TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL REMITTANCES

The Case of Polish Women in Norway and Poland

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Research on skilled migrants often focuses on the negative effects of migration on sending countries. Discussions of positive results are limited to monetary remittances. Using ethnographic data, we explore the impact of mobility on the creation of new opportunities in Poland. We argue that Polish women bring back, not only financial resources, but also socio-cultural remittances that allow them to establish new businesses, pursue novel employment opportunities, and gain new perceptions of gender roles and equality. We depart from the conceptualization of labor migration, which emphasizes the dichotomy between sending and receiving countries, the pervasive nature of national borders that separate labor migrants from origin countries, and the ubiquitous financial gains. Instead, we focus on socio-cultural remittances that are deployed in transnational spaces.

Keywords: social remittances, transnational migration, Polish migrant women, Poland, Norway

Poland's accession to the European Union resulted in increased mobility of young, highly-educated people. In the immediate post-accession period, most Poles went to the United Kingdom and Ireland (Burrell 2009; Drinkwater, Eade & Garapich 2009; Garapich 2008), but Norway soon became a popular destination for Poles seeking to improve their livelihoods (Baba & Dahl-Jørgensen 2010; Napierała 2008; Main & Czerniejewska 2017; Pawlak 2012, 2015). High wages and geographic proximity made Norway an attractive destination.

This paper is based on two research projects – Mobile Lives, Immobile Realms? Female Mobility between Poland and Norway[1] and Migration for Welfare: Nurses within three Regimes of Immigration and Integration into the Norwegian Welfare State[2] – focused on mobility of Polish women[3] between Poland and Norway. Many of the interviewed women were highly educated professionals: nurses, graduates of Scandinavian philology programs, sociologists, psychologists, journalists, and entrepreneurs.

Research on skilled migrants tends to focus on negative effects of migration – brain drain and/or family disintegration and conflicts – on sending countries (Okólski 2007; Anacka, Brzozowski, Chałupczak et al. 2014). Discussions of positives are often limited to monetary remittances. Using data from interviews with Polish women – those who have lived in Norway, those who have returned to Poland, those who are living transnational lives, and

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those who never spent much time in Norway – we explore the impact of their mobility on new opportunities in Poland and new attitudes toward gender issues.

We argue that Polish migrants bring back not only financial resources, but also considerable socio-cultural remittances. Transnational commuters who live in Poland, but fly frequently to Norway to work as interpreters or nurses, earn higher wages than they could command in Poland, but also gain new expertise. Learning new values, norms, and practices in Norway has brought about social change in how Polish women conceptualize gender roles, affected their attitudes toward reproductive health and aging, and influenced how they raise children. Regardless of the range of socio-cultural remittances, knowledge of Norwegian plays a crucial role in facilitating new opportunities for Polish women.

Graduates of Norwegian philology are in high demand. Poles moving to Norway and learning Norwegian prefer Polish teachers. These teachers often work in transnational cyberspace teaching Norwegian online. Scandinavian businesses – My Norway (*Moja Norwegia*), Ikea, various publishing houses – bring their stores and offices to Poland and provide opportunities for brain exchange. Polish health professionals cater to Scandinavian patients in Poland by establishing specialized clinics with Norwegian- or Swedish-speaking staff.

Discussing these new opportunities, we depart from the common, in many instances rather narrow, conceptualization of labor migration, which emphasizes the dichotomy between sending and receiving countries, the pervasive nature of national borders that separate labor migrants from origin countries, and the ubiquitous financial gains. Using ethnographic data collected between 2016 and 2018 from 130 Polish women, we focus less on the economic advantages stemming from migration and emphasize the socio-cultural remittances the women are utilizing upon return to Poland or while traversing the transnational space between Poland and Norway. We also write about those women who never left Poland but benefited from migration between Poland and Norway. The latter include women who speak fluent Norwegian and teach Norwegian to Poles contemplating moving to Norway or work for Norwegian companies in Poland. These cases shed a new light on migration patterns and trajectories as well as on the effects of migration on the country of origin.

The article includes four sections. We begin with a discussion of methodological issues and the positionality of the research team vis-à-vis the study participants. A section on the theoretical framework follows. The bulk of the article is devoted to presentation of empirical findings. We discuss cases of women who teach Norwegian, work for Scandinavian companies in Poland, apply nursing skills acquired in Norway in Polish health clinics as well as women who established businesses inspired by Norwegian lifestyles and women who changed their own lifestyles and acquired a new outlook on gender roles. In the conclusions, we explore how socio-cultural remittances transform the mobile women and to what extent they bring about social change.

Reflections on the Research Process

The research team followed the principles of multi-sited ethnography, a method of data collection that allowed us to trace a topic through different field sites in Norway (Oslo, Bergen, Kristiansund, Drammen) and in Poland (Poznań, Warsaw, Gdańsk, Koszalin), and analytically explore transnational processes, people in motion, and ideas that extend over multiple locations (Marcus 1995). While prized by some (Rouse 1992; Benton, Sangaramoorthy & Kalofono 2017), the multi-sited approach is critiqued by others (e.g. Hage 2005; Candea 2007; Falzon 2009). Those who favor multi-sited ethnography – we count ourselves among this group – consider it a must in the contemporary highly-networked world, where culture is "de-territorialized", and where ethnographers deal with a high level of mobility among people.

