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MIGRATION PATTERNS OLD AND NEW. SOME USEFUL CONCEPTS AND A FEW EXAMPLES

I. Introduction

Today's migrations are usually perceived as a new phenomena, triggered by rapid changes of the globalizing world. Another words, many students believe, we are dealing with processes that have never took place on such a large scale before. The precedence of the mass migration of the turn of the XIX century is acknowledged, but the emphasis is put on a new quality of the current migration flows. Contrary to that, this short entry aims to point out to some striking similarities between the *old* and *new* migrations (Foner, Lucassen). The term *old migrations* refers in this context to the late XIX century mass migration which led from Europe mostly overseas, and the term *new migrations* denotes the current migration flows.

II. Useful Concepts

The concept of *transnationalism* is often discussed by researchers. Here, let us note just two points. First of all it must be emphasized that this new concept (developed in mid 1990's) applies to the *old migrations*, as much as it does to the studies of *new migrations*. Secondly, it is interesting to note the paradoxes of transnationalism:

“**Connectivity** between source and destination points is an inherent aspect of migrations, but migration networks generate a multiplicity of »**imagined communities**« organized along different, often conflicting principles. Consequently, what immigration scholars describe as transnationalism is usually its opposite: highly **particularistic attachments** antithetical to those by-products of globalization denoted by the concept of »transnational civil society«”.¹

¹ R. Waldinger, D. Fitzgelard, *Immigrant 'Transnationalism' and the Presence of the Past*, “American Journal of Sociology” 2004, vol. 109, pp. 1177–1195.

Indeed, while studying the phenomenon of transnationalism we are confronted with migrant moving between and within two (or more) cultural spaces on the one hand, and on the other hand we trace the immigrant community building. Clearly, the latter process, typical for the *old migrations*, is repeated in the *new migrations*. It is puzzling, since one could expect that today there is no more need of an immigrant community. The easy connection nowadays between migrant's home and his/her destination, facilitates not only keeping in touch on every day basis, but also frequent visits. Another words the connection helps to overcome sense of alienation and loneliness. Nevertheless, migrants still need to construct their own, distinct milieu in the receiving country, they keep establishing their own associations, institutions and services. They have their own shops, medical doctors, pubs, and church services. Nowadays a new forms of contact are added: blogs, internet fora and websites. Newcomers who want today to get in touch with their compatriots, at their new place of residence, simply browse net and they find there all necessary information. So new forms of inner-group activity intersect today with the old pattern of migrants' behavior.

The process of social changes leads migrants into unexpected situations, and makes them face new choices. Most of newcomers become agents of modernity, despite their initial intention.² It is fascinating to analyse the process in which the conservative migration turns into innovative one, which brings pre-modern peasants to merge into and contribute to the modern, and post-modern (post-industrial) labour market. Most migrants originate from the underdeveloped areas, and they decide to migrate because they feel, they are excluded from the society which is rapidly changing. And so they move to the large international commercial and industrial centres (mostly in the West). Their decision is meant to secure their previous position, to keep the status quo. Despite the conservative motives, most migrants become innovators, accepting new roles, and responding to new challenges. Somehow, when they are far from home, they find it easier to adjust to modernity. One of the reasons is that they have more options in the new country.

There is no point to elaborate here on the concept of *modernity*.³ Generally speaking, after a few decades of disgrace, the concept came back in its new version in which Eurocentrism and the linear vision of world progress have been erased. In its new version, the concept of modernity underlines, among others, the phenomenon of the gap in the global cities, between their elites (managers, businessmen, artists, intellectuals) on one hand, and on the other hand the labor force which is employed in the maintenance, and lowest services.⁴ Both groups are made of migrants, but the latter one lacks agency which is an attribute of the cosmopolitan elite. Still migrant women who are employed in domestic services, and often experience deskilling in the new

² David A. Gerber, *Theories and Lives: Transnationalism and Current Theory in Immigration History*, IMIS-Beitrage, 15(1), 15–34, 2000.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ S. Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents. Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*, "The New Press", New York 1998.

country, become more independent and self-confident than they have ever been before. So in fact they do not lack agency, but rather have less agency than the elite.

Liquid modernity is another concept useful in migration studies. It can be used to analyze the construction and reconstruction of identity, both individual, and collective, and to trace changing patterns of social ties. According to Zygmunt Bauman:

“The old social bonds of family and community are being replaced by concepts of identity that are by their nature fluid and flexible. Modernity originally aimed to break primordial social bonds only to reform and relocate individuals in even stronger, new bonds (such as the nation, or the nuclear family). Liquid modernity means strong bonds are out entirely”.⁵

Bauman asserts that

“we have **moved from a solid to a fluid phase** of modernity, in which nothing keeps its shape, and social forms are constantly changing at great speed, radically transforming the experience of being human”.⁶

But in fact establishment of immigrant communities testifies to the fact, that migrants know how to recreate the traditional forms of social bonds in the new country, and how to limit the rapidity the transformation. It seems that the concept of liquid modernity explains some problems, the migrants are confronted with, but does not apply to the whole migrants' activity.

The immigrant communities are based on social capital, and help to reproduce it. It is, therefore, a kind of *perpetuum mobile*. According to Robert Putnam

“social capital refers to social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance and trustworthiness”.

