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SOCIAL NETWORKS AS A PERPETUAL VEHICLE
FOR MIGRATION

INTRODUCTION

The direct incentive for labour migrants' admission to Europe since the end of the Second World War was the substitution of migrants for the working-class.[1] The massive inflows of migrants that followed the decision of admission were supplemented by globalization, further accelerated by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. The subsequent political and economic changes within Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), along with the wars inside Europe (in former Yugoslavia), and in close proximity to it (Middle East and North Africa), released huge migration flows into Western Europe accompanied by migratory movements within and out of the former Soviet Bloc countries. As a result, Central and Eastern Europe has become both a sending and receiving region. Additionally, three Mediterranean former out-migration states – Greece, Italy, and Spain – have become the destination of mass migration inflows, both legal and illegal,[2] originating from within Europe and elsewhere. All these movements included: short-term and long-term labour migration (both legal and illegal), seasonal or circular migration, emigration for settlement or a more permanent stay, and illegal transit migration. Consequently, the multi-stranded social relations built by migrants across borders have

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[1] Ch. CALDWELL, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe. Immigration, Islam, and the West*, New York: Doubleday 2009, p. 124.

[2] "It is generally understood that illegality relates to acts of non-compliance with the law in order to reach a foreign destination or take up residence outside the country of origin"; see M. OKÓLSKI, *Illegality of International Population Movements in Poland*, "International Migration" 38(2000), p. 58; or – one should add – to take employment in the destination country's labour market. By definition, illegal immigrants do not meet all or some of the conditions required for entry, settlement, and/or work in the destination state.

paved the way for: establishment of migratory routes, continuous migratory inflows along these routes, and the growth of migrant communities in the recipient European countries. These three factors reinforce each other, and the social device that significantly contributes to "them" has been the social networks.

Numerous migration studies have highlighted the importance of social networks to the dynamics of labour migration to Europe over the past three decades. However, there are not only labour migrant inflows that have been set in motion by the networks. The latter also accelerated the formation of illegal movements' migratory routes heading into Europe. This paper rests on the assumption that the well-known theoretical concept of social networks, which provides an ingenious explanation for migration flows, is also an enduring and powerful vehicle for out-migrations of various types. And this remains so despite changing conditions related to technological and other developments. The paper starts off by outlining the very concept of a network.

1. NETWORKS

On the whole, a network analysis depicts relations among actors and the social structures that emerge from recurring nature of these relations. "The ideas that social phenomena can be interpreted as networks of relations, that society itself can be interpreted as a network, and that social action can be explained as the outcome of the constraints imposed and the opportunities afforded by social relations have been recurrent since Simmel's formal sociology".[3] The development of network analysis has helped to highlight the structures underlying the complexity of relations among actors in everyday life, social and spatial mobility included.

Personal networks[4] are omnipresent, since most of us – from the very beginning of our lives – are part of various networks, such as family, friends, peer groups, work colleagues, and so on, while these relationships as a rule are taken for granted. The general term of personal network comprises inter-

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[3] A. CHIESI, *Network Analysis*, [in:] *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences,* eds. N. Smelser, P. Baltes, vol. 15, Amsterdam: Elesevier 2001, p. 10502.

[4] The notions of "personal" and "social" networks are equal with each other, and further I use them interchangeably. However, the incentive to introduce the former one is driven by the need to distinguish between networks discussed here in this paper from organizationally defined networks that are beyond the scope of this article.

personal relationships or ties of different characteristics, either "weak" or "strong", maintained by migrants or less mobile people, or established by individuals involved in criminal activity. A variety of personal networks is reflected in notions adopted in the sociological literature: "kin networks", "social networks", "migration/migratory networks", and "trafficking networks". In migration processes all of the above elements are involved, and hence all discussed below.