Our studies were limited to a relatively small geographic area which reduced logistical challenges. Additionally, the studies were conducted by a team

of several anthropologists who concentrated on specific localities and returned to them several times in the course of the multi-year projects. While we would have loved to become "thick ethnographers" and spent prolonged periods of time in one locality (Bourdieu 1993), embarking on the research on nurses, we knew that these busy professionals, with unpredictable schedules resulting from being on call and having to respond to emergencies, would not be available to talk to us for more than a couple of hours at a time, that "deep hanging out" in healthcare establishments required official permissions and, even when those were granted, our ability to shadow our interlocutors was very limited.

The team members interviewed the study participants mostly in person and occasionally via Skype. In total, we interviewed 130 women. The sample was unique because it included only women. When we began our study in 2015, most of the existing research on migration from Poland to Norway had focused either on men (Friberg & Tyldum 2007; Grabowska-Lusińska & Okólski 2009; Napierała & Trevena 2010; Friberg 2012; Pawlak 2015) or on families (Pustułka, Ślusarczyk & Strzemecka 2015; Bell & Erdal, 2015; Guribye et al. 2015; Slany et al. 2018). The most important characteristics of the studied cohort included: multiple migrations, move from larger cities in Poland, high educational background, relatively high number of single women, and young age (21–40 years old). We used a snowball sampling to select study participants. All interviews were conducted in Polish and lasted between one and three hours. Depending on the women's preferences, interviews were conducted at their homes, workplaces, and cafes. In some cases, we visited the women not once but twice or three times. Most interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The generated texts enabled close reading of the interviews. We used both thematic content analysis and narrative analysis to identify patterns and themes (Cook & Crang 1995).

Presenting the ethnographic data, we took great care to ensure the anonymity of the interviewed women. All names used in this article are pseudonyms; in some instances, names of cities where the women reside were also changed. The women consented to using the rich ethnographic details to make their migration stories come alive; details that could easily identify a particular participant were altered. The Polish community in Norway is fairly large, the interviewed women live in several far-flung areas, and tracing them on the basis of the information they shared would be difficult.

Much has been written about reflexivity (Berger 2013) and positionality (Bourke 2014) of the researcher/s conducting qualitative studies. After all, research is shaped by both researcher/s and study participant/s (England 1994). In positionality theory, it is acknowledged that because we have multiple overlapping identities, we make meaning from various aspects of those identities (Kezar 2002). The researchers had much in common with the study participants. All were born, raised, and educated in Poland. All were white cisgender individuals. With one exception, the researchers were female. Except for one senior female, all researchers were similar in age to the study participants. Two of the female researchers had migration experiences themselves. These similarities certainly facilitated easy access to Polish communities in Norway and in Poland. However, despite these commonalities, the researchers engaged in a continual dialogue, internal and external, and critical assessment of our positionality as both insiders (Polish, highly-educated, some also migrants) and outsiders (never lived in Norway, one male).

Mostly, the team members conducted their research separately, but occasionally two researchers spent several weeks working together in Norway. It enabled us to discuss our ongoing findings as well as adjust the research topics and theoretical perspectives. Additionally, we routinely debriefed each other on our findings. In some instances, different researchers interviewed the same study participant/s. All of these efforts ensured a high degree of reflexivity (Berger 2013).

Socio-cultural Remittances: It's not all about Money

The term "social remittances" – coined by Peggy Levitt in the late 1990s – is a relatively new concept. However, migration scholars observed changes in norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors stemming from migration as early as the 1900s. Thomas and Znaniecki (1918–1920) in their classic volumes *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* wrote about circulation of non-financial "goods" between origin and destination communities.

We use Peggy Levitt's definition of socio-cultural remittances: "[…] the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending countries." In Levitt's early understanding of the concept, these ideas and behaviors were "the north-to-south equivalent of the social and cultural resources that migrants bring with them" (Levitt 1998: 927). Later, Levitt and Lamba-Nieves focused "on how social remittances transform the meaning and worth of time, thereby changing the way they are accepted and valued and recalibrating the relationship between migration and development." They showcased "culture's importance in creating and mirroring successful societies" and emphasized that "(b)ringing culture back into migration scholarship means not only looking at the circulation of ideas, people, and objects but seeing migration as an inherently cultural act" (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2013: 12). Following their lead, in this article we use the term socio-cultural remittances.

While Levitt and Lamba-Nieves' research focused on migration between developing and developed countries and placed their findings within the migration-development nexus, other researchers explored socio-cultural remittances within the North-North migration, contesting the widespread assumption that socio-cultural remittances do not travel between developed countries in the same way they traverse the developed-developing nations (Garapich 2016; Grabowska & Garapich 2016; Haynes & Galasińska 2016; Karolak 2016; Vianello 2013). Our research also focuses on transmission of socio-cultural remittances within the North-North context. Given the high mobility of the studied women, we emphasize the fact that many of them remain connected both to the communities of origin and the communities they enter. In the migration literature, these relationships have been labeled "transnational migration circuits" (Rouse 1992), "transnational social fields" (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1994), "transnational communities" (Levitt 1998; Nagengast & Kearney 1990; Portes 1996; Mountz & Wright 1996), or "binational societies" (Guarnizo 1994).

Much of the research on socio-cultural remittances has focused on return migrants. Several scholars have written about Poles returning from the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States after Poland's accession to the European Union (Fihel & Grabowska-Lusińska 2014; Grabowska-Lusińska 2010; Anacka & Fihel 2012; White 2014; Jaźwińska & Grabowska 2017). Scholars have indicated that return migrants were entrepreneurial, possessed lots of economic, social, and cultural capital as well as valuable "innovative potential" (Iglicka 2002).

