

POLISH SUCCESSFUL MIGRANTS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE WESTERN EUROPE METROPOLITAN AREAS

ALEKSANDER POSERN-ZIELIŃSKI

POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
POZNAŃ

The aim of the paper is to present some of the results of a research project on the adaptation strategy of Polish migrants living in five west European capitals (Berlin, Dublin, London, Oslo, and Stockholm). The target group was composed of migrants who had settled in host countries either before and after the accession of Poland into EU. The migrants selected for the investigation belong to the category of well integrated and successful people. The central aim of the study is to present the mechanisms and circumstances of the process of achieving success. The migrants' success is identified here in two ways: according to objective criteria (social and economic advances), and in terms of emic perspectives, disclosing a subjective satisfaction of migrants and their feelings of well-being. Another topic discussed in the paper is the transnational context of the adaptation and integration process. The importance of social and cultural capital brought by migrants from their country of origin and their openness and positive attitude toward the receiving country is also delineated. One of the most interesting findings is that migrant success is more often achieved in the context of relative isolation from the ethnic community (diaspora) established in the host country. At the same time the "migrants of success" participate frequently in an informal social network of ethnic relations and continue to maintain ties with the home country.

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Artykuł przedstawia niektóre istotne, ustalenia dokonane w ramach projektu badawczego poświęconego polskim migrantom w kilku stolicach zachodniej Europy (Berlinie, Dublinie, Londynie, Oslo i Sztokholmie). Badaniami objęci zostali imigranci, którzy osiedlili się w tych miastach zarówno przed jak i po wstąpieniu Polski do UE. Szczególna uwaga zwrócona została na „Polaków sukcesu”, którzy w nowym środowisku dobrze zintegrowali się ze społeczeństwem i krajem osiedlenia. Jednocześnie przedstawiony został mechanizm i warunki osiągania sukcesu przez migrantów. Sukces ten zinterpretowany został z dwóch perspektyw: jako zjawisko obiektywnego awansu migrantów wynikającego z osiągniętej pozycji społeczno-zawodowej i ekonomicznej oraz jako fenomen ujmowany emicznie, tj. wynikający z subiektywnego poczucia satysfakcji opartej na statusie „dobrostanu”. Omówiono również związki zachodzące między transnarodowymi powiązaniem migrantów a ich skuteczną adaptacją i integracją. Zwrócono przy tym uwagę na znaczenie kapitału społecznego i kulturowego migrantów, z którym przybyli oni do nowego kraju, a także na takie ich cechy sprzyjające sukcesowi, jak otwartość, elastyczność i pozytywny stosunek do kraju i społeczeństwa przyjmującego. Jednym z bardziej interesujących ustaleń jest to, które wskazuje, iż bardzo często sukces migracyjny został osiągnięty w warunkach względnej izolacji od zinstytucjonalizowanego środowiska etnicznego (diaspory polskiej). Jednakowoż nie oznacza to, iż Polacy sukcesu odcinają się radykalnie od swego rdzennego środowiska, tylko tworzą własne sieci kontaktów z bliskimi i przyjaciółmi oraz kontynuują różnorodne związki z krajem pochodzenia.

Key words: Polish migrants, success, integration, adaptation.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The central themes of the anthropological research project presented below were the adaptive strategies of migrants from Poland along with their integration efforts. At the heart of the project, carried out from 2015–2018 by a team of Polish anthropologists, and headed by myself, was the question of immigrant success¹. Therefore we decided to study the mostly invisible group of transnational Polish migrants currently living in five metropolitan areas of western Europe, namely in Berlin, London, Dublin, Oslo, and Stockholm. As a matter of fact, our main target group has been composed by Poles who had migrated to the West immediately after the accession of Poland to the European Union in 2004, with the migration peak during the period from 2007 to 2012 (White 2011). To some degree we also investigate Polish migrants who left their home country in the 1980s and '90s as a push effect of Marshall Law². According to Polish terminology the older migration wave is usually labeled as “post-solidarity migration”, and the second one – as “post-accession migration” (Friberg 2012). Among both groups of migrants there are many successful Poles who have adapted well to their countries of residence and who are well integrated with the mainstream of their host societies. The period spanning Poland’s incorporation into the EU and the years of our field research is in fact long enough to offer the possibility to observe the trajectories of migrants’ adaptations and the process of achieving success by some of the most active migrants, whom we term here – “the Poles of success”. The term has only a symbolic meaning for us, because we have focused our attention on a much broader group of “successful Poles”, instead of concentrating on the much more narrow and elitist group composed of eminent scholars, artists, and businessmen.