Academic work on social networks comprises a vast body of literature. An abstract and descriptive concept of social network means a structured set of social relationships between individuals that are not spontaneous or ephemeral but lasting, and they evolve over time. In migration research, the subject of social networks is not new. In the 1960s and 1970s, numerous researchers emphasized the importance of kin and friendship networks in planning and sustaining migration. And before long it was stated that social networks might become migration networks. The latter are defined as simple structures or a set of relationships founded upon mutual trust, solidarity, and reciprocal exchange that link mobile and non-mobile people. Monica Boyd promotes the view that migration networks are personal, social networks based on family, friendship, and community. She acknowledges that "these networks may be considered 'personal' networks to distinguish them from networks based on social ties based on distant or organizationally defined social relations".[5] Hence, migration networks are just one kind of personal/social network. Elaborating on this issue Boyd indicates that "personal networks or ties between people, represent only one out of many kinds of networks", such as "political or economic ties between sending and receiving nations".[6] Migration networks, which by definition are personal and influence the decision on migration, may also select (potential) migrants within households and the local community, and influence the selection of destination, directing or channeling migratory flows toward certain places. They lower the overall costs of migration by providing cost-saving information, as well as reducing psychological/emotional costs, and hence they facilitate labour and other motivated movements. Apart from being selective, these networks also play an important role in adaptation, as they help an immigrant to adjust to the host country immediately, from the beginning of the stay. As numerous studies have shown, migration networks are very effective in lo-

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[5] M. BOYD, *Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas*, "International Migration Review" 23(1989), p. 639.

[6] Ibidem, p. 655.

cating employment for newly arrived immigrants, although their effectiveness is limited to occupations with a high concentration of immigrant workers. "Networks link population in sending and receiving states in a dynamic manner. They serve as mechanisms of interpreting data and feeding information and other resources in both directions."[7]

As mentioned, the network concept focuses simultaneously on the agency and the structure. It combines the individualistic and structural perspectives, allowing for the interpretation of migration from both angles. A new light can be shed on this issue using Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration.[8] Drawing upon his conception of agency and structures, migrant/social networks may be identified as actions of human agents (migrants or potential migrants) who comply with rules (reciprocal exchange, solidarity) and allocate available resources, hence creating permanent structures, i.e. the social and/or migration ties (networks) that are informal and invisible. From this perspective, the very fact of migration is equal to the "stretching" of extant social relations (structures) over space – and with tangible results: the empirical evidence from migration research indicates that "relatively successful migration experiences are rapidly emulated by friends, relatives and others."[9] This is how **chain migration** develops, that is, a process in which people move to destinations which they have heard of from relatives or friends, and/or migrants send for family member(s), kin or a member of the home community.[10] Chain migration develops along with the migrant networks and may be seen as their function and indicator. Both notions (migrant networks & chain migration) are vital for the explanation of contemporary migration flows into Europe, as they predominantly have been directed and supported by social networks often bringing about chain migration. Although networks are an omnipresent vehicle for migrations, they may still be accompanied by other arrangements facilitating movements, like employment agencies, labour/student exchange programs and, last but not least, illegal migration businesses.

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[7] D. GURAK, F. CACES, *Migration Networks and the Shaping of Migration Systems*, [in:] *International Migration Systems:* A Global Approach, eds. M. Kritz, L. Lim, H. Zlotnik, New York–Oxford: Clarendon Press–Oxford University Press, p. 151.

[8] A. GIDDENS, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge: Polity Press 1984.

[9] J. GOSS, *Conceptualizing International Labour Migration: A Structural Perspective*, "International Migration Review" 29(1995), p. 335.

[10] This is further augmented by the fact that members of cohesive networks tend to share common opinions; see A. EPSTEIN, *Gossip, norms and social network*, [in:] *Social Networks in Urban Situations*, ed. J. Mitchell, Manchester 1969.