In this paper, we focus both on returns (physical and virtual) and transnational mobility. We also include in our analysis women who never migrated but benefited from migration between Poland and Norway. We unpack the concept of remittances not in terms of increased wages, savings accounts, purchasing power of the migrants – although all of these things were important to the interviewed women – but rather in terms of socio-cultural remittances they utilize to improve their livelihoods. We use socio-cultural remittances as an analytical tool to understand *what* Polish women living transnationally remit, *how* they remit various forms of social capital, and *toward what end* they remit things, behaviors, and ideas in order to answer a basic research question: How do socio-cultural remittances facilitate new opportunities for Polish women? We focus especially on the knowledge of Norwegian and its role in creating new employment and facilitating entrepreneurship. Additionally, we ask to what extent socio-cultural remittances transform the mobile women and generate social change.

"Everybody speaks Norwegian in Norway, but not in Poland": Teaching Norwegian

Several universities in Poland offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in Scandinavian studies, including Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish philology. During our fieldwork we came across a number of women who work mostly in Poland utilizing their academic degrees in Norwegian philology and additional language training in Norway. They benefit from the increased mobility between Poland and Norway and the resulting demand for language teachers and interpreters, both among Polish migrants and Norwegian institutions in Norway and in Poland. Interestingly, aside from a short-term practicum in Norway, some of these women never lived in Norway, but migration plans or the realities of others are at the center of their livelihoods.

Many migrants prefer to learn Norwegian with the assistance of Polish teachers. Several language schools in Poland offer online Norwegian language courses, but some graduates of Scandinavian programs work independently of such schools and register as entrepreneurs specializing in language courses or make individual arrangements with migrants for private lessons, online or in-person, depending whether the student is already living in Norway or planning to move to Norway. Anna, Helena, and Klara are examples of graduates of Norwegian philology who benefited from the migration boom and work as language tutors, interpreters, and translators.

Anna studied Scandinavian philology in the 1980s. English philology was already popular, and as she said, "it seemed interesting, but also a bit foolish" (*wariactwo*) to pursue a degree in English. Anna had neither personal connection to Norway nor had she ever traveled to the country. Upon graduation, Anna was offered a one-year scholarship and was finally able to experience Norway. Once her scholarship ended, Anna returned to Poland and started working as a teaching assistant at the university but soon resigned since "it had no future".

During the transformation in the 1990s, Anna worked for different international companies and gained considerable experience in the business sector over the next 15 years. When she was laid off, she looked for new career options. She took English language courses to become an English language tutor, but around 2011/2012 it dawned on Anna that her proficiency in Norwegian was an asset and a path to another career.

> I started to use it [Norwegian] at the moment when so many Poles moved to Norway and started to teach Norwegian because, paradoxically, there was a large niche on the market. […] courses offered in Norway often did not correspond to the participants' needs, […] they preferred to learn Norwegian with a Polish tutor. It is a galactic paradox, but that's how it works… so it was very easy for me to dust off my skills in Norwegian, it was so physiological… for a short time it [the language] was like being behind a glass window but it was just a moment and the glass was gone.

Anna's professional life changed radically after she discovered the usefulness of her degree. She now runs her own tutoring company. She likes the independence and flexibility it offers. Her clients include Poles living in Norway who want to improve their language skills to advance professionally; Poles planning to move to Norway; and Poles living in Poland with professional connections to Norway.

Helena is another Norwegian language teacher offering classes to Poles in Poland and in Norway. She became interested in Norway in secondary school when she joined a Polish-Norwegian Society in Warsaw, which organized cultural events as well as Norwegian language courses. Helena decided to further her interest in Norwegian culture and enrolled in the Norwegian philology program. While studying, she started to work as an interpreter, translator, and tutor. She now gives Norwegian lessons in person and via Skype. Helena visits Norway quite regularly, but is not considering migration.

Helena is amazed at the growing interest in Norwegian and in Norway. She never thought it would be possible to work using her knowledge of Norwegian. She planned to work as a teacher of German, which she speaks fluently. She observed:

> When Poland entered the EU, people started to go for work there, trade contacts were developing, and there is really a lot of work [for me]. I work mainly in Norwegian, now, not in German.

While Anna and Helena lived in Norway only for a year, Klara spent several years in the country. While a student of Norwegian philology in Poland, Klara worked as an *au pair* in Norway to improve her language skills. In 2005, after finishing her MA, Klara applied for an MA program in media studies in Norway. Klara and her boyfriend, an artist, wanted to go abroad for some time and Norway seemed like a good option. Once they arrived in Norway, they realized that there was a lot of work for people with Norwegian language skills. Klara recalled her experiences as follows:

> When I arrived, I called the commune and told them I was looking for a job. Each commune has a special section for interpretation services for schools, doctors, social services. When I first called, they said they didn't need Polish. However, after three weeks they called me back and said, "we were mistaken, lots of [Polish] children have enrolled in Norwegian schools and we need interpreters in schools." I thought: What children, what schools? For me interpretation was limited to conferences, translation of documents, and here they talked about schools! In Poland, there is practically no discussion about interpretation for regular people. This was the first time I encountered [this need]. It turned out that interpreters were needed during parent-teacher meetings, school activities, and when children needed to be vaccinated.