I should stress here, that the frequently used word “success” in my paper – is here applied as a kind of metaphorical expression adapted to the category of migrants, who in spite of many objective obstacles and barriers, typical for immigrants experiences, were able to realize their dreams and establish a satisfactory place/position in a new

¹ The project (No. 2014/13/B/HS3/04927) under the title “Polacy sukcesu – między emigracją a transnarodowością. Nowe oblicze polskiej diaspory w Europie zachodniej” [Poles of success – between emigration and transnationality. The New shape of Polish diaspora in Western Europe] was approved and supporting financially by the “Narodowe Centrum Nauki” [National Science Center]. It was carried out by a team of five anthropologists: A. Szymoszyn and A. Szczepaniak-Kroll (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology PAS), R. Beszterda (Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń), and Ł. Kaczmarek (Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), under the supervision of A. Posern-Zieliński (Polish Academy of Sciences).

² Marshall Law was introduced by the Communist regime during the period of Solidarity’s burgeoning socio-political influence and was followed by the early years of Poland’s transformation into a market economy, which initially brought about serious social crises, high unemployment rates, and feelings of disappointment (Gomułka 2016).

country. At the center of the research is aim to: understand the process of achieving success, to identify the circumstances of migrants' progress, and capture the emic perspective of the migrants' experiences, their opinion of their achieved well-being, and their subjective feeling of satisfaction.

Another topic covered by the project was the transnational context of the integrational process. The crucial question here is the dilemma: which factors are more important in the process of achieving success: a) strong ties with one's own national community (diaspora) formed abroad, or b) the opposite strategy: deep incorporation into the host society. We identified a strong tendency that real success has been more often achieved in relative isolation from their own established ethnic community in the host country. However this context does not mean that successful Poles have decided to break all their ties with their own compatriots. On the contrary, they have participated frequently in a kind of informal social network of ethnic relations that has been built in a given host country/city and simultaneously have maintained some ties with the home country.

Additionally, the process of acculturation and assimilation among recent successful migrants is also observed with the aim of identifying how the social and cultural capital they brought from the home country could influence the speed and quality of acquiring new competences needed to succeed in the host country.

There are lot of published texts – both in Poland and in the diaspora – on individual successful Polish migrants, but a majority of them are short reports, press releases, and interviews depicting the biographical histories of, e.g. scientists, businessmen, artists, and physicians. Such stories are usually published to combat the power of the dominant stereotype of Polish migrants, found on the lower levels of social strata. Stories on individual achievements of Polish migrants succeeding in the mainstream society of a receiving country have the potential to change the popular image of Poles abroad and instead create a positive picture, showing, that within a broader category of migrants, there are individuals who, in spite of objective barriers, were able to achieve success in a number of prestigious fields.

In contrast to the articles in popular press, the issue of successful Polish migrants has been understudied in the social sciences. Instead, a majority of studies have focused more on the mainstream groups of migrants. Such a situation is the result of two factors: firstly reaching this largely dispersed category of people during the fieldwork is difficult, and secondly, it is quite hard to extract relevant data from statistical sources. Another issue is the need for such studies to develop more sophisticated research tools than regular methods used by sociologists or demographers. According to the experiences of my anthropological team, the most effective approach to such a target group was without doubt ethnographical deep interviews, based on biographical schemes, combined with mutual understanding, trust and a sympathy between researcher and respondent. An important problem during the research was the issue of reaching and

selecting potential respondents corresponding to the roughly defined criteria of ‘successful migrants’. This problem was initially solved by personal contacts with the Polish diaspora community, including activists and ethnic authorities, and expanding from here, the next stages of research using the “snowball” method were effectively applied³.

TARGET COUNTRIES

The project was carried out in those countries of western Europe where Polish migrants have established a large presence, especially in metropolitan settings. It is in such urban environments that migrants have found the best conditions for achieving success. It should be stressed here that among the target group, a majority of migrants are well educated, and have been able to take advantage of their professional competences.

