderly in Poland.

On the one hand, a migration of an adult child to different country consist in moving to a place where opportunities to earn money are greater than in the country of their origin. As a result, those ones who stay in the country and can provide support to elderly parents are declining. On the other hand, migration of a child usually increases not only his own social security but also the security of a family – both the procreative (if it is possessed) and an origin. It should be remembered that the decision to migrate is in Polish culture very common taken in a broader group of people, mostly by members of a close family, when a migration of one of an actor of network leads to the extension and not to the breaking of this network. Practices of migrants may in this context be analyzed in terms of the metaphor of „seekers” for new sources of a social security. However, state institutions would prefer adult children stayed in a sending society because it usually provides care to ensure elderly parents. Assuming that nobody in a family undertakes the trans-

national activity, may appear an opposite process to this demanded by a state, and despite the fact that all children will be close to elderly parents, they will not have adequate resources to provide them a care. It should also be remembered that elderly parents often help their adult children - both non-migrant (more often) and migrant ones (more rarely). Therefore, intergenerational relationships have not got an exploitive character here but are rather based on a interdependence of individual generations in a family.

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