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## **POLISH EMIGRANTS IN DÜSSELDORF**

### **The migrants' heritage of identity and entry into German society**

#### **Abstract:**

The article deals with the problem of the possibilities for Polish migrants entering the German society in Düsseldorf. Their ethnic and cultural heritage can be an element which facilitates or hampers this process. The studies carried out was of a diagnostic character (N: 150) and the research problem touched the course of the process of the socio-cultural assimilation of the Polish emigrants in Düsseldorf. The results indicate that Polish emigration is internally varied and the emigrants integrate with the German society to a different extent. The features that vary the most include the place which they come from and which they grew up in, as well as the time of their leaving Poland. Migrants from the territory of Silesia (historically an ethnic-cultural borderland itself) find it much easier to adapt to the new socio-professional situation in Germany than their compatriots who have come from other parts of Poland.

**Key words:** identity, emigration, assimilation, borderland, Poland-Germany, Düsseldorf

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**POLSCY EMIGRANCI W DÜSSELDORFIE. DZIEDZICTWO TOŻSAMOŚCI MIGRANTÓW  
A WCHODZENIE W SPOŁECZEŃSTWO NIEMIECKIE**

**Streszczenie:**

Artykuł podejmuje problem możliwego wchodzenia polskich emigrantów w społeczeństwo niemieckie w Düsseldorfie. Dziedzictwo etniczno-kulturowe może być elementem ułatwiającym lub osłabiającym to zjawisko. Przeprowadzone badania miały charakter diagnostyczny (N:150), a problem badawczy dotyczył przebiegu procesu asymilacji społeczno-kulturowej polskich emigrantów w Düsseldorfie. Wyniki badań wskazały, że emigracja polska jest zróżnicowana wewnątrznie i w różnym stopniu integruje się ze społeczeństwem niemieckim. Cechy najbardziej ją różnicujące w poglądach to miejsce dorastania i czas wyjazdu z Polski. Migranci z obszaru Śląska (historyczne pogranicze etniczno-kulturowe) łatwiej adaptują się do nowej sytuacji społeczno-zawodowej w Niemczech niż przybysze z innych części Polski.

**Słowa kluczowe:** tożsamość, emigracja, asymilacja, pogranicze, Polska–Niemcy, Düsseldorf

**The terminological background of the research**

The existence of individuals in traditional societies used to develop along a continuing cycle of generations and was written into the round of presentations and transformations of communities. The modernisation (globalisation) processes going on at the moment, have formed mechanisms of territorial uprooting, while the individual's lifetime is becoming an 'individual section' torn from the cycle of generations. Individuals are liable to break the continuity, which can also give rise to a sense of ethnic displacement and social alienation. Migration of people to other countries is conducive to such a situation arising.

Cultural heritage is the fundamental component of man's identity, which should first be located in social memory that makes an important factor shaping the individual's and group's identity. However, in current time, the (inter)generational transmission of this memory is becoming a problem area. Maurice Halbwachs wrote that man acquires

memories, recognises and locates them<sup>1</sup>. The memory of the past (selective and changeable) which the individual builds within the environment of their families and kin, within their local community, public institutions and mass media is complemented biographically with their own experiences.

In the cultures of old, it is “the private (local) motherland” which became the commonwealth of place and the commonwealth of experiences connecting people, being – at the same time – an intermediate link between the individual and the ideological mother country. The memory of forefathers – the progenitors – used to constitute a point of reference to creating “one’s own self” and real rooting in the world, which also made it into a link in the chain of generations and created the space of familiarity and belonging. Defining identity in the past, attention was paid to acquisition of individual’s experiences, formation of determined social bonds and their being rooted in historically defined and recognised values. Perhaps, this is why the answer to the question: ‘Who am I?’ was not difficult to give by people who held a precise, clear vision of the world and of the order which reigned in it.

In the days preceding modernity, the problem of “individual’s identity” had not existed virtually, since individualism was an undesired phenomenon, restricting itself to insignificant – from the point of view of communities – decisions. The identity of a group was the identity of the individual and there did not exist any greater discrepancy between the two categories.

These (post-)modern times have strengthened, in European societies, the “structural individualism” which defines the individual’s present being<sup>2</sup>. The characteristic feature of the contemporary social world is a reflexive ordering and weaving the concrete one’s own ‘I’ out of abstract systems. The identity in this new context is the choice made ‘everyday’<sup>3</sup>. It was not even a long time ago that being raised in a homo-

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<sup>1</sup> M. Halbwachs, *Společne ramy paměti*, Warszawa 1969, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> J.C. Kaufmann, *Ego. Socjologia jednostki*, Warszawa 2004, p. 224; See: M. Marody, *Jednostka po nowoczesności. Perspektywa socjologiczna*, Warszawa 2015, p. 222.

<sup>3</sup> A. Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. „Ja” i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności*, Warszawa 2001, p. 98–149.

geneous ethnic culture would create a solid identity of the individual, yet globalisation has changed a lot in this respect. Processes of social de-institutionalisation, cultural pluralism and structural individualism have led to inappropriate perception of reality and to losing realism in visions, attitudes and actions with reference to life. The multithreaded nature of self-determination is hence increasing man's existential concern<sup>4</sup>.