For comparative purposes, the study was conducted in three different regions of western Europe. The first target area is Germany, which has traditionally been considered as an attractive destination for Polish immigrants since the nineteenth century and remains popular to this day (Praszałowicz 2010, Wolff-Powęska and Schulz 2000, Nowosielski 2011). The number of successful Poles in Germany is growing, especially in Berlin, thanks to the potential opportunities offered by the capital and its close proximity to the Polish border. Many of the Polish inhabitants of the city have established their own businesses, others work as employees in local companies operating in the Polish-German market, taking advantage of their competences in both languages, cultures, and economic systems. According to some current estimations around two million migrants from Poland (of different legal status and migration background) currently live in Germany. They are mostly dispersed in large and middle sized cities in the former West Germany, such Munich, Frankfurt, Mannheim, and of course Berlin, where their population totals around 100 thousand (Zensusdatenbank 2011). Among those migrants there is a large group of young, well-educated people, with a lot of social capital that has allowed them to reach their goals successfully.

Since WWII the UK has been a home for many refugees and DPs from Poland; even the Polish Government in Exile was based in London during the Cold War and the Communist regime in Poland. Over the course of time this “old emigration”, composed mainly of “intelligentsia” and war veterans, became quite well integrated with the host society (Stachura 2004, Sword 1989, Zubrzycki 1956, Patterson 1961). But after accession of Poland to EU, a new and sizeable wave of young migrants (many of them from small towns, the countryside and regions affected by high unemployment

³ More on the methodological assumptions, description of the research and the approach applied, see: Beszterda 2016; Szczepaniak-Kroll and Szymoszyn 2016.

rate, but also a lot of graduates) decided to move to “the Islands” looking for work, better opportunities, and to complete their education in UK and Ireland (Burrell 2009; White 2011). A majority of them found their place as simple workers in public services, construction, or transportation, but many newcomers relatively swiftly achieved more prestigious positions in, for example, the IT industry, the City, academia, or started their own small businesses (medical clinics, stores, restaurants, workshops etc.) (Irek 2012; Garapich 2012; Ryan 2010). Today around 900 thousand Polish migrants live in the UK and they constitute the largest national group among all newcomers from the EU countries. In the metropolitan area of London alone the Polish population is estimated at close to 160 thousand (Winiecka 2016, 116–124).

In contrast to UK, the republic of Ireland is a new destination for Polish migrants. Before the period of accession only a tiny group of Poles (numbering only a few hundred) were present on the “Green Island”. The situation changed dramatically when the “gates” were opened to migrants from Central Europe. Around 140 thousand Polish migrants currently live in Ireland, but a fixed number is hard to establish due to the mobility of many newcomers, who move to Belfast, London, continental Europe or just return to Poland (Kaczmarek 2017b).

The third region of our study is Scandinavia (Norway and Sweden), where a high percentage of educated Polish migrants are employed in accordance with their professional qualifications, which has of course been a contributing factor to their relative high social status (middle class). The Scandinavian migration policy also facilitates and speeds up the integration of newcomers and helps them economically and socially at the beginning of their settlement (see Wiesbrock 2011). The good working conditions, appropriate salaries, and high standard of living, all these factors mean that Sweden and Norway are becoming a permanent home for many Polish migrants. In Sweden the number of Poles is estimated at around 100 thousand, with approximately 30 thousand living in metropolitan area of Stockholm (Wiesbrock 2011). A similar number of Polish newcomers live in Norway (around 100 thousand) and they form the largest ethnic/immigrant group in the country. A majority of them have settled in the Oslo metropolitan area (Friberg 2012).

TARGET GROUP

The topic of success in migration studies has not been yet analyzed sufficiently, especially with regard to research on the Polish diaspora. The majority of research has been centered on groups: confronting social problems, poorly adapted to the new environment, requiring support, or forming isolated ethnic/national neighborhoods. Such approaches are relatively typical of all types of social studies, which prefer to concentrate their interest on marginal and exploited groups, people from lower social

strata (peasants, workers, minorities, or indigenous groups), and only rarely, if ever, paying attention to mainstream society, the middle class, elites, or successful members of society. In anthropology and related studies, however, there is now a growing tendency to shift from that traditional position toward studies on upper social strata and the highly skilled migrants (MacCleansy 2002).

Unsurprisingly the above mentioned tendency also exists in studies on Polish migration, (including anthropology). However, an anthropological approach that uses qualitative methods combined with ethnographic fieldwork would appear to have promising potential for studies on individual migrant strategies. Most recent research carried out by sociologists (who as usually prefer quantitative, hard data) has been focused on various economic aspects of migration and has analyzed the situation of migrants who have serious difficulties in coping with their life in the country of residence. On the contrary to the group identified as “migrants of survival”, the “migrants of well-being” or “migrants of success”, form an almost invisible category, as they are relatively dispersed, and rarely provoke any trouble. It is probably these elements that have been decisive for successful migrants not being an important focus of research interest. This notwithstanding, this category of migrants is noticeably growing. In contrast to traditional migrant communities, usually living in a compact grouping (ethnic/national neighborhood), the latter should be defined as a kind of “scattered” community, well integrated with the mainstream host society, yet still maintaining and/or building a social network of personal relations with compatriots of a similar status. In spite of their integration they usually maintain their Polish identity and preserve a strong interest in Polish current affairs. As such, thanks to their competences within both host and origin cultures and societies, they can operate freely in a network of transnational connections.