2. MIGRATION NETWORKS AND MIGRATION BUSINESS

The omnipresence of networks' arrangements in migrations does not mean they are identical in their distinct types of movement. On the contrary, it may be assumed that different types of migratory flows require, involve, and establish different kinds of networks. Although the issue calls for further investigation, it is already clear that at least one type of migration, i.e. the illegal, and illegal migration-related businesses, makes use of specific networks.

The migration business concept developed by John Salt in the late 1990s is still valid. The author defined it as "a system of institutional networks consisting of organizations, agents and individuals each of which stands to gain some form of remuneration".[11] This thriving business has numerous components, and parts of them are private, both legal and illegal. Among the legal ones are commercial networks for trading, transportation, and contract work, which are fairly permanent, formal, and visible structures. The illegal ones deal with smuggling and trafficking networks,[12] i.e., informal and invisible structures that smoothly facilitate movements on long-established migratory routes.

Developed countries continue to face the challenge of undocumented migration. Cross-border mobility is a timeless social process, but recent years have witnessed its marked acceleration, including at Poland's eastern border.[13] Both illegal labour migrants and asylum seekers are involved in undocumented cross-border mobility and both may be the clients of illegal migration businesses. Some asylum seekers and economic migrants "enter a destination country through unauthorized means, and the response of many states to undocumented migration has been to enhance border control and

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[11] J. SALT, *Reconceptualising Migration and Migration Space*, paper presented to the conference on Central and Eastern Europe – New Migration Space, Pułtusk 11-13 December 1997, p. 4.

[12] The smuggled person "is a foreigner who has been assisted in unauthorized entry and/or residence or employment in the territory of an alien State", and trafficked is a person used against his/her will, "distinct features of trafficking are recruiting, guiding or manipulating a person at any stage of the migratory process as well as exploiting him/her by means of deceit or coercion"; see M. OKÓLSKI, *Illegality of International Population Movements*, p. 59-60.

[13] It is worth noting that in pursuit of greater precision in border control, states have adopted new technologies that take advantage of biometric identification (and data) and electronic monitoring systems, and one example can be seen at the USA-Mexico border; see I. GOLDIN, G. CAMERON, M. BALARAJAN, *Exceptional People. How Migration Shaped Our World and Will Define Our Future*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2009, p. 153-154.

enforcement".[14] There is a vital difference between an asylum seeker and a refugee that needs to be clarified. The distinction primarily relates to the procedures used to acquire formal recognition of the refugee status. Refugees usually flee to neighboring countries from conflict or persecution at home, while asylum seekers are more likely to apply for protection in more, and sometime in very, distant countries.[15] Another crucial difference lies in the fact that asylum seekers are applying for humanitarian protection, which often brings about access to assistance, benefits (like social welfare), and permanent residence in the host country, while "most refugees live temporarily in countries close to the one they have fled with intention of returning home".[16] Furthermore, "asylum seekers looking for third-country settlement are attracted to particular countries" driven by their perception of a country's economy, society, and asylum policies, they also tend to "relocate to a country where there are family and friends."[17] And as "some people who apply for asylum do not really need protection – they would be 'economic migrants' by another name."[18] Asylum processes are determined by the policies adopted by particular governments[19], and as favorable asylum decision usually implies the right of permanent residence in the country of application, the rejection of an appeal for asylum usually results in the migrant's repatriation or movement to another country; asylum seekers can also be detained at any stage of their application.[20]

Asylum seekers continue to arrive in the European Union states, and their immigration is becoming associated with illegal border-crossing. Smuggling of migrants needs to be "neatly" networked, thus it involves transnational networks of organized crime that are often linked with other illegal activities. For their part, illegal migrants depend upon smuggling networks on the one hand, and upon the ethnic networks (i.e., ties with compatriots) on the other. Three principal illegal strategies implemented by these migrants are: entry without documents, entry with false documents, and clandestine entry. Research on these "procedures" shows that trafficking in persons or smug-

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[14] The threat of terrorism has reinforced this trend; see: I. GOLDIN, G. CAMERON, M. BALARAJAN, *Exceptional People*, p. 153.