Throughout the centuries, culture has – to put it pedagogically – been the “teacher” to succeeding generations; these days, it is attempting to depreciate and disintegrate the very perception of humanity itself more and more aggressively in the message it passes. Besides, by promoting the utopia of individualistic happiness, it makes human beings into mere recipients – compulsive consumers, and in consequence – an easy target of manipulation (<sup>5</sup>). The deficit in inheriting culture and being rooted in it, the lack of the right point of reference to re-awakened subjectivism, with deficit in the intellectual key to interpreting the complex reality – is a current problem which many people face<sup>6</sup>. Description of the identity capital, without realisation of the character of different dependences and relations with the social and cultural space, would be isolated from the context and abstract. This “locating ‘oneself’ in the world” allows interpreting mechanisms which function as colloquial images in people's consciousness, while the self-knowledge becomes the basis of the sense of exposed identity<sup>7</sup>.

In the world, contemporary man is “forced” continuously to make choices and to take decisions. People passing, according to Peter L. Berg-

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<sup>4</sup> Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa 2007, p. 208–209.

<sup>5</sup> M. Dziewiecki, *Wychowanie w dobie ponowoczesności*, Jedność, Kielce 2002, p. 114–125; See: J. Śledzianowski, *Dehumanizacja człowieka i humanizacja zwierząt*, Kielce 2014.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, B. Russel observed that dominant trends and civilizational phenomena led to considerable destruction of the Truth, the Good and the Beauty, since “Pragmatists explained that the Truth is what it pays to believe in. Historians of customs reduced Good to the dimension of a tribal custom. Artists annihilated the Beauty [...]”. B. Russell, *Szkice niepopularne*, Warszawa 1997, p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> J. Koziński, *Psychologiczna teoria samowiedzy*, Warszawa 1981, p. 312.

er<sup>8</sup>, from the “world of fate” (“enforcement”) to the “world of choice” (“changing possibilities”), can encounter difficulty self-determining themselves by acceptance of, for example, the “transparent identity” which is delivered by sham pop culture<sup>9</sup>.

Despite the dominance of the culture of temporariness, the empirical experience points to the fact that identity is embedded in the generational code of meanings as well as places and the space of culture. Alexis de Tocqueville defined this state as “habits of the heart” (i.e., customs)<sup>10</sup>, while Edward T. Hall has complemented it with the explanation of a “hidden dimension of culture”<sup>11</sup>. Henryka Kwiatkowska, on the other hand, argues that the more the world does not favour creation of identity, the more radical the need for the consciousness of oneself and the difficulty in answering the question ‘Who am I?’ become<sup>12</sup>.

Nowadays, people who come from lands of cultures (and at a civilisation level) different from those of their host countries pose a problem and this is not only on the European scale. As early as a quarter of century ago, Samuel P. Huntington observed that in being the identity of civilisation *sensu largo*, it is culture and cultural identity which shape new models of cohesion, disintegration or conflict in contemporary world<sup>13</sup>. The author cited above has also pointed to a clash of (distant) cultures (civilisations) which people do not know, do not understand and often interpret wrongly. They have at their disposal merely pictures of reality presented by the media; nevertheless, they have not experienced them personally or historically.

Migrants from the same cultural and religious circle find themselves in a better situation, although all sorts of dilemmas may also arise in the case of such immigrants. A writer and personage of the French-Ger-

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<sup>8</sup> P.L. Berger, *Sehnsucht nach Sinn. Glauben in einer Zeit der Leichtgläubigkeit*, Frankfurt am Main–New York, 1994, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Z. Melosik, T. Szkudlarek, *Kultura, tożsamość i edukacja – migotanie znaczeń*, Kraków 1998, p. 58–59.

<sup>10</sup> A. de Tocqueville, *O demokracji w Ameryce*, Warszawa 2005, p. 382.

<sup>11</sup> See: E.T. Hall, *Poza kulturę*, wyd. 2, Warszawa 2001.

<sup>12</sup> H. Kwiatkowska, *Tożsamość nauczycieli. Między anomią a autonomią*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 176.

<sup>13</sup> S.P. Huntington, *Zderzenie cywilizacji*, Warszawa 1998, p. 174–175.

man borderland, René Schickele, wrote in a very moving way: “Mein Herz ist zu groß für ein Vaterland und zu klein für zwei“ (“My heart is too big for one fatherland and too small for two”). The motto itself, being quoted on many occasions, seems to be at the psychological construction of a large number of people who migrate today<sup>14</sup>.

Can the present inhabitants of Europe (especially the migrating ones) feel in a similar way? In Poland, the older generation had already lived through the time of inter-regional and ethnic confrontations in the years preceding and following World War 2. The consequences of the recalled events are then revealed in studies on Opole Silesia which, sociologically, is treated as an area of ethnic-cultural borderland<sup>15</sup>. The controversies regarding identification within this frontier area can arise at the meeting point of Polishness, Silesianness and German character, particularly in the subjective confrontation of the individual with culture and society – either Polish or German as well. The certainty of the native culture strengthens ethnic (regional) convictions, whereas the lack of it generates instability of the identity capital, giving rise to doubts, fear and withdrawal. It suffices to say that national (regional) identifications themselves affect – one can assume at least indirectly – the life of individuals who locate themselves in a new living settlement.