In the migration studies of today there are two basic and complimentary approaches analyzing the post-migration process of adaptation and integration: a) from the perspective of the majority of migrants trying to survive in a new country, and b) from the perspective of successful migrants, who in relative short time are able to achieve a stable economic position and level of life satisfaction. Both perspectives are important, interrelated and neither should be omitted or neglected.

The key word in the project is “success”, but in the course of our investigation, we discovered that the most important task should be the reconstruction of migrants’ biographical trajectories that have guided them to a successful life, their adaptation strategy in post-migration context, the importance of social and cultural capital as factors facilitating social advance, the ties with the home country, ways to build new social networks, the role of transnational connections, and the types of relationships with their own ethnic diaspora in country of residence (Beszterda 2016).

All these aspects were analyzed from anthropological perspectives, giving priority to the perception and evaluation of migrants themselves on the basis of their narratives.

The primary research task was to find out how the migrants speak about their success, how they try to define it, how they evaluate their own success, and which moment of their biography they treat as crucial for success.

Such an approach is important for two reasons. It allows researchers to see the post-migration process as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, composed of objective conditions, developed strategies, and respected values. On the other hand, research on migrant success helps reduce the impact of the still existing popular stereotype that sees Polish migrants as occupying only the lowest, unskilled jobs. Through such images the stereotypical recent Polish migrant works abroad cleaning dishes in an English pub, or as a plumber fixing a ruined bathroom in France, or as a construction worker remodeling an old Irish house for less than the market rate.

The road to migration success and effective integration is linked not only to the applied strategy, but also depends, to a large extent, on the nature of the initial migration process itself. The most distinctive types of such out-migrations leading from Central European countries to western Europe are as follows:

- a) Temporary employment seeking migrations to accumulate money and return to the home country with savings. However, in many cases, such stays have been transformed into more stable and longer periods of residence, especially after discovery of new job opportunities, adjustment to the new environment, and realizing how easy it is to start a new life in the West.
- b) One way migration as a desperate escape from difficult economic situation and/or life crisis (unemployment, poverty, lack of perspectives in a small town or countryside, family problems etc.).
- c) Typical chain migration; in the first stage a few brave migrants leave the country and try to stabilize themselves, after some time other persons (friends, family members, neighbors) join them to start a regular life abroad. Stabilization and the final decision to stay for good in the new country usually comes at the moment when the family is reunited and children appear.
- d) Migration of professionals: (artisans, HT and IT specialists, medical doctors and nurses, university graduates, academics, etc.), mostly on the basis of previously arranged contracts. At the beginning of their stay, they could be termed as transnationals, but in the course of time, their shift to the status of permanent immigrant is becoming more common.

Successful Polish migrants come from all these categories, although to a different degree. It is obvious that among newcomers with good professional experience that is well suited to the labor market of the receiving country, the number of successful migrants is very high. However, many people that could also be categorized as “successful persons” came to the new country under more difficult migration paths and, thanks to their social capital, determination and continuing education in situ, has achieved their “success”.

DISCUSSION ON THE CONCEPT OF SUCCESS

There is no doubt that the concept of success belongs to the classic vocabulary of (neo)liberal discourse and, according to such a perspective is valued very positively in contrast to persons considered as “losers”. The American myth of the self-made man could serve here as a good example of an immigrant’s achievement, from a street shoe shiner to a stockbroker. Today the idea of success is treated in a more complex manner and at least three different dimensions of success should be identified. The first is associated with the argument of personal potential for upward mobility, which always facilitates the process of achieving success in any circumstances, especially by smart and dynamic persons. The second dimension refers mostly to the argument of know-how and is based on the assumption that success can be achieved under the condition that the person is able to properly master a professional skill and can follow some technical rules that will guide him/her towards their goal. Finally, we have the third argument, which refers to the importance of a favorable system. According to this, success is generally the result of good conditions, shaped by the social, political, legal and economic systems in which the migrant acts. If we analyze the question of success in the migration context, it is obvious that all of the above mentioned dimensions play a crucial role in forming a complex structure, but in each individual case the combination of decisive factors could be composed of slightly different configurations.