[15] Ibidem, p. 148.

[16] Ibidem.

[17] Ibidem, p. 115-116.

[18] Ibidem, p. 152.

[19] For example, "while only 15 percent of Iraqi asylum seekers in the UK were granted refugee status, more than two-thirds were recognized in Germany, and none were recognized in Greece."; see I. GOLDIN, G. CAMERON, M. BALARAJAN, *Exceptional People*, p. 152.

[20] Ibidem, p. 151-152.

gling of migrants constitutes an integral part of the illegal migration business, "and the activity of trafficking networks increasingly affects the number of migrants, as well as the selection of destinations and routes used."[21] One comprehensive description of the procedure reads: "A survey conducted in Poland in 1998 revealed.. […] the worldwide availability of contact points reaching out to the most remote and most hardly accessible localities in Africa and Asia, and the well-coordinated and effective functioning of the trafficking organizations. […] Another important finding is the role of criminal networks in running trafficking organizations. At least one-third of all studied cases showed a very similar pattern: an unattended trip to Moscow (or other city in the ex-USSR), followed (after a shorter or longer wait to make up a migrants' group) by an escorted trip to Kiev, Minsk or Vilnius, and (usually after the re-arrangement of the group) an illegal entry to Poland. […] Gradually, migrants are further trafficked in newly composed groups to Germany or other western countries."[22] After crossing the Polish border, illegal migrants are provided with food, shelter, transport and an escort, and all necessary information regarding the further journey.[23] All this requires close and regular cooperation that relies on criminal networks, also internationally. Indeed, "in arranging illegal border crossing […] a high degree of coordination must be secured between the teams from the two neighbouring countries. At this level, it is also quite common for local members of the network in a transit (destination) country to collaborate with foreigners representing the major countries of origin, who are legal residents of that country, in handling illegal migrants' affairs in a given territory."[24] The necessary coordination of migration along an entire route must be and is ensured by the smuggling networks. Some insights afforded into the functioning of these networks reveal its following levels:

"– informal leadership, which takes care of, or at least controls, the entire process on a given route, and ensures its security;

– internationally linked underworld bosses in each country through which transit routes run;

– bilingual teams pursuing people-smuggling activities in specific border areas; and

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[21] M. OKÓLSKI, *Recent trends and major issues in international migration: Central and East European perspectives*, "International Migration" 165(2000), p. 337.

[22] Ibidem, p. 338.

[23] M. OKÓLSKI, *Illegality of International Population Movements*, p. 72.

[24] Ibidem, p. 74-75.

– local collaborators in specific relocation centres or border areas who are entrusted with particular, separate tasks."[25]

Such has been, and undoubtedly still is, the *modus operandi* of international crime networks that form a part of illegal migrant business.

Since the 1990s, Poland, like other CEE states, has been receiving a considerable number of illegal transit migrants originating from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, and the major detected routes led through Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. "The great importance of transit migration for current patterns of illegal migration stems from the fact that Poland attracts migrants less for its own virtues (job opportunities, wages, social protection) than its location as an immediate neighbor of Germany, by far the most desired destination in Europe".[26] The above cited observation never loses its validity. The established ethnic diasporas in western EU states, Germany included, pull in further, successive numbers of compatriots eager to leave their home country and join relatives/friends in Europe. Migration/trafficking networks and migratory routes further inspire these decisions and subsequent movements.