The couple spent four years in Norway studying and working but decided to return to Poland due to the difficulties Klara's partner had finding a job. As an artist, his career options were better in Poland, therefore, they returned. Yet, Klara continues to work in Norway. She commutes to Norway a few times a month to provide interpretation for Norwegian hospitals, courts, and other government offices dealing with Polish migrants who have not learned the Norwegian language at all or sufficiently enough to follow official proceedings and make important decisions. Klara is very satisfied with her work arrangements. The huge wage gap between Poland and Norway allows her "to earn in Norway, but spend in Poland." It is also easier for her to raise children in Poland because they have more contact with their Polish grandparents. Klara likes her schedule because she can concentrate on her work for a few days and still have energy for other things. She has the agency to decide how much and when she works to accommodate her own and her family's needs. When she is not in Norway, Klara works from her home translating documents.

"Knowing Norwegian is also useful in other fields": Working for Scandinavian Companies

While the majority of the Norwegian philology graduates worked as language teachers and interpreters, several of our interlocutors worked for a variety of Scandinavian companies, which moved their operations to Poland. These women were originally hired for their language skills, but in the process of working for these companies also acquired new competencies. Katarzyna, Laura, and Sonia are great examples of young women gaining educational and social capital by working for different Scandinavian firms. While they are very happy in their current jobs, they think of the new skills as assets they can take with them to other employment situations.

Shortly after graduation, Katarzyna landed a job as a copy editor for a Norwegian publisher with offices in Poland. Katarzyna liked the fact that she was able to utilize her knowledge of Norwegian, but found the work tedious. As interest in all things Norwegian increased in Poland, Katarzyna was recruited by a Polish publisher interested in publishing Scandinavian children's literature. Katarzyna jumped at the opportunity and took the new job liaising with literary agents in Norway, covering book fairs, and negotiating royalties for books to be translated into Polish and published in Poland. Comparing the two jobs, she said:

> Working for the Norwegian publisher, I mainly worked with manuscripts. Trying to spot every spelling or punctuation mistake was like plucking small feathers. Here [in the Polish publishing house], I don't just proof-read, but also use my math skills to calculate royalties, and go to book fairs. I get to talk to readers […] and negotiate with literary agents – both Scandinavian and German – and oversee the acquisition of copyrights.

When asked whether she plans to move to Norway, Katarzyna said that in Poland her skills are unique and she can have stable employment for years to come, but in Norway she would not have the same advantage. She joked: "Everybody speaks Norwegian in Norway!"

Katarzyna is very pleased that she is also acquiring new skills in the publishing industry, including contract negotiations, talent spotting, and accounts management. She thinks this educational capital would serve her well if she wanted to change jobs. She goes to Norway regularly, both on business and on vacation. She cultivates professional and private relationships with Norwegians in the publishing industry and beyond. She said about the socio-cultural remittances and social capital she is acquiring: "I realized how important networking is." She supplements her income by teaching Norwegian to Polish nurses and dentists. In developing specialized curricula for her students, Katarzyna gained yet another asset: expanded medical vocabulary in Norwegian. She thinks that if she wanted, she could write a Norwegian language textbook for medical professionals.

Laura worked as a Norwegian language teacher for a few years, but she has recently moved north to start a job as a copy-editor in a Norwegian publishing house. We credit Laura with the idea to write this paper. In a conversation with one of the authors, she said:

> There are many new employment opportunities in Poland because of Polish migration to Norway. There is a big demand for Norwegian language teachers and in recruitment firms where they need staff who speaks both Polish and Norwegian. In my opinion, this industry [recruitment agencies] is booming. I think that's why so many people want to study Norwegian.

Like Katarzyna, Laura hopes that she will gain new skills easily transferable to other employment situations. At the time of our interview, Laura had just finished a training for new employees and got a glimpse at the cultural differences in treating staff, the emphasis on life-work balance, and the importance of not taking work home, to name a few examples. Laura thinks there will be more to discover as she gets comfortable in her new position.

Sonia's first degree was in archeology, but when she could not find a job, she decided to enroll in the Norwegian philology program. Shortly after graduating, she got a job with a Norwegian furniture store in Poland as part of a team setting up new Human Resources and Payroll systems, mainly with an eye toward outsourcing these functions. As part of this effort, Sonia has gone on many business trips to Oslo. She estimates that she spent about seven or eight months in the last two years working closely with Norwegian colleagues in Norway.

Fluency in Norwegian has also been beneficial to women who did not study Norwegian in Poland but acquired near-native fluency in the language while working in Norway. While most of the interviewed language teachers have graduate degrees in Norwegian philology, we encountered several women who did not have formal training in Norwegian but learnt the language on their own and now this knowledge serves as a basis for their tutoring businesses. Agata is a good example of this group of women.

Agata fell in love with the Norwegian language when she first started going to Norway as a student to earn money during summer vacation. However, once she and her boyfriend settled in northern Norway, she decided to turn her linguistic skills into business and set up an online Norwegian language program for nurses. Having worked as an assistant for home-bound people, Agata noticed an increased number of Polish nurses being hired by healthcare establishments. She quickly put two and two together and a very successful language program was born. At the moment, Agata and her boyfriend live in

Norway, but she remarked: "It's a very portable enterprise and if I ever return to Poland, I can continue teaching Norwegian." Agata's emphasis on medical vocabulary makes her a sought-after tutor by firms recruiting Polish nurses to work in Norway.