The many contradictions attached to the concept of success, as well as its colloquial use, brought about a tendency in the social sciences to substitute the word “success” with more appropriate expressions such as “subjective well-being” or “achievement”. The concept of subjective well-being (developed and discussed extensively in Latin American as the idea of *vivir bien* [to have a good life]) has become quite popular, especially in the last decade, and is applied frequently to post-colonial studies, indigenous research, critical studies on globalization, and de-growth studies (Fisher 2014).

Our studies, carried out among migrants, have fully confirmed such an approach. The word “success” is more or less avoided by immigrants in conversations; instead, they prefer to describe their newly achieved positions and improved standard of living as finally attaining “life satisfaction” or achieving a “good life”. Within the range of the semantic field formed by such expressions we have found following arguments:

- economic well-being adjusted to current needs,
- social and health security and family life stabilization (in terms of good household, access to education, money for holidays and vacation),
- fulfillment of professional aspirations,
- respect, prestige, good relationships in the workplace and local neighborhood,
- empowerment – as subjective perception, that their current life and prospects are in their own hands and are mostly dependent on their own activities.

A migrant's success has at least two dimensions: individual and collective. It is well known that in immigrant countries (like the U.S.A. or Australia) some ethnic groups have achieved success in a relative short time, thanks to the implemented strategy of integration, an effective self-supporting social network, and inherited cultural capital (patterns of behaviors and value orientation). Such ethnic communities (like Jews in the U.S., Lebanese in Latin America or Chinese in Malaysia) have made their progress more quickly than other migrant groups and, as result of the proper strategy, they occupy higher economic positions, and frequently are overrepresented in prestigious professions. Instead of promotion of a "culture of small stabilization" on the already-attained level, they generate a "culture of success", facilitating further advances for following generations.

However in some cases the same ethnic group splits itself in two parts: one, following the "culture of success" and the other choosing "small stabilization". Such a situation is easy to find among Polish-Americans: On one hand there is the old Polish diaspora ("Polonia"), formed mostly of working class people, descendants of poor countryside immigrants, and on the other we encounter Polish migrants from the "Solidarity" period (1980s.), mostly originating from well-educated and urbanite newcomers (Posern-Zieliński 2003). Another recent example of this "split" is the sharp contrast between Polish migrants in Norway: *Polakkenen* (Polish workers) living mostly in ethnic isolation, versus professionals from Poland aspiring to find a space in the mainstream of the host society (Pawlak 2015).

If collective success can be measured with the use of more or less objective criteria, then individual success should be looked at differently. Each person evaluates their achievements quite differently, and in a similarly subjective way is evaluated by their friends and relatives. This means that the concept of success is in fact a relative category, showing, above all, a positive individual assessment of a person's current satisfying situation. One of the most common approach to studies of migrant success is to apply a set of objective criteria, which can be found in statistical data directly related to migrant populations. In this methodology, migrant success is frequently measured by:

- a) economic criteria (for example – annual income as an indicator of belonging to the middle class),
- b) professional criteria (high ranking occupations, percentage of such professionals in the national group),
- c) lifestyle (character of neighborhood, category of house or flat, ways of spending holidays and leisure time, etc.),
- d) education (graduation from prestigious universities, type of schools selected for children),
- e) VIP (authority) position (within host society, in own national group, on international level).

However such objective criteria of success have some limitations, especially if we want to study success from an anthropological perspective and prefer to concentrate on

emic evaluation, which could disclose the personal point of view of the migrant. Such opinions allow us to ascertain in which way migrants define their success, how they evaluate it, what subjective comparative criteria of success they apply (referring to their current position as newcomers in foreign country, comparing their current situation to their life condition before migration, contrasting the initial period of stay in the new country with recently achieved level, juxtaposing their situation with friends', or taking into account the general standard of living in the receiving country. Therefore everything indicates that, from an anthropological perspective, success should be seen as a subjective category, albeit one that is strongly related to objective facts shaping biographical experience and the advance of migrants.

According to our research the migrants' perspective on their own success is mostly based on the assumption, that if the previously projected goals have been achieved, they feel satisfaction, which for them is the real source of success. It is obvious that every person perceives a success in their own, individual way, but the applied criteria are quite similar. In a majority of cases the migrants stress the fulfillment of projected goals (economic, professional, educational, related to family stabilization, possibility of self-realization, breaking the barriers typical for the initial period of migration, etc.).