The socio-cultural context described above poses a certain challenge to migrating people who ought to develop positive feelings towards the new place of living. New globalisation-related contexts, ethnic, denominational, social and cultural differences form the basis of the social changes in Germany, amongst which the examined emigrants from Poland who came to live in Düsseldorf should find themselves. Thus, the question: “How is the consciousness of the Polish migrants being

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<sup>14</sup> D. Lamping, *Über Grenzen: eine literarische Topographie*, Göttingen 2011, p. 37–53.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., *Kwestie tożsamości narodowej i regionalnej na Śląsku Opolskim po II wojnie światowej*, red. S. Senft, A. Trzcieleńska-Polus, „Śląsk Opolski” 2004, nr 1, Opole 2004; E. Nycz, *Współczesne autoidentyfikacje mieszkańców pogranicza etniczno-kulturowego*, In: *Wielokulturowość – między edukacją regionalną i edukacją międzykulturową. Dylematy i konteksty tożsamościowe*, eds. K. Kossak-Główczeński, A. Kożyczkova, Kraków 2015, p. 153–176.

formed in the current social and cultural situation in Germany?” is the research problem undertaken to be investigated in the present diagnostic studies. Here recognition of concrete socio-cultural-pedagogical facts and phenomena have been assumed, since they enrich the theoretical and practical knowledge of not only researchers, but also that of animators of the life of Poles living in Germany.

### **Circumstances of Poles' migrating to Düsseldorf**

The high number of Polish emigrants inhabiting Düsseldorf at present is conditioned by both history, economy and politics. This city belongs to the industrial district of North Rhine Westphalia, yet in the initial period of the industrial flourishing of the Ruhr Basin (the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) it did not play such a significant role as it does today, since the development of mining, steel and machine industry was concentrated around the following places: Bochum, Dortmund, Duisburg, Essen, Bottrop and Oberhausen<sup>16</sup>. The rise of the Second German Reich in 1871 coincided with the dynamic industrial-economic development of North Rhine Westphalia. The economy ‘needed’ workers, among whom there were Polish migrants looking for employment in Germany’s industrial centre and settling down there. These emigrants from Poland often constituted the dominant workforce who were living in settlements next to mines and factories. As early as in 1894, the first Union of Poles in Germany in Bochum was established, before its activity ‘expanded’ over the whole Ruhr. The Union contributed to setting up of other national organisations and associations, such as Polish Trade Unions, Polish Catholic Missions, schools, social clubs, libraries, news-

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<sup>16</sup> V.M. Stefanski, *Zum Prozess der Emanzipation und Integration von Außenseitern: Polnische Arbeitsemigranten in Ruhrgebiet*, Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa and der Universität Dortmund, Dortmund 1984, p. 30–72. See: A. Trzecielińska-Polus, *Polacy w Niemczech – zróżnicowanie i struktura*, In: *Polacy i Niemcy. Płaszczyzny i drogi normalizacji. Bilans pierwszego pięciolecia*, eds. M. Lis, A. Trzecielińska-Polus, Opole 1997, p. 71–80.

papers, shops, Bank of Polish Workers and Polish Socialist Party of the Prussian Partition<sup>17</sup>.

The activity of the Union of Poles in Germany was not favourably accepted, especially by the Nazi authorities of Germany<sup>18</sup>. Fearing that the Union could grow too strong in both its cultural and political influence, the Nazis took steps with the aim to restrict its activity and, at the same time, to weaken the social position of the Polish emigrants living and working in the Ruhr. For instance, it was forbidden to say mass in the Polish language or use the mother tongue at work and public places, among others<sup>19</sup>. Polish workers were subject to discrimination as regards their pay, social position or living conditions<sup>20</sup>.

In the Interwar period, the outskirts of Düsseldorf, Leverkusen saw the development of chemical industry (Bayer-Werk). Then, during World War 2, the demand for (cheap) workforce increased. The workers recruited from both prisoners-of-war and forced labourers brought from occupied Poland<sup>21</sup>. All the Polish workers were persecuted who objected to the strong impact of germanization and violence, as well as the policy of discrimination to which they had experienced and been

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<sup>17</sup> S. Peters-Schildgen, *Von Ost nach West: Migration ins Ruhrgebiet. Geschichte und Fohrschungslage*, In: *Polen-Ruhr: Zuwanderung zwischen 1871 und heute*, eds. D. Kift, D. Osses, Essen 2007, p. 16–17; M. Nowosielski, *Polacy w Niemczech. Stan i perspektywy badań*, „Przegląd Zachodni”, 2012, no. 3, <http://www.iz.poznan.pl/plik,pobierz,1001,daee99f73f7d91d23147d84f702a23bc/33-wybrany-artukul-3-2012.pdf> [26.07.2017].

<sup>18</sup> Z.T. Klimaszewski, *Związek Polaków w Niemczech – od rozkwitu do upadku*, In: *Polacy w Niemczech: przeszłość, terażniejszość, przyszłość*, eds. Z.T. Klimaszewski, Białystok 202, p. 91–107.

<sup>19</sup> D. Osses, *Von Ruhrpolen zu Kosmopolen. Einwanderer aus Polen im Ruhrgebiet*, In: *Nach Westen. Zuwanderung aus Osteuropa ins Ruhrgebiet*, eds. D. Osses, I. Grabowsky, Essen 2012, p. 54–56.