While many of the women we write about in this paper have physically returned to Poland, we think Agata is an interesting example of a woman who acquired socio-cultural remittances and educational capital and uses them in cyberspace. Many of her students don't know where she is physically when they log onto Skype to have their tutorial. Agata advertises her services mainly on Facebook, in Polish. Most of her students are still in Poland; they take her language courses as they prepare to assume jobs as nurses in Norway. Therefore, Agata teaches "back at home." In a way, Agata has expanded our conceptualization of socio-cultural remittances beyond the traditional understanding of socio-cultural remittances as ideas and behaviors sent or brought back home. It seems that to bring something back home does not necessarily mean one has to be home physically. Agata performs "returning home" in cyberspace every time she starts a tutoring session.

Nursing Skills Enhanced in Norway Brought Back Home

One of the studies we are utilizing to inform this paper focused on Polish nurses working in Norway. A few of the nurses we talked with have returned home and are applying lessons learnt in the Norwegian healthcare and eldercare institutions in Poland. Bożena worked as a registered nurse in Norway for a few years but, having realized that medical tourism from Scandinavia to Poland was booming, she returned to her native Gdańsk to assume a position at a private clinic catering solely to Scandinavian patients. She said:

> Truth be told, I missed Poland and my family, but the money in Norway was good, so I stayed for a little while. But I came home one day for vacation and noticed how many medical establishments advertised services for Scandinavians. I asked around and found this clinic. I love it here. In the nursing home I worked in Norway, things were kind of boring. Here I utilize both my nursing and my language skills.

Bożena is a coveted employee not solely because of her nursing credentials and fluency in Norwegian, but also for her cross-cultural skills in dealing with patients from Norway. The clinic's medical personnel consult with Bożena all the time on best practices for approaching foreign patients. Bożena continues to work in Norway for about a month each year to keep up her Norwegian and to learn about new advances in nursing. The experiences – medical know-how, cultural differences in attitudes toward patients, and language skills – affected her earning power. She is aware of the privileged position she has due to the socio-cultural remittances she brought back.

Beata[4] went to Norway in 2000 to work as a nurse. She describes her decision, her arrival in Bergen, and her work there in a book aptly titled *Norwegian Diary* (Babiarczyk 2007). It is an interesting account of settling into a new country, new language, and a familiar job, but in a very different cultural context. After four years, Beata decided to come back to Poland. She describes her dilemma in the book as follows:

> The issue of "staying or returning" is an eternal dilemma of many migrants, torn between "heart and reason." I know, because I have discussed this with many migrants. I know, because I experienced this dilemma myself. (2007: 79)

Beata's four-year sojourn in Norway has had a profound effect on her. She writes:

> My stay in Norway has changed me, I hope for the better. It shaped me, it strengthened my self-esteem, and made me believe in myself. Of course, it also significantly affected my financial situation. I believe I have other possibilities now, and, to a large extent, I am able to decide my own fate. I am not afraid of any challenges. (2007: 80)

Beata goes on to write about the "safety valve" (*wentyl bezpieczenstwa*) she has – licence to practice

nursing not just in Norway but in other Scandinavian countries, excellent command of the Norwegian language, and practical experience in Norwegian hospitals – that would enable her to return to Norway if things do not work out in Poland.

Another nurse, Grażyna, also spent a few years in Norway and eventually returned to Poland. When asked if her experiences working as a nurse in Norway in any way affected her professional work upon return, Grażyna said:

> My experiences were important both for my professional development and my general outlook on life. I have not necessarily learnt many new nursing skills, but I have definitely gained a new "openness to the world" (*otwarcie na świat*).

It seems that the self-esteem Grażyna acquired in Norway served her well. Since her return to Poland, Grażyna received a Ph.D. in health sciences. She is currently teaching at a university in southern Poland, where she also coordinates an Erasmus program for nursing students. She has an impressive list of publications. About her academic work, she said the following:

> Yes, my professional development and my scientific endeavors are partially related to my experiences in Norway. Working in a nursing home, I became quite interested in geriatrics and gerontology. I also had the opportunity to experience the Norwegian care system for the elderly, which was much more advanced than in Poland. Norwegians paid a lot of attention to the dignity of the aging process. This inspired me to immerse myself in this field.

Grażyna continues her professional contacts with colleagues in Norway, including with the University of Oslo in her capacity as an Erasmus coordinator. She also had an internship at a nursing school in Oslo while pursuing her doctoral studies. She stays in contact with people she met in Norway via e-mail, visits the country every couple of years, and reads books in Norwegian to keep up her language skills.

Some of the nurses we interviewed acquired a whole range of socio-cultural remittances, especially with regards to attitudes toward their patients, the aging process, the way they approach dying patients, and the way they behave on the job. Irena works in a large hospital in Bergen on a ward that treats many terminally ill people. She remarked how difficult it was for her to accept Norwegian doctors' and nurses' attitude to dying patients. "In Poland, we would undertake heroic measures until the very end to prolong a dying person's life. It took me a long time to understand that sometimes you just have to let go and allow the patient to make peace with their illness, to die in dignity."

Another nurse told our colleague that caring and nursing mean "something different" in Norway. "I had to learn how to walk," she said. In Poland, where she worked in a hospital for many years, she was expected to adhere to a rather rapid pace. Thus, walking quickly in Polish hospitals was a "normal" and "obvious" way of being a nurse. "You have to work fast if you want to cover all the patients during your shift," she added. She was surprised that her way of walking raised concerns. She learned that by walking briskly, she unconsciously created a nervous atmosphere, a sense that something alarming is happening on the ward. In order to accommodate the new culture of work, she had to slow down and learn a new way of walking through hospital corridors (Pawlak 2018).