People identified as successful migrants belong to the category of "very active", they are usually able to overcome lots of obstacles, they have a special motivation to progress in their life, they consequently try to fulfill their aspirations and ambitions. Bearing that attitude in mind, it is obvious that, for them success does not mean something spectacular. Rather, it is limited to stability through achieving the projected goals. A common conviction pertaining to success is the need for balance between having a good employment status (in terms of satisfaction, salary, and social relations) and prosperity in the family arena (Kaczmarek 2017a).

The data gathered from our interlocutors confirm that the success should be analyzed as a process, as the result of long lasting endeavors; its subjective evaluation might change over the course of time due to transforming life conditions. At the beginning of the post-migration period, success could be seen in the preliminary stabilization in the new country. But after a few years new expectations appear on the scene and the next set of achievements might be treated as real migrant success. Conversely, if the planned goals are not attained, then frustration and deprivation may appear.

A similar approach to the question of migrant success has been applied by German sociologists, who prefer the term *Erfolg* (achievement). Consequently the target group under study is usually labeled *erfolgreiche Migranten*. To this category is made up mostly of migrants with university education, who are able to reach *Spitzenposition* (a top position) within mainstream society in the receiving country (Nowicka 2014). The idea of *Erfolg* is mostly applied to the following aspects of migrant life:

- a) to the successful migration from home country to the new home, completed through satisfactory attainment of stability,

- b) to the successful process of integration in the receiving country,
- c) to substantial advancement in one's professional career.

These findings, established on the basis of the sociological research on the Polish migrants living in Germany and the UK, to a large extent coincide with the results of our own research. It is also quite interesting that some basic conclusions developed by Armand Farsi (2012), in his book on highly qualified migrants (university and research center employees) are very similar to the results obtained in our study on Poles in five metropolitan cities of Europe. In both sets of research, conducted in different settings and analyzed from different perspectives, inherited social and cultural capital, relatively loose ties with own migrant group, and strong transnational attitudes, are given crucial roles in the process of achieving success, satisfaction, and/or high social status.

Another interesting and valuable intervention on migrant success can be found in Sabeen Sandhu's book (2012), in which the author describes the "culture of success" developed by a group of IT specialists from India, working in transnational companies in Silicon Valley (USA). The author implemented an anthropological perspective and decided to study the perception of success among Indian professional migrants, as well as their strategy of personal success management. The last task was analyzed thanks to the reconstruction of biographical schemes, which facilitate the discovery of a main pattern, leading the migrants directly to the level of satisfactory achievement.

Among other interesting conclusions developed by Sandhu, and quite similar to the findings present in our studies on Poles in Western Europe, are three important factors, connected to migrants' strategies of successful integration:

- a) active adaptation to mainstream society, to the specificity of the workplace (corporative environment), and to the lifestyle of the middle and upper middle class.
- b) "othering" strategy – tendency to create some kind of boundary between migrants of success, (especially professionals, well integrated and belonging to the middle class) and the traditional (old) diaspora institutions and working class migrants. This distancing mechanism – based on class, culture, values and worldview – is responsible for the relative isolation of both groups from each other, and underlines the division between many successful migrants and their ordinary ethnic compatriots, usually considered as people unable to adapt properly to a host country's way of life.
- c) Loose ties with family and kin members and a reluctant attitude to support their applications for jobs in the same corporation (anti-nepotism).

Studying the question of migrant success would be unjustifiable if we were to omit the contradictory relationships between the feelings of life satisfaction and relative deprivation, which is a phenomenon quite frequently observed among newcomers. Migration, conceptualized as process of leaving one's home country, could be considered as a kind of dramatic "flight" or "escape" from an unsatisfactory condition. At

the same time, such migration is also seen as a kind of adventure, a journey toward a mythical “promised land”, where it is very easy to find well paid job, where everybody can start a new life, devoid of everyday struggles, and where a good professional career is a real possibility for the newcomer.