But recently one can see innovations in the illegal border-crossing business. The engagement of the state (in this case, Belarus) laid the foundations for further development of migrant smuggling, as witnessed on the Polish-Belarusian border since summer 2021. Encouraged in many ways by this state's agencies, the asylum seekers from all over the world (including Cuba and India), presumably headed for Germany, have – by the thousands – attempted to force through this border, illegally and violently. The Polish state's measures introduced to combat these illegal and violent inflows are not unprecedented. On the contrary, since the 1990s, the European receiving states have promptly reacted to the increased entry of asylum seekers by restricting entry and preventing migration. Special measures put into operation in order to restrict the entrance of asylum-seekers have included: sanctions on airlines who carry people without the right documents, sending people back to the "first countries of asylum", and raising visa requirements. A reasonable doubt underlay these firm measures – namely, whether the asylum seekers were driven from their home country by persecution or whether they were, in fact, economically-motivated, clandestine labour migrants.

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[25] Ibidem, p. 74.

[26] *The Challenge of East-West Migration for Poland*, eds. K. Iglicka, K. Sword, Houndmills: Macmillan 1999.

Smuggling or trafficking is a costly business, and the price is very high in relation to earnings in the countries of origin. That is why clients of this business employ basically two methods. Firstly, money is paid to a trafficker beforehand by the future migrant's employer as a credit/loan to the migrant. Secondly, money is paid, usually by relatives or other co-ethnics, upon (successful) arrival at the destination place involved in this movement.[27] According to one piece of evidence, some half of the reviewed migrants from Asian states to Western Europe "said they had paid (or agreed to pay) US$5,000 or more, and a quarter US$12,000 or more".[28] Another study showed that traffickers charged Iranian asylum seekers heading for the Netherlands between US$4000 and US$6000, "and these payments had to be made in advance and in foreign currency".[29] In this case, traffickers had been involved at each stage of asylum seekers' migration (from home to the destination country), they arranged documents and tickets, where necessary, provided information concerning strategies for staying in the Netherlands, and influenced the choice of final destination in Europe.[30] The latter was due to the fact that these traffickers had established and maintained migration routes across Europe and it "was reported that a close international network of contacts operated along these routes".[31] This is how the traffickers' (smugglers') network operated. The survey quoted above also depicted the way in which the asylum seekers' social networks "worked". It showed that out of 24 respondents "20 reported having friends or relatives in European countries before leaving Iran, and most said that their initial plan had been to join these people."[32] These supportive ethnic (personal) networks provided financial assistance, information, emotional support, and childcare. More recent data gathered by Europol reveal that in 2015 the cost for an illegal crossing of the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa to the EU was approximately US$2000, though traffickers constantly change and modify the routes and prices. Generally, in the illegal migration business, the price charged is tied to the modes of transportation utilized and the distance covered.

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[27] M. OKÓLSKI, *Recent trends and major issues*, p. 338.

[28] M. OKÓLSKI, *Illegality of International Population Movements*, p. 73.

[29] Meeting the costs of traffickers meant that some of their clients "had been obliged to work on the black market in transit countries" while others "had managed to borrow enough money before leaving Iran"; see K. KOSER, *"Out of the frying pan and into the fire". A case study of illegality amongst Asylum Seekers*, paper presented to the conference on New Migration in Europe: Social Constructions and Social Reality, Utrecht, April 18-20, 1996, p. 8.

[30] K. KOSER, *"Out of the frying pan and into the fire"*, p. 5.

[31] Ibidem.

[32] Ibidem, p. 7.

In light of the presented illegal cross-border mobility we may distinguish specific networks operating in the realm of illegal migration businesses. They are twofold. In the first place, they tie clients, and potential clients, with the business's staff. These ties are very flexible, and change at the successive stages of the route. Simultaneously, they are accompanied by stable, personal networks that link the migrant with other co-ethnics, be they relatives and/or friends who live in the destination state or region (e.g., Europe). The latter ties provide courage and (continuous) support, and pass on the latest information relevant at the given stage of the journey. Shown are two crucial elements of the network involved in illegal border-crossing. They supplement each other, and both are necessary, hence our name for these networks: **twofold border-crossing networks**.