<sup>20</sup> See: Ł.P. Andrzejewski, *Polacy i ich status w Niemczech po Traktacie Wersalskim*, In: *Polacy w Niemczech: przeszłość, terażniejszość, przyszłość*, eds. Z.T. Klimaszewski, Białystok 2002, p. 20–24.

<sup>21</sup> It follows from the studies done by Valentina M. Stefanski that masses of Poles were forced to take jobs in the plants belonging to Bayer-Werk. V.M. Stefanski, *Zwangsarbeit in Leverkusen*, Osnabrück 2000, p. 14–21.

exposed to<sup>22</sup>. The war and the violence connected with it ended in 1945, yet the situation in Germany remained socially and politically complicated. After all, there were, as it was pointed out, people staying there who had not come out of their own free will. Poland found itself in the zone of influence of the Soviet Union, with all the consequences thereof. The Displaced Persons<sup>23</sup>, who – for various reasons after the end of World War 2 – did not manage (or did not want) to return to Poland, instead settling in nearby places and formed the (early) post-war Polish emigration.

The days of the turn of the 1970s and the 1980s opened the post-industrial period for the Ruhr Basin. Toffler's 'third wave'<sup>24</sup> contributed to a rise in the demand for the branch of services, which came to very rapidly recognised be in Düsseldorf, contributing again to the development of this city. Accordingly, the demand for an (educated) workforce grew, which led to a considerable inflow of wage-earning migrants<sup>25</sup>.

In recent years, it has been possible to notice an interdependence between the growing inflow of emigrants and the local economic development. The increasing number of Polish emigrants in the city resulted in the establishment of the Polish Institute (29<sup>th</sup> November 1993) in the Old Town in Düsseldorf. Hannelore Kraft, who has been the Prime Minister of the Federate State of North Rhine Westphalen since the spring of 2017, stated that "one of the more fortunate coincidences of fate in modern history, after the breakthrough of 1989–1990, was the resuming of contacts between Poland and North Rhine Westpha-

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<sup>22</sup> H.C. Seidel, *Polnische Zwangsarbeiter im Ruhrbergbau von 1940 bis 1945*, In: Schimanski, *Kurorra und andere. Polnische Einwanderer im Ruhrgebiet zwischen der Reichsgründung und dem Zweitem Weltkrieg*, eds. D. Dahlmann, A.S. Kotowski, Z. Karpus, Essen 2005, p. 270–272.

<sup>23</sup> "Displaced persons" (DPs) – the term applied after the end of World War 2, with reference to citizens of the countries occupied by Germans, who – after having been displaced to do forced labor – did not come back to their mother countries after the war and benefited from aid of international organizations.

<sup>24</sup> See: A. Toffler, *Trzecia fala*, Warszawa 1986.

<sup>25</sup> According to the statistical National Census of 2011, there were 24.5% immigrants staying in North Rhine Westphalen. See: [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Methoden/Zensus/\\_/Tabellen/MHG\\_1\\_LaenderGemeinden.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Methoden/Zensus/_/Tabellen/MHG_1_LaenderGemeinden.html) [21.07.2017].

len [...], where Polish emigration has been settling down for centuries and where every fourth Pole living in Germany lives. One of the most important initiators of the good neighborly cooperation between North Rhein Westphalen and Poland is the Polish Institute in Düsseldorf. This is an institution which presents a very broad spectrum of activity: from exchange projects of youth from Poland and North Rhine Westphalen, through meetings of artists from the both countries, into new conceptions of the political development of the Weimar Triangle<sup>26</sup>.

In addition, Dirk Elbers, the Mayor of Düsseldorf (2008–2014), appreciated both the significance of the presence of Polish citizens and the activity of the Polish Institute which enriches the city's cultural life. Speaking about the cooperation of the Twin Cities of Düsseldorf and Warsaw, he expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the partnership and multifaceted actions undertaken together with the Polish diaspora, as well as his hope of further fruitful international cooperation supported by the Polish Institute<sup>27</sup>.

Trying to meet the need to cultivate the Polish character and develop cultural integration, as well as endeavouring to raise interest in Poland on the part of the German community, for many years now the Polish Institute has implemented a variety of school and educational projects, organising exhibitions, theatre performances, concerts, discussion meetings, days of literature and film festivals. Such actions are meant to contribute to formation of positive bonds between Germans and Poles, despite the ethnic and cultural differences, in the name of the principle of 'unity in variety'.

### **Studies of the Polish emigrants in Düsseldorf**

The research presented below was conducted in Düsseldorf, inhabited by over 600 thousand people, including the official registration of 43,000 Poles who make 7.0% of the total number of the city's inhab-

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<sup>26</sup> K. Fortuna, K. Jarzombek, *20 Jahre Polnisches Institut Düsseldorf*, Düsseldorf 2013, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

itants<sup>28</sup>. In reality, it is only too probable that there are many more Poles residing in Düsseldorf, since the statistics of the City Hall do not count for citizens who, owing to their origin in the territories of western Poland which used to belong to Germany, are considered to be Spätaussiedler (that is the so-called late displaced). Moreover, the statistics do not include people holding double citizenship status or those who are not officially registered in the city, either. But it is this 'grey zone' of emigrants working illegally that is indeed extensive and impossible to control in terms of numbers. Its representatives make a large proportion of the Polish diaspora living in Düsseldorf nowadays.