Several other nurses indicated that they would like to utilize experiences they gained in Norway when they return to Poland. A couple spoke of setting up private nursing homes upon return. At present, it is difficult to ascertain how realistic these plans are, but it was interesting to hear them articulate the need to change attitudes to eldercare in Poland. One of the interviewees mentioned how working in a Norwegian nursing home changed her personal attitudes toward her own aging parents. She said:

> I never thought I would contemplate putting my mom into a nursing home. I always thought that I would have to quit my job and take care of her when the time comes, but now, I think, she might be better off in a good nursing home.

Return Migrants Investing in Business Ventures in Poland

Better earnings were definitely a motivating factor to go to Norway for many women in our sample. However, the earned money was not solely spent to support a certain life style. While many women saved money to put a down payment on a house or to buy a flat in Poland, none of the interviewed women sent remittances to support other family members. Several, however, saved money to invest in business ventures in Poland upon return. Along with the investment capital, the women brought with them new attitudes toward financial independence and risk-taking. The migration experiences made them more agentic.

After graduating with a degree in social sciences from the University of Toruń, Zofia moved to Warsaw where she met Konrad. Zofia was not able to find a well-paid job and did not like living in a big city. She really wanted to move to the countryside:

> I did not have a house in a village, I had no chance of inheriting one either, so I thought that the only way to move to the countryside would be to earn money and buy a house. It was perhaps a strange utopian vision, but I couldn't let go of the idea.

Zofia and Konrad went to Norway for the first time in 2013 to earn enough money to invest in Poland. They returned to Norway two more times. After the first trip, they saved enough to buy a house in the mountains in south-east Poland. The second trip to Norway was to save money for renovation, and the last one to have enough capital to turn the house into a guesthouse. Zofia had diverse experiences working in a hotel in Norway but she really enjoyed nature and spent her free time exploring the countryside. The sheer beauty of the country was one of the reasons Zofia and Konrad chose Norway. Zofia said "I loved to stay in the countryside, have clean air, and beautiful wild nature." It really confirmed that this was her lifestyle. Apart from money, they brought pieces of driftwood that they used to decorate their guesthouse in the mountains and a more general, less tangible, attitude toward recreation and the need to "commune with nature."

The love of nature and interest in the hospitality industry was an inspiration for another Polish couple who decided to open "a Norwegian village" in Western Poland. Originally, Renata and Alek went to Norway as tourists, but they loved the natural beauty of Norway so much that they decided to "make a little Norway in the heart of Poland". They explained this idea to a journalist:

> Norway enchanted us with its openness, simplicity, and lifestyle that derives from nature. We decided to live like Norwegians, yet not in a big city but in our own house in the forest. We knew it would be impossible in the short time. At first, we would have to live and work for many years in the city to save enough money because the prices of real estate in Norway are very high. The dreams about the Norwegian countryside and life in the midst of the Scandinavian nature were almost impossible for us. (Zbierska 2018)

Instead, the couple bought a piece of land in Poland and first built a little cottage (*hytte*). Later, they added a wooden barn, a few more cottages, and a small farm with a few reindeers, and Shetland ponies. They named buildings and paths in Norwegian, decorated in Norwegian style, and offer imported Norwegian cheese for breakfast. Renata and Alek organized their Norway-inspired agritourist farm for Poles and foreigners interested in spending time outdoors, being silent and peaceful or just relaxing. Step by step, they realized their dream with their own savings and family support. While the remitted money was important to the couple's enterprise, the socio-cultural remittances were as important to the whole enterprise.

Acquiring a Scandinavian Style of Living (and Working)

Several women talked at length about working conditions and support for individuals and families in Norway. Many perceived the issue of work-life balance as a "Scandinavian invention." Barbara and

Elżbieta, both mothers of small children, talked about the benefits of paid parental leave and subsidized childcare that provided them with the opportunity to balance careers with family life. Barbara who works as a researcher remarked:

> I can leave the office in time to pick up my boys at a daycare. Nobody begrudges me this privilege. In fact, my boss encourages me to participate in the activities at my older son's pre-school.

Elżbieta was encouraged to return to work after her maternity leave by her female colleagues who remarked that it was relatively easy to combine motherhood and work because of existing pro-family policies. Sonia, too, said that "the working hours are very reasonable and there is a lot of emphasis on work-life balance." She gave examples of supervisors "ordering" employees to go home if something needed their attention and assigning their duties to others. She said nobody minded taking on additional tasks because they knew that when they needed the time off to attend to personal matters, they, too, would be granted some reprieve. She thought this was somewhat of a paradox because Norwegians are very private and reserved people and usually do not invite their co-workers to their homes, do not go out socially with co-workers, and yet "private" matters such as illness in the family, difficulties with teenage children or divorce are known among co-workers and support is being provided.

Sonia thought these socio-cultural remittances will serve her well when she changes jobs. She has her sights set on a Norwegian firm based in northern Poland. She thinks that in order to be competitive, Polish employers will need to change their attitudes toward their employees and take into account that they are humans with private lives.

Other women talked about being able to balance family and work obligations with their own needs: finding time for self-development, enjoying the outdoors, pursuing sports and hobbies. Małgorzata, a young, single woman, who works as a nurse, said she was able to combine work with her love of hiking. She enrolled in a hiking club to have regular exercise and the ability to see Norway. Małgorzata goes on hiking trips virtually every weekend. She said: "It is my sacred time. These trips rejuvenate me!" Even women who never lived in Norway, but visited their husbands who worked there, noticed the enjoyment Norwegians gain from nature. Lena said "she learnt to enjoy life much more" after vacationing in Norway. Teresa emphasized how her appreciation of nature flourished after a few visits to Norway. She now spends much more time outdoors in Poland.