3. CONTINUOUS RELEVANCE OF MIGRATION NETWORKS

Social/personal networks are a continuously essential factor of migration as they both affect one's decision to migrate, and in a number of ways support the movement. Transformed into supportive migration networks – due to the out-mobility of some co-networkers – they reduce numerous costs related to out-movement, are helpful in getting a job (particularly a low-paid one) – reportedly often obtained informally through personal contacts and recommendations – and are also considered to be synonymous with social embeddedness[33] in the receiving society. This study was conducted in Milan in 1997 and shows the migrants' networks are very extensive and heterogeneous. Although mainly comprised of compatriots, in many cases they "involve migrants from other countries as well as Italians – friends, colleagues, acquaintances and people working in associations and public services… mediate interaction with public institutions and the local labour market in Italy".[34] From this it follows that migrants are (constantly) developing networks after settling in the host country, and extending them, so that the newly interlaced net links the newcomers with other co-ethnics, local people, and migrants from other countries. It may be said that social, ethnic and migration networks in which these people operated mingled with each other,

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[33] E. MINGIONE, F. QUASSOLI, *The Participation of Immigrants in the Underground Economy in Italy*, [in:] *Eldorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe*, eds. R. King, G. Lazaridis, Ch. Tsardanidis, London: MacMillan 2000, p. 44.

[34] Ibidem, p. 53.

and this is the essence of their heterogeneity, as stated above. Many studies, apart from the one already presented, highlight the importance of migration networks for entering host countries, their supplementation (upon settlement) with social networks built up with host society's members and other migrants, and their usefulness in finding job opportunities and channeling various newcomers' needs. As a result, migrants in a destination country operate in a specific "mix" of social networks.

Networks, however, are involved in migration in two ways, and they may support both: out-migration and return migration. Research carried out among Greek migrants in the USA showed that social networks were also useful "devices" in return migration of the second generation from the USA to Greece, as they helped to establish the "right connections" crucial in finding employment upon return.[35] Existing literature shows that generally only kin and family networks are involved in return migration. Hence, we may say that only these networks may play the role of **return networks**. It is worth noting, however, that in regard to return migration the kin networks' role may be ambiguous. In some instances such networks really do discourage migrants from return, thus becoming **no-return kin networks**.[36] As discovered, some Polish migrants in Vienna "have prolonged their stay to long-term or an unforeseen future, and took the role of permanent 'sponsors' of their family back in Poland, that in no way encouraged their return."[37] The actual role of kin networks in return migration is determined by the financial issues, i.e. the financial status of the potential (re)migrants and/or their families back home, and their consumption-investment aspirations and strategies (incidentally, ever growing).[38] Return migrants who embody resources and information of the receiving areas link them with the sending places, and thus they preserve the use of social networks in the migration process.[39]

At present, we are witnessing a new form for establishing social ties that is also gathering momentum in the domain of migration. It is the online-social-networking utilizing the Internet and electronic resources. In the receiving states, the online-networking results in establishing ethnic migrant online communities across the country, as well as particular ethnic commu-

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[35] A. CHRISTU, *Crossing boundaries – ethnicizing employment – gendering labour: gender, ethnicity, and social networks in return migration*, "Social & Cultural Geography" 7(2005), no. 1, p. 89.

[36] K. ROMANISZYN, *Migration Networks and Return Migration*, [in:] *Homecoming. An Anthropology of Return Migration*, eds. E. Nowicka, H. Firozbakhch, Kraków: Nomos 2008, p. 40.

[37] Ibidem, p. 41.

[38] Ibidem, p. 44.

[39] M. BOYD, *Family and Personal Networks in International Migration*, p. 650.

nities of a town or a region, as revealed in the study on Polish migrants in the UK.[40] The research showed that "computer-assisted networks can strengthen already existing groups or can contribute to the establishment of new communities. The latter seems to be more common among young people."[41] The analysis of the Polish migrants' portals created in numerous host countries led to the same conclusions, that computer-assisted networks support already existing Polish migrants' communities, and develop ties that may be "extended" from the virtual to the real world.[42] Internet portals and discussion forums, which flourish among Polish migrants in the destination countries, are also reported as a massive resource for information, tips, guides and various forms of assistance for them.[43] The establishment of virtual networks by migrants proves that networks and networking, be they virtual or physical (real) are an indispensable element of migration and settlement in the host state.