After coming to a new country, the divergence between the migration myth and new, everyday reality starts almost immediately, forcing the migrant to develop their own strategy of adaptation and plan how to overcome any obstacles they may encounter. As the result of this divergence the following feelings and attitudes appear:

- a) severe disappointment, leading to, in some cases a decision to return to the home country,
- b) acceptance, but not full satisfaction, with new conditions, based on the assumption that the person has already achieved an income and standard of life that is much better than in the home country,
- c) relative deprivation, based on the sudden discovery that the expected status and projected career, rooted in personal ambitions and educational qualifications of the migrant are in fact not in the potential range attainment.
- d) acceptance of the migrant’ difficult life, and the connected high social cost, combined with the conviction that in the future, or at least for the next generation, the decision of migration will be beneficial.
- e) the strategy directly related to the discussed topic, based on a complex strategy of overcoming all the above mentioned objective and subjective obstacles to find a way that leads to upward social mobility, integration within the mainstream of the new society, and satisfaction.

SUCCESS AS STABILIZATION AND NORMAL LIFE

As already mentioned above the findings of our project, in many aspects support the results of German and American research on migrant success. In those studies two contradictory categories of migrants have been identified: “winners” – or successful migrants, and “losers” – unsuccessful migrants. This division, however, does not fully correspond to the situation of Polish migrants, the majority of whom are considered satisfied, because of the level of income and standard of living achieved. The important difference takes place between those who are more willing to integrate, and those who are deeply immersed in the national diaspora. According to the perception of “winners” in our study, they describe their post-migration success as a kind of “normality”, “normal life”, “regular life”, “easy life”, “life performed at a satisfactory level”, not affected by limited family budget and bureaucratic barriers. The migrant’s assessment of his achieved life situation as a state of “normality” is quite common and has also been registered by other researchers (Lopez Rodrigez 2010; Rabikowska 2010) They

stress how easy is to find employment, to earn a good salary and access social security. All these factors are treated as migration “benefits”, which to some extent reduce or neutralize the feeling of deprivation caused in many cases by the necessity to work below their previous professional status and qualifications.

A lot of migrants compare their new situation (the achieved success) with their social and financial position in Poland. The success is evaluated as solid financial stabilization, but frequently at the cost of working in a field that is unrelated to their higher education and which is below their professional aspirations. For these migrants, the post-migration situation was the real success, because it is in this period that they achieved a level of well-being without the day-to-day problems and money shortages that they frequently experienced in the old country.

The new social and cultural environment opens up new possibilities of self-realization to migrants. They appreciate their new experiences and discoveries of their previously unknown abilities. For many of them their success is expressed as a pride at being able to overcome all the trouble they encountered after migration. One respondent said: “I did it myself despite many obstacles and without the help of any relatives or friends”. It is quite typical that the majority of Polish migrants, regardless of their real status, prefer to identify themselves as successful people and that they evaluate their decision to migrate positively.

The migrants consider their success mostly as a kind of personal “successful achievement”, related strictly to their own way of life and their social status. Personal “success” is mostly defined as a stable everyday life, which means: financial security for the family, self-realization (understood as career advancement), favorable conditions in the new country, the overcoming of successive barriers, and critical moments typical for migrants. Success is also connected with the concept of well-being and a dignified life, satisfaction, social security, respect, and good relationships with coworkers.

For the Polish migrants one of the dimensions of “success” is “normality”, a stable life without balancing precariously on a tightrope, and attaining a standard of living correspondent with their level of education and qualifications. Success is also described as the fulfillment of aspirations typical for educated migrants. The last category of migrants have a strong drive to join the “middle class” as quickly as possible and to start living a middle class lifestyle. For the migrants originating from lower social strata and the countryside, “success” could have a different meaning. It is, for them, not only important to achieve a relatively good standard of well-being, but first and foremost, they appreciate their new financial and material status, which they would not be able to achieve in their home country. At the same time, they are quite conscious that their success was facilitated thanks to the Western system of an effective, functioning economy and a highly developed social security system. Yet, they always stress that without their personal activities, determination, risky choices, hard work, and ambitions, it would be impossible to reach their chosen goals.

Successful Polish migrants point out that they very quickly discovered the right way to attain professional advancement. They also stress that they were able to fully concentrate on their professional career, without spending time working additional jobs to supplement their income, which was the common occurrence in Poland. Another issue they raise is the easy access to language lessons and professional workshops, which facilitated their adaptation and upskilling. Migrants consider the atmosphere at the workplace as an important factor conducive to success, where an employee who performs his duties well is appreciated and frequently promoted over time. They also stress that through being in a new country, they discovered their own, previously unknown potential to shape their future, their power to overcome obstacles, previously hidden abilities to activate their creative mind, and the strength to struggle with new challenges. The last statements were expressed mostly by the newcomers who had decided to change their profession and found satisfying work in new fields. It is also true that in some cases, economic conditions (like the oil boom in Norway, high demand for construction workers in UK, or a shortage of IT specialists in Ireland) have accelerated the advancement of migrants.