The issue of work-life balance is very visible in a number of popular publications – novels and "how-to" books – devoted to *hygge*, general well-being, and love of nature. Many of these books have been translated into Polish and captivated the imagination of numerous Poles. There are also Polish authors who write about life in Norway, including Anna Kurek, who has a degree in Norwegian studies, and blogs about Norway and the Norwegian language (https://norwegolozka.com/o-mnie/). She is the author of a book entitled *Happy Like a Salmon*, referring to the saying that happy Norwegians are like a happy salmon (*å være en glad laks*). The title corresponds to the notion that a typical Norwegian is a happy Norwegian. Some authors are a bit more critical of Norway. Nina Witoszek, for instance, in her book "The best country in the world" (*Najlepszy kraj na świecie*) questions the myth of Norway as an ideal democracy with unsurpassed social welfare.

Popular websites about things Norwegian, and more generally Scandinavian, seem to affect vacation choices of many Poles (http://skandynawia.net.pl/norwegia-zycie-codzienne/). Publishers report increased interest in Norwegian literature. Polish authors such as Ilona Wiśniewska wrote reportages about Finnmark and Vardo in Northern Norway. Her books *Hen* (Far away) and *Białe* (White) have received many awards and sold numerous copies. These cultural phenomena have made an impact on Polish society. This impact goes hand-in-hand with the socio-cultural remittances brought back by return migrants and transnationally mobile Polish women.

"I have had enough of Polish misogyny!" Changing Gender Roles

Gender was a big part of our conversations with the interviewed women. Gender relations and gender conceptualizations are always embedded in social, cultural, economic, and political realms, but it does not mean that they are static. On the contrary, they are negotiated and often transformed in the migratory context. Many of our interlocutors spoke at length about gender identities and gender roles, comparing attitudes toward women and ways of bringing up daughters in Norway and in Poland.

Katarzyna came to Norway with her six-year-old son to join her husband, Jan. She did not speak any Norwegian but, needing to interact with her son's teachers, she learnt it quickly. Katarzyna and Jan have a construction company and since Jan is not fluent in Norwegian, it is Katarzyna who manages the company and negotiates with Norwegian clients. Along with her language skills, Katarzyna has also learnt a lot about architectural design and was able to use some of that knowledge when the couple designed their vacation home in Poland. Most importantly, the experiences of living and working in Norway had an impact on her approach to and understanding of gender relations. Katarzyna recalled that when she shops in Norway to buy construction supplies, she is treated like a professional. In Poland, on the other hand, the men working in a home depot question her every request. She said:

> I have to go to Poland for a month and a half and, frankly, I'm quite terrified to be there for so long. Together with my girlfriend we joke that in Norway nothing can surprise us, not like in Poland. Here, for example, it's nothing unusual that a woman is operating a cement mixer… but in Poland it's unthinkable. Here, as an owner of a construction company, when I go to the building depot, they treat me like a professional, as it should be. […] In Poland, when I needed special wooden rafters for our house, I had to go to a sawmill, because you cannot get them in a building depot. So, when I went there, they were all like "whose idea was it? Such strange rafters?" I had to explain that it was my idea derived from Scandinavian architecture… I had to explain myself and justify my knowledge. Same with building depots in Poland, they don't treat me like a professional, because I'm a woman. […] In Norway, it's impossible to experience such things.

For Katarzyna, the experiences of living and working in Norway had an impact on her own understanding of gender relations. By comparing different contexts of practicing gendered relations and identities, Katarzyna positions herself and her well-being in a particular social world. Katarzyna feels a sense of belonging in the professional world in Norway, where her gender does not define her skills. She resents the fact that she is not treated the same way in Poland.

Karolina, who has a five-year-old daughter, cannot imagine raising her in Poland. Karolina appreciates the freedoms her daughter can experience in Kindergarten where children are taught independence and gender equality from an early age. Talking about her desire to stay in Oslo, Karolina said:

> Emphasis on equality is the main factor. In Poland, women's status has always been deplorable, and now it is simply tragic. I don't want my daughter to grow up in a society that condones domestic violence and discriminates [against] girls and women. Poland is not a country for women.

Karolina wants her young daughter to be raised as an equal member of the society and does not think that would be possible in Poland. Karolina also wants Polish women living in Oslo to embrace feminist ideas. She found a few like-minded women at the university where she has just finished her doctorate and they have organized a Polish-Norwegian feminist group. However, so far, she has not been able to find many Polish women who would like to become active in the group. Most of the women who came together to support Polish women during the "Black Monday" (*Czarny poniedziałek*)[5] demonstration were young Norwegian women who heard about the struggles of Polish women in Poland. However,

Karolina is happy that she has gained political allies through her involvement in the feminist movement (see Youkhana 2015). She discusses her ambitions with female relatives and friends when she goes to Poland for a visit, but, as she says, "much of it falls on deaf ears."

Migration to Norway was an emancipatory project for some of the women in our studies (Herzberg 2015). Moving to Norway, the women gained access to a less hierarchical society, where gender equality is practiced to a much larger extent than in Poland (Gjestad, Herzberg & Nødland et al. 2016). Several of the women with children stressed how much they appreciated both the paid parental leave and the financial assistance for single mothers. Availability of these benefits made them look at their position within the society and the family in a very different light. When they discuss these issues in Poland, many of them resonate with their friends and young women in the family.