The aim of the research has thus been to take a closer look at the problem of possibilities of Polish emigrants entering German society in Düsseldorf from the point of view of their regional origin and time of arrival. In connection with the still high number of Poles coming to Germany, the aspect of living together and co-existence in a multicultural urban society is vital in the situation of demographic and civilisational transformations in this host country. The research was of the diagnostic character and the research questions dealt with in the article were formulated in the following way: What shapes the consciousness of the examined migrants in the new sociocultural situation? How does the contemporary process of sociocultural assimilation of Polish emigrants in Düsseldorf run?

The questionnaire consisted of 26 (extended) main questions and 11 ones of the sociodemographic nature, which played the auxiliary role in the statistical elaboration of the data. It was assumed that the degree of assimilation of Polish emigrants in Germany depends on the place of their origin in Poland, as well as on the duration of their stay in Germany (assuming their easier assimilation to living abroad than that

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<sup>28</sup> Amt für Statistik und Wahlen der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf-Bevölkerung stand vom 31.12.2014.

Since the turn of the 1980s and the 1990s Polish emigrants have not formed typically 'Polish' streets and quarters in the city anymore, like the older generations of the displaced used to do in the past, the new emigration being dispersed all over the city. Still in such districts as Hellerhof, Garath, Rath, Eller, Flingern and Derendorf – the concentration of the Polish is greater, with a higher number of residents of Polish origin.

of their counterparts who left the mother country over 25 years ago and a more difficult process in persons who decided to emigrate in the last 10 years). The examined group of emigrants comprised 150 people (non-random selection, the snowball sampling method). The survey proper was carried out in Düsseldorf by Helena Kowalska-Baron as part of her diploma seminar assignment in the fall of 2015. The data basis was built in IBM SPSS package, while the present analysis is of the secondary character<sup>29</sup>.

In this article, one important criterion for the analysis of the research material refers to the examined persons' place of origin in Poland, that is Silesia (the former Polish-German borderland) or in other parts of the country and – indirectly – to the time of their emigrating: older emigrants (the turn of the 1980s and the 1990s up to the year 2003, i.e., before Poland's accession to the European Union) and the latest waves of emigration (since 2004, i.e., after Poland's joining the EU). The demographic characteristics of the examined group of emigrants constituted a significant question to explain the dependency occurring in the course of the assimilation process within the new society.

Among the subjects, the women examined made up 48% and men 52% of the respondents. Over half of them (55.3%) declared being in matrimony, while every tenth (10.7%) stayed in a partner relationship; nearly every fifth respondent (18.7%) was single, whereas the remaining subjects were either divorced (8.0%) or widowed (6.0%). Focusing on the data in more detail with regard to the research questions, the following needs to be mentioned: 86 respondents came from Silesia and 64 subjects from other parts of Poland, while the "Old emigration" made 96 people in total, out of whom 63 came from Silesia, whereas 33 respondents from other parts of the country. Consequently, the "New emigration" group (locally being assessed as "rapacious") com-

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<sup>29</sup> The studies which are referred to make the first part of a larger research project designed to examine the environment of the Polish emigrants in the city. In 2018, the research entitled *Na obcej ziemi z obcymi. Polscy emigranci w Düsseldorfie w kontaktach z innymi i obcymi* [On the foreign land. Polish emigrants in Düsseldorf in contacts with others and foreigners] was completed.

prised of 54 representatives, including 23 emigrants with Silesian roots and 31 from other provinces of Poland.

The question of the ethnic identification of the examined is interesting to note. The Polish identification was self-declared by half of the respondents (50.0%), the German-Polish – by every fifth (20.0%) of the examined, the European – by every tenth (10.0%) and the Silesian – by 8.7% of the respondents. The majority of those who called on their Polish national identity came from outside Silesia. Only less than one fourth of the Silesian identified themselves with the Polish ethnicity.

On the other hand, the decisive majority of respondents from other regions of Poland (70.3%) identified themselves with their Polish roots. The situation of those who declared their German identity presented itself in an analogous way, since almost all of the examined declared their Silesian origin. Additionally, 11.8% of all the questioned Silesians declared their belonging to the Silesian nationality which is not legally acknowledged in Poland<sup>30</sup>. The self-identity of the Silesian as inhabitants of the borderland was hence dispersed and divided, which was confirmed by the findings of the research<sup>31</sup>.

In view of the course of history the population of Silesia belonged to two and more worlds of culture (Polish, German, Moravian). As early as the 1930s, Emil Szramek pointed to certain characteristic features typical of the Silesia region (being the result of “long lasting”); that is, frontier and peripheral location, changing dynastic/political belonging, a melting pot of cultures and religions, consciousness of the fron-

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<sup>30</sup> P. Popieliński, *Problematyka narodowościowa w spisach powszechnych ludności z 2002 i 2012 roku w kontekście mniejszości niemieckiej w Polsce*, „Rocznik Polsko-Niemiecki” 2013, no. 21, p. 129.