Migration studies reflect the stable and considerable importance of migration networks for contemporary migration from Poland. Although they play a more significant role in the out-movement of lower-educated and older migrants,[44] while young, fairly well-educated people adopt more individualistic migration strategies and rely on extensive social networks built up by members of the host country.[45] Emigration from Poland since the beginning of the 1980s, firstly during the months of the Solidarity uprising, later during the martial law period and the first years of political and socio-economic transformation illustrates the fundamental importance of migration networks as an effective mechanism stimulating migration and providing assistance in first months after arrival in the destination state.[46] The Polish communities in the host states that enable migrants to live and work in their own social mi-

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[40] Among the portals chosen by the author for the investigation were: www.mojawyspa.co.uk, www.mojabrytania.pl, www.polacy.co.uk, www.gadatka.com; see R. SEREDYŃSKA-ABOU EID, *The Role of Online Communities for Polish Migrants in the United Kingdom*, [in:] *Selling One's Favourite Piano to Emigrate*, eds. J. Isański, P. Luczys, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars 2011, p. 32.

[41] Ibidem, p. 38.

[42] W. GIGLEWICZ, *Polonia w sieci,* [in:] *W kręgu badań nad Polonią i duszpasterstwem polonijnym*, eds. S. Zych, B. Walicki, Lublin: Ośrodek Badań nad Polonią i Duszpasterstwem Polonijnym KUL 2015.

[43] J. PLEWKO, *Sprostać migracji. Pomoc migrantom ekonomicznym z ziem polskich (połowa XIX – początek XXI wieku),* Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2010.

[44] B. CIEŚLIŃSKA, *Emigracje bliskie i dalekie. Studium współczesnych migracji zarobkowych na przykładzie województwa podlaskiego*, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Białostockiego 2012.

[45] I. GRABOWSKA-LUSIŃSKA, M. OKÓLSKI, *Emigracja ostatnia?* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar 2009, p. 182-185.

[46] J. PLEWKO, *Sprostać migracji*, 164f.

lieu also arose from the Polish ethnic networks, as reported by numerous researchers.[47]

As previously mentioned, since 1989, Poland, like other CEE states, has been attracting a growing number of migrants roughly classified as economic (voluntary) migrants, involuntary migrants, and transit migrants. The social device of networks served as the vehicle for inflows of the latter (as described above) and also of the former ones. Their concentration in the Polish labour market, in particular its economic sectors, like small trade, gastronomy, domestic service, construction, and agriculture, reveals the existence and strength of migration/social networks linking the newcomers with their compatriots already working in Poland, and with local employers. It confirms a general observation: "Studies on the labor market have evidenced that people acquire information about job opportunities mainly on informal relations, and 'strong' or 'weak' interpersonal ties determine differential chances of entering employment".[48] The direct result of the stated concentration, along with job opportunities/vacancies in these economic sectors, has led to the emergence of **ethnic niches** in the Polish labour market. This is how migration/social networks influence the economy of the receiving state. According to some estimates, the stock of immigrants in Poland has increased from around 100 thousand in 2011 to a number exceeding 2 million in 2019, and Ukrainian citizens represented the majority of this population.[49] Even before the present war, Ukrainians working temporarily in Poland were estimated at around 1.35 million. Apart from the economic factor, i.e., a flourishing labour market with the lowest levels of unemployment recorded since 1989, also the social factors allowed for such a massive inflow. These were the well-developed: transportation networks, channels of formal recruitment as well as networks of informal recruiters entangled with migration/social networks.[50] Cited, contemporary research on the Ukrainian newcomers provides a good empirical illustration of migrant/social networks' functioning. The authors arrived at the conclusion that "the majority of our