In such favorable situations success appears as the result of reinforcement of migrants' potential combined with the possibilities of the market. There is no doubt that despite all the above mentioned features, migrant success is frequently conditioned by good luck. That said, such unexpected events – according to the newcomers – are only properly utilized and capitalized on by smart, well prepared, hard-working people. It also should be mentioned here that some migration strategies are applied even before arriving in the new country and are based on carefully prepared plans and long periods of diligent preparation. A good example of this strategy can be seen in the boom of interest in mastering the Norwegian or German language by Polish students of medicine and nursing. Many of them plan to start their professional careers abroad, after they complete their mandatory internships, and thanks to their language competences, the regular adjustment period is often eliminated.

INTEGRATION, MIGRANT SUCCESS, AND MAINTENANCE OF IDENTITY

One of the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of this research project on “successful migrants” was the assumption that migrant success could be achieved much easier in relative isolation from the migrant's own national group (diaspora). In a majority of the individual cases analyzed, this assumption has been fully justified. During the first period of their post-migration stay, the relationships of the newcomer with their own national community (including institutions) in the new country are usually strong and such links are quite natural. However, over the course of time and due in part to a greater level of stability, such relationships become gradually less and less weak and are

expressed only at the occasional and/or symbolic level (like incidental participation at important religious holidays, or national events). This shift is also confirmed by sociological research conducted recently among Poles in the UK (Ryan 2011; Pustulka 2013).

Well integrated migrants gradually reduce their activities in ethnic associations and clubs; they do not participate in cultural events tailored specially for Poles, leaving that space for people who are less integrated, who have limited knowledge of the host country's language, and who mostly originated from lower social strata. This does not mean, however that successful migrants are eager to break completely any relations with their compatriots. It is more that they locate their natural need for familiar/national proximity in other, more intimate spheres (continuing contact with family members, building networks composed of friends and colleagues, etc.). This kind of tendency is often one of reasons for the weakening of the importance of Polish organizations as official institutions to represent the interests of the diaspora towards the country of residence and origin. On this aspect of changes and its consequences, rightly pointed out Nowosielski (2014; 2016) in his studies on the situation of Poles in Germany. There is no doubt, that this process has a much wider range and is noticeable also in other European countries, as well as in the USA. The acceptance of the life style of the mainstream middle class is, for them, very important as proof of their successful integration. They stress their solidarity and loyalty toward the receiving country, explaining, that such an attitude should be a logical reimbursement for all the opportunities and chances they have encountered in the new land. In more simple terms, they would like to live and behave like "natives".

Concluding the remarks on integration and the strategies of Polish migrants, at least six main features can be identified as important factors in the processes leading migrants to become successful.

1. Inherited social, cultural and educational capital brought directly from the home country.
2. Proper understanding of the local system and effective adaptation to it, thanks to previous knowledge of the language, general orientation in social reality and life conditions in the West, and in many cases – previous experience of work or study outside the home country.
3. Personality, facilitating professional advancement (determination, adaptability, strong motivation, consistency in life planning, ability to overcome problems, and confront challenges).
4. Advancement of the integration process due to the migrant's positive attitude toward the society/country of settlement, with the successful elimination of barriers, and last but not least, with the reorientation of the migrant's mentality to the new values and patterns prevailing in the receiving country.
5. Successful migration is also correlated with weak (or even absent) relationships with their own national group (institutional diaspora). However, despite their

integration and good social status in mainstream society a majority of successful migrants still maintain an attachment to their ethnic identity, which is cultivated through personal and family contacts (and supported thanks to the modern electronic media and the possibility of frequent visits back to the home country).

6. After many years abroad, migrants of success (I mean here both categories: those with real [objective] achievements and those feeling satisfaction with their personal well-being) are on the right path towards build their future in the receiving country; they invest in flats and houses, the remittances they send back home gradually shrink, and they carefully plan their children's education. All of this means, that they are not, at the moment, candidates for return migration, which from time to time is suggested in Poland, especially in the political discourse. Some of them could – of course – plan a re-emigration after retirement, but such decisions are difficult to predict today.

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Author's address:

Prof. Aleksander Posern-Zieliński
Polish Academy of Sciences
ul. Rubież 46, 61-612 Poznań, POLAND
e-mail: alpoz@amu.edu.pl
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1249-8478>.