Study participants had many common characteristics: high levels of education, same ethnicity, whiteness. However, their attitudes to feminism, religion or their family situation were diverse. "People are affected simultaneously by the social treatment of a multitude of characteristics" (Guittar & Guittar 2015: 654). Multiple dimensions of their identities played a role in their migratory experiences and decisions. The concept of intersectionality analyzes "experiences based on the interconnection of ethnicity, race, class, gender, nationality, religion, sexuality, and any other social categories that situate one's experience in relation to power in society" (Guittar & Guittar 2015: 660). As shown above, intersectionality allowed us to see Polish migrant women as a heterogenous group despite having many similar characteristics.

Conclusions: Who Benefits from the Socio-cultural Remittances?

We have presented empirical findings indicating *what* socio-cultural remittances – language skills, nursing skills, entrepreneurial abilities, attitudes toward gender and nature – our interlocutors utilize in transnational space. We have also shown *how* these remittances are transferred – by opening businesses, finding jobs requiring new skills, and serving as role models. As already emphasized, the socio-cultural remittances are not always transferred to Poland upon return, but are frequently deployed in the transnational space by people like Katarzyna who "lives" in Norway but spends time in Poland (vacationing and building a home) or Agata who uses her socio-cultural remittances in cyberspace. In the concluding section, we attempt to answer the remaining question: *toward what ends* are these remittances transferred or who benefits from these remittances?

The literature on socio-cultural remittances increasingly conceptualizes migrants as "norm entrepreneurs" and "transnational agents of social change" (Glick Schiller, Basch & Blanc Szanton 1992; Levitt 1998). The "development-migration nexus" (Kapur 2004) framework has gradually been extended to other realms such as the political scene and scholars have argued that migrants are "new and unaccounted power groups" (Itzigsohn & Villacrés 2008) and "vectors of […] mass-level type of democratic diffusion" (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2010). Scholars examining the transfer of remittances between developed and developing countries write about socio-cultural remittances affecting change in communal practices and strategies to realize collective projects (improving infrastructure, building schools and hospitals, affecting political behavior) (Collyer 2014; Lafleur 2011; Morales & Giugni 2011).

With few exceptions (Gawlewicz 2015), there is limited literature on how socio-cultural remittances travel between Polish migrants and their families and friends that stayed behind. In particular, there is very little understanding of how and to what extent Polish female migrants influence, negotiate, and challenge each other's attitudes toward social and cultural issues such as ethnic and gender diversity, acceptance of refugees and immigrants, to name a few examples. As Gawlewicz (2015: 2216) writes: "This is surprising given the fact that the effects of migrant encounters with embodied difference have been increasingly discussed" (see also Cook, Dwyer & Waite 2011; Fox 2013; Phillips et al. 2013).

Using post-2004 migration between Poland and UK as an example, she explores circulation of attitudes toward difference between Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland. Her study is limited to the effects of socio-cultural remittances on interpersonal relationships and does not extend to community-wide or societal changes brought about by circulation of socio-cultural remittances. We could surmise that Gawlewicz did not find evidence of societal changes or that these issues were not part of her research questions. The ethnographic data suggests the first. Her interviewees focused mainly on changes brought about within the personal sphere.

In our study, we also have not seen any evidence of women undertaking large-scale projects for social change. While women like Katarzyna seem to want to model new gender identities and expect Polish men to treat women equally, we have not seen women deploying socio-cultural remittances to change, for example, gender policies in Poland. Karolina is an exception to this rule. Getting involved in marches and demonstrations condemning harsh abortion policies in Poland, she hopes to both increase participation of Polish women living in Norway in political causes and send a signal of support to women demonstrating in Poland. As her circle of like-minded women expands, perhaps she will undertake activities that go beyond symbolic support and get involved with female activists in Poland (Federacja 2016).

Scholars of socio-cultural remittances do emphasize that they "are always intentional, interactive, and accompanied by various scales of measured social effect […]. Thus, migrants generate their social remittances with a particular meaning/purpose in order to make a specific effect upon their community, while their lives also interact with sending and receiving societies in different ways" (Isaakyan & Triandafyllidou 2017: 2789; see also Carling 2014; and Mazzucato 2011).

These exceptions notwithstanding, most of our interlocutors are examples of highly individualized migrants who treat migration as an empowerment strategy and well-planned development of their knowledge, education, and skills. They had many common characteristics (gender, age, education, ethnicity, whiteness), but they were also different in their attitudes to feminism, religion or their family situation. These same trends have been observed by other scholars studying Polish migrants (e.g., Galasińska & Kozłowska 2009; Isański, Mleczko & Seredynska-Abou Eid 2014). Isański and colleagues (2014) discuss the post-accession Polish migration as "project ME," indicating that unlike other groups of migrants who use migration for survival or escape, Poles use migration for professional development. This trend was certainly true for many of the women in our study. We wonder whether with time, things will change. Will the women use the acquired attitudes, new ideas to launch community-wide efforts? Perhaps, but perhaps not. Our studies indicate that many Polish women intend to stay in Norway for considerable length of time, while maintaining a strong attachment to people and places in Poland. This situation is bound to result in a continuous exchange of ideas, skills, and practices.

Notes

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2 This work is part of the WELLMIG project, supported by the Research Council of Norway, grant number 250427.
3 While some of the nurses we studied included men, in this article we focus solely on women.
4 We actually never met Beata but found her diary so interesting that we decided to include her case in the analysis.
5 The "Black Monday" protest in 2016 was directed against the introduction of the total ban on abortion, prepared by the conservative government.

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