<sup>31</sup> The literature of the subject points to the so-called frontier identity which is dominant among the migrants who come from Opole Silesia. It allows them to enter German society in a better way than this is possible for the other representatives of the examined group. See: A. Michalczyk, *Spółeczeństwo niemieckie wobec Polski i Polaków w ostatnich 20 latach*, In: *Colloquium Opole 2011. Od wojny o granice do dobrego sąsiedztwa*, red. M. Choroś, M. Eiden, B. Linek, M. Lis, Opole 2012, p. 121–132.

tier (borderland), civic and national conversions, as well as mosaic-like ethnic, social and cultural arrangement<sup>32</sup>.

Emigration has had its individual and social consequences. In the Silesian case, this slowly results in loosening and limiting emotional bonds with the heritage of the private fatherland (Heimat) in contrast to people who come from outside Silesia. In the future, this scenario may lead to Heimatslosigkeit or “homelessness” of the succeeding generation. The findings confirm that among the second generation of the respondents of Silesian origin, two thirds have already been uprooted and no longer call refer to their Silesian origin. At the same time only one fifth of the second generation emigrants coming from other regions of Poland identified themselves with their new environment of living. Thus, the national conversions in question are still stronger in migrants from Silesia, whose environment (formed historically)<sup>33</sup> could be conducive to this phenomenon.

### **Emigrants’ entry into the new community**

One important element in the process of entering another society is the knowledge of their language. One statistically captured difference is visible between use of the language in everyday communication between those examined from Silesia and those from other regions of Poland. The difference between the good skill of using the German language from the time before arriving in Germany among the former inhabitants of Silesia (arithmetic mean – 3.58) and the rest of the migrants (3.0) came up. The contact with the German language and

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<sup>32</sup> E. Szramek, *Śląsk jako problem socjologiczny*, „Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku” 1934, no. 4 [reprint of the article published in „Roczników Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku”, Opole 1995]. See: contemporary framework of the problem: J. Kijonka, *Tożsamość współczesnych Górnoślązaków. Studium socjologiczne*, Katowice 2016.

<sup>33</sup> See: M. Żakowska, „Russlanddeutsche“ i „Polenddeutsche“. *Zaprogramowanie kulturowe niemieckich „późnych przesiedleńców” z Rosji i z Polski*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2011; J. Kijonka, *Migracje z Górnego Śląska do Republiki Federalnej Niemiec w latach 1970–1989, czyli między ojczyzną prywatną a ideologiczną*, „Górnośląskie Studia Socjologiczne. Seria Nowa” 2013, t. 4, p. 38–40.

culture creates the possibility of changing the *Weltanschauung* in the perception of reality to date, as well as acceptance of a new/another perspective of its evaluation. This also covers the historical perspective.

There appear differences between the examined when we take into account the place of origin ( $r = -0.393$ ), time of migration [old/new] ( $r = 0.658$ ) and successiveness of generations ( $r = 0.218$ ). The examined from Silesia declared greater susceptibility to changes resulting from their living in new conditions than the remaining ones from other parts of Poland. This can be tied to the family-based inheritance of the historical deposit of the German culture in (Opole) Silesia.<sup>34</sup> The conversion of identity in this case was easier than for people being raised without the environmental inheritance of the German culture.

Adaptation of migrants to the local structures of social life was to a large extent decided by the quality and intensity of relationships with neighbours and social contacts. In the research findings, it was possible to note that almost half of the respondents maintained the same relations both with Germans and their compatriots. Over one fourth of the examined (28.0%) declared that their contacts with Germans were limited exclusively to the workplace. Only one in every tenth person pointed to sporadic social contacts with Germans. Regarding this very issue, the place that the migrants came from again played an important role in shaping their 'new' life in Germany. The former inhabitants of Silesia claimed that the majority of their acquaintances whom they maintained contacts with were German.

It is worth noting here the fact that Silesians, being included in the group of the newest emigration, were no longer striving so much for full assimilation or cutting off their roots as their predecessors did<sup>35</sup>. The data prove that merely 8.6% of the representatives of the so-called new emigration coming from Silesia declared maintaining social contacts chiefly with Germans. The older emigration from Silesia frequently perceived their Polish origin as a reason to feel ashamed, meaning

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<sup>34</sup> See: M. Lis, *Mniejszość niemiecka na Śląsku Opolskim 1989–2014. Z bagażem przeszłości w realiach współczesności*, Opole 2015.

<sup>35</sup> L. Dyczewski, *Polacy w Bawarii. Tożsamość etniczno-kulturowa. Wchodzenie w społeczeństwo niemieckie*, Lublin 1993, p. 221.

that it was a source of complexes. In order to counteract the inner condition of dissonance which they lived through, they consciously underwent complete assimilation and integration with the environment. All these efforts served the purpose of acquiring – with reference to autochthons – an image of acceptance of the German sense of identity which was declared by them.

The new emigration, independent of their origin in Poland, was characterized by a greater sense of their own value, perceived potential in themselves, regarding which they did not feel the need for discarding their roots or did not have to resign from contact with their compatriots in favour of obtaining greater acceptance on the part of native Germans. Comparing the examined group of Polish emigrants with representatives of other nations (e.g., from African-Arab countries) inhabiting Germany, it may be stated that the examined emigrants managed to adapt to the new/other social reality in a better way than the 'Others'. Inasmuch as the area from which they came did not exert an influence on the aspects under discussion, the time of their coming to the host country did play the role of a differentiating factor<sup>36</sup>.