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[47] See for instance: K. ROMANISZYN, *Kulturowe implikacje międzynarodowych migracji*, Lublin: Instytut Badań nad Polonią i Duszpasterstwem Polonijnym KUL 2003; A. GRZYMAŁA-KAZŁOWSKA, *Rozwój sieci migranckiej i wzrost wagi powiązań rodzinnych*, [in:] *Ludzie na huśtawce. Migracje między peryferiami Polski i Zachodu*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar 2001.

[48] M. GRANOVETTER, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1973.

[49] GUS, *Populacja obcokrajowców w Polsce w czasie pandemii Covid-19*, Warszawa 2020.

[50] M. KINDLER, K. WÓJCIKOWSKA-BANIAK, *(Missing) Bridging Ties and Social Capital? The Creation and Reproduction of Migrants' Social Network Advantage: The Case of Ukrainian Migrants in Poland*, "Central and Eastern European Migration Review" 8(2019), p. 77-85.

interviewees received the first information about jobs from more experienced migrants – Ukrainian acquaintances or friends they had met in Ukraine. This allowed them not only to find work, but also to avoid poor working conditions, especially regarding payment."[51] Furthermore, "the workplace constitutes an important formal or informal institutional context for interaction and potential tie formation for labour migrants".[52] This only highlights the way of extension of social networks in which migrants operate: while maintaining the existing ethnic ones, they simultaneously form social networks with co-workers.

CONCLUSIONS

Migration, a natural process that is gathering momentum, may further intensify in the coming decades. If so, the networks of various kinds would be among the contributing factors. Networks involved in migration processes are not static. On the contrary they multiply, differentiate, and become heterogeneous linking together newcomers with their co-ethnics, local people, and migrants from other countries. Their importance is also evident in the host country's economy. It stems from creation of ethnic niches, i.e. the concentration of labour migrants in particular sectors of this economy. Migration networks also accompany illegal migration businesses being involved in illegal border-crossings. The virtual online-social-networking in the host countries creates new ethnic migrant communities, and aids in the maintenance of the existing ones. Being a social (structural) device of migration networks at the same time augments the personal decision-making process. This only confirms the fact that migration results from both the rational calculations of its expected costs and benefits, and through (various) social structures. All in all, networks and networking, either virtual or physical (real), are an indispensable element of migration, settlement, and adaptation of newcomers.

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[51] Ibidem, p, 104.
[52] Ibidem.

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SOCIAL NETWORKS AS A PERPETUAL VEHICLE FOR MIGRATION

Summary

Migration processes have accelerated in the past few decades all over the world, and pose major social and political challenges. The paper aims to discuss the constant importance of personal networks in these movements. It addresses the phenomenon of networks viewed as a prime social mechanism which amplifies and directs migration flows. Close attention has been paid to the variety of networks in which migrants operate in the host country, and the specific nature of the illegal border-crossing networks. The paper is based on relevant monographs and research data.

Key words: social network(s); migration network(s); migration business.

SIECI – STAŁY, SPOŁECZNY WEHIKUŁ MIGRACJI

Przepływy migracyjne, które nasiliły się w ostatnich kilku dekadach stanowią wielkie wyzwanie natury politycznej i społecznej. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest pokazanie jak niezmiennie wielkie znaczenie w tych przemieszczeniach mają sieci migracyjne. Stanowią one, bowiem podstawowy społeczny mechanizm wzmacniający i ukierunkowujący przepływy migracyjne. W tekście uwagę poświęcono szczególnie kwestii różnorodności sieci, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem sieci szmuglerów ludzi. Zaplecze empiryczne artykułu stanowią dane z badań.

Słowa kluczowe: sieci społeczne; sieci migracyjne; migracyjny biznes.