Hence, the representatives of the so-called old emigration declared higher percentage of being accepted by Germans than their counterparts belonging to the latest emigration. The latter often said about a dislike they felt in contacts with native residents. The socioeconomic situation in Germany favoured the development of antagonism towards Poles who have come to stay in Germany in recent years and who are perceived as a competitive workforce who 'dump' the prices of services.

### **Native tradition and faith functioning in new conditions**

It did not come easy for all emigrants to find their ways in the new reality. The reality of everyday life and work, which can build a sense of alienation, caused many of the examined to feel dissatisfied with the decision to emigrate, which they had taken. This, in turn, has often led

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<sup>36</sup> See: R. Łukasiewicz, *Relacje intergrupowe „starej” i najnowszej emigracji polskiej w Niemczech. Komunikat z badań*, In: *Polacy w Niemczech: przeszłość, teraźniejszość, przyszłość*, eds. Z.T. Klimaszewski, Białystok 2013, p. 270–283.

to a lack of feeling or sense of life. However, it was found that the higher the respondents' satisfaction with their decision to leave Poland, the easier it was for them to find the sense of living abroad. The correlation coefficient of satisfaction with leaving the mother country and the declared sense of life for the afore-mentioned variable amounts to 0.897 (significant with  $p < 0.05$ ).

A large part of the respondents were indeed satisfied with their stay in Germany but also strove to maintain the inherited cultural identity in the German environment. Independent of the region of origin, belonging to the old or new emigration group or representing an individual generation – the most frequently indicated way of maintaining contact with the Polish language turned out to be oral conversations held within the family environment of kin or in the circle of friends (82.0%). The technical mass media caused listening to the Polish radio or (especially) TV to be indicated the most often, whereas reading the press or books in the native tongue was chosen much less frequently. The examined turned out to be the least interested in active common participation in celebration events or ceremonies conducted in the Polish language. It is a worrying phenomenon that merely 7.3% of the respondents wanted to act for the benefit of Polish organisations abroad.

Germany is a country in which 58.0% of the native inhabitants declare themselves to be Christian (23.94 million belong to the Roman Catholic Church and 23.04 million – to an Evangelical Church). Moreover, there are 4.25 million Muslims and over 100 thousand people of Jewish religion living in this state. Among the Catholics, only 2.6 million (10.9%) declare themselves to be believers practising their faith regularly<sup>37</sup>. As regards the examined group of emigrants from Poland, over half of the respondents declared practicing their faith regularly (52.7%); those who were believers but did not practice regularly – 28.7%; those indifferent to religion – 8.0%; believers but not practicing – 6.0%; and those who did not follow any religion and did not practice – 3.3%<sup>38</sup>. In this individual case, it can be generalised that the mi-

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<sup>37</sup> <http://de.statista.com/themen/125/religion/> [09.06.2016].

<sup>38</sup> By way of example: in the year 2015, 391,925 believers (including 181,925 Catholics and 210,000 Protestants) and in 2014 – 487 719 people in German so-

grants from Poland, who participate in religious services, support the local Catholic Church and, by doing so, cultivate Christian foundations of culture, which are common for the European circle – in opposition to the majority of autochthons who reject the sphere of sacrum in favor of practical freedom of consumerism and individualism<sup>39</sup>.

Decidedly, the priestly and cultural-national activity of the Polish Catholic Mission (*Missio cum cura animarum* under the vocation of Our Lady Queen of Polish People Abroad)<sup>40</sup> was of greatest importance to half of the respondents. The symbolic value of the Mission's activity is closely connected with the experience that the followers brought along with them from the "country of their childhood". An extra-religious function was also visible supporting the social existence of certain examined respondents in the new life situation. The research participants examined from Silesia declared their participation in religious rites and ceremonies, tying the activity of the Mission to propagation of the national heritage, more frequently than those questioned from outside this region.

Faith is a spiritual value derived from family home and local environment. It influences the sense of human value and the way in which individuals perceive themselves, as well as the surrounding world. Here, the research data indicates that faith helps emigrants to alleviate the feeling of alienation, while the sense of belonging to a commonwealth of believers makes it possible for them to find common bonds with nationals. Perceiving values which connect the migrants examined with the autochthons have then facilitated overcoming the differences which divide people. The phenomenon of alienation was thus accompanied by the feeling they were incapable of finding one's way in the new reality<sup>41</sup>.

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ciety left the Church. Data: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/4052/umfrage/kirchenaustritte-in-deutschland-nach-konfessionen/> [10.07.2017].

<sup>39</sup> J. Mariański, *Sekularyzacja i desekularyzacja w nowoczesnym świecie*, Lublin 2006, p. 53–55.

<sup>40</sup> See: <http://www.pmkduesseldorf.de/index.php/misja/historia-misji> [10.09.2017].

<sup>41</sup> In the sociological understanding, alienation often signifies loneliness and/or helplessness of man in the world surrounding him (helplessness, nonsense, an-

Still, those who admitted to being religious declared that the syndrome of alienation receded (51.0%) faster than in the case of those who did not follow any religion (61.5%). Only 15.1% of these believers indicated, as respondents, that the feeling of alienation was persisting, in comparison with 23.1% of the examined non-believers who claimed so. The data collected proved the fact that depending on the respondent's attitude towards faith, differences have emerged in developing the sense of alienation (as well as those of living) abroad.

### **Conclusions from the studies**

Analysing the material collected (due to the limitation of space in this publication presented in a selective manner), it is possible to conclude that the awareness and functioning of Polish emigrants is dependent on the region of Poland they came to Düsseldorf from. The region from which the individual person arrives from determines the adaptative process to a large extent. The respondents from Silesia display a considerably weaker bonds with their "country of childhood" than those coming from other regions in Poland. The historically-formed ethnic-cultural borderland has influenced this dispersed sense of ethnic identity.

Therefore, the former call on their Polish national identity is often less in comparison with their counterparts from outside Silesia. Furthermore, the examined emigrants from Silesia are much more weakly interested in maintaining their bonds with Poland, including their failure not to keep up too close a relationship with relatives staying in Poland, or even breaking such bonds at all. They turn out to visit Poland far less frequently than emigrants from outside Silesia and are far less interested in the political-economic situation in the former mother country. Apart from this reality, they do not pay attention to the language skills of their children as regards knowledge of the Polish language (or the Silesian dialect) and more often than other, the subjects examined declare holding friendly relations with Germans rather than

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omy, isolation and estrangement). In: M. Seeman, *Alienation studies*, „Annual Review of Sociology” 1975, no. 23, p. 91–123.

their compatriots *sensu largo*. Finally, they engage very rarely in the sociocultural life of Poles living abroad.

It may be thought that the course of the assimilation process has been less acute for those examined from Silesia in comparison with the representatives of emigrants from outside this region, since the dispersed (Silesian-German) sense of identity of the former has facilitated their successful adaptation to the new environment and made it easier for them to yield to assimilation. The participants examined with their Silesian roots, who arrived in Germany in their youth, declared that they faced the barrier of alienation less frequently than their counterparts from other regions of Poland, engaging with greater intensity in the social life in the new environment and establishing good relations with the nationals; they also tend to evaluate the Germans' attitudes towards themselves, as emigrants, in a more positive way.

These respondents, due to the heritage of Silesian frontier and the possibility of holding the so-called double citizenship (Polish and German) were able to take advantage of better conditions of social aid and education than the examined who could not call on the German origin of their ancestors. The former also had more opportunities of taking better employment (in industrial concerns or administration), without having to run their own business activity or take jobs illegally, which is risky and more stressful. Thus, the stable (generally) professional standing and – in consequence – the attained level of living conditions reflected to a much higher degree their satisfaction with the decision to leave the home country. This is, most probably, the reason why their longing for the mother country is weaker.

The study material presented here shows the conditions behind the attitudes and situations in which the examined emigrants found themselves in search of a better life. The inherited identity of the country where they were born evolved in the contact with the German reality. Experiencing the new environment, with the simultaneous necessity of taking risk of abandoning traditional or acquiring other/new values, has constructed the dynamics of the attitudes of the examined emigrants. However, it is difficult to measure the index of "gross emigration happiness" which is sought so acutely by the respondents. Staying among them and a study reflection give rise to the supposition that the

examined mentally are advocates – in their large number – of the Ciceronian expression: *ubi bene, ibi patria*, which is worrying if one keeps in mind the thought expressed by Ludwik Hirszfeld: “In the mother country one has the past and the future. In a foreign land – only the present...”

The emigrants examined are aware of their own situation and the reality of the society they have come to live in. On the one hand, they cultivate the Polish (Silesian) ethnic-cultural heritage; on the other, they are subject to the process of assimilating elements of the German society. To some extent, they are connected with the country of origin, slowly entering the society which – to them and probably to the next generation – will make up the basic reality. Every tenth of the examined has already identified himself/herself with the European symbolic dimension. The respondents are living as if in two worlds: in the private and family sphere, where there still dominate Polish values in the domain of symbolic culture, and in the socio-professional sphere dominated by the culture of living within German society and being closer and closer connected with it as well as with the German culture.

The literature of the subject outlines two standpoints which describe the further fate of the examined group of migrants. It can be supposed that with time the examined subjects will abandon the heritage of one culture in favor of the other (William James' approach), or they will not have to rid of their ethnic-cultural heritage while living in the new social environment (according to Robert Park)<sup>42</sup>. In the case of Germany, there is a political block preventing Poles associating and forming the Polish minority; in contrast to Poland, where the German minority take full advantage of their right to associate, which is guaranteed by the Polish state.

To conclude, one other element of the reality in which the respondents participate can be mentioned. The situation in which they have found themselves depends on the personal depth of experiencing the symbolic (spiritual) culture of the country of their origin and that of the host one. It happens more and more often that for a number of reasons

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<sup>42</sup> L. Dyczewski, *Polacy w Bawarii. Tożsamość etniczno-kulturowa. Wchodzenie w społeczeństwo niemieckie*, Lublin 1993, p. 250.

(among others, educational) emigrants (especially young ones) know neither one culture nor the other well enough. This lack of knowledge can superimpose on civilisational changes connected, among others, with the triumph of technology over culture *sensu largo*, with the common moral consequences described already several years ago by Neil Postman<sup>43</sup>. Thus, the situation of Polish (and not only Polish) migrants is conditioned by the political, economic, social, but primarily – cultural – contexts which are more effective and link people who meet in a more permanent manner.

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<sup>43</sup> N. Postman, *Technopol – triumf techniki nad kulturą*, PIW, Warszawa 1995, p. 219–220.

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