Putnam introduces a notion of *bonding & bridging social capital*. Bonding social capital – means “networks that link people who are similar in crucial aspects and tend to be inward looking”. Bridging social capital – denotes “social networks that encompass different types of people and tend to be outward looking”.⁷ In migration studies the concept of bridging social capital is useful in tracing relations between immigrants and the mainstream of the receiving society, as well as between various migrant groups. The concept of bonding social capital applies to studies on inner (immigrant) group activity.

Another research perspective takes into account gender roles. It becomes clear that migration from pre-modern areas to the West petrifies traditional gender roles on a labor market. And so migrant men are often employed in “typical male jobs”, at constructions works, and/or renovation, they also work as drivers, plumbers, electricians. Immigrant women, on the other hand, are usually employed as domestics. They simply replace local women at home, taking care of children, or of elderly, cleaning, cooking, ironing, and doing laundry. Their women employers enjoy emancipation

⁵ <http://www.lehigh.edu/~amsp/2004/06/zygmunt-baumans-doubts-about.html> (5.05.2010).

⁶ <http://www.culturewars.org.uk/2004-02/identity.htm> (Dolan Cummings) (5.05.2010).

⁷ R. Putnam, *Better Together. Restoring the American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York 2003.

and become career oriented, but there is a need for somebody who would stay at home and do “house-wife’s work”.

Looking at migration from the gender perspective, one should take into account the concept of *risk*. Marta Kindler asserts that:

“The use of risk when looking at women who migrate to work as cleaners and carers is (...) particularly appropriate. This type of migration is an inherently risky proposition since it constitutes a gamble on a whole range of unknowns, including not only the employment opportunities and employment conditions in the destination country, but also the migrant’s ability to cope with a prolonged absence from home. The risk is also relevant when considering the specific risks inherent in the character of migrant domestic work”⁸

Marta Kindler notes that risk is present both in the old and the new country, since staying at home (for example in Ukraine) is also risky for a woman who is a head of a family, does not have any job, and wonders how to support the family.

Another useful concept in this context, refers to *vulnerability*:

“Women’s migrations were theorised so far as processes controlled by a rational calculation of gains and loses and determined by the idea of *profitability*. The *vulnerability model* incorporates earlier models, since high *perceived profitability* will contribute to the idea of reduced vulnerability. The *vulnerability model* is, however, not restricted to the migration decision, and aims to also explain differences in the subsequent settlement process”⁹

The vulnerability and risk concepts underline the difference between male and female migration. Definitely men migrants are not exposed to the dangers which women migrants are confronted with almost every day.

It should be noted that foreign domestics have been known world-wide throughout the history.¹⁰ Their experience is intriguing, since it exemplifies substantial cultural distance in the situation of intimate contact. In case of domestics who live in (in homes of their employers), there is a great deal of exposure to the culture of the host-society. The situation triggers their faster integration with the new society, in comparison with domestics who live-out.

If the women pulls (in the course of time) her husband and children to join her in the new country, she becomes a broker between her family and the receiving society. She is a pioneer of a migration chain, and she could replace her husband as a head of a household.

The concepts listed above is just a short selection. They all apply to both *old* and *new migrations* and help to explain mechanisms of migrants’ behavior.

⁸ M. Kindler, *Risk and Risk Strategies in Migration: Ukrainian Domestic Workers in Poland* [in:] H. Lutz (ed.), *Migration and Domestic Work: A European Perspective on a Global Theme*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2007, p. 146.

⁹ M. Schrover, *Migration, Gender and Vulnerability*, <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/pdf/geschiedenis/schrovergradsem.pdf> (5.05.2010).

¹⁰ A. Rosińska-Kordasiewicz, *Prace pomocy domowej. Doświadczenie polskich migrantek w Neapolu*, CMR Working Papers no. 4/62, Ośrodek Badań Migracyjnych, Warszawa 2005.

III. Examples

The examples refer to the following issues: mechanisms of chain migration (migration networks), migration social capital, keeping in touch, and the ethnic community building. The examples are meant to demonstrate that old sources can still be useful in the current migration studies. The emotions, connections, and problems that migrants experienced a century ago, continue to be the main issues in migrants' life nowadays.

In the *old migration* flows, most newcomers registered at Ellis Island declared, they already had relatives or friends in the US. It means that they were pulled by the earlier migrants, who left their home village or town, and settled in the United States.

The mechanisms of using social capital functioned both in the XIX century, and they function nowadays. Migration chains and nets were formed across the Atlantic, and information were exchanged about the promises which the new country offered. Let us look at an example which refers to the mid-XIX century. The letter is written by a German immigrant from Bavaria, Frank Schano, who addresses his parents in law, the Klingers, in Wuerttemberg. Frank had never met them, but he discusses with them across the Ocean his plan of pulling his wife's sibling to the United States. The letter was sent on September 4th, 1852 from New York:

“we want to arrange passage for Gottlieb and Katharina, and they will start their journey by the beginning of November, and we will make sure that when they are here the others can come over later, too. So they should get ready but they will receive more detailed information ahead of time”¹¹

The editors of the letters' collection examined the whole correspondence between the Schanos and the Klingers, and they found out that within a few years, five of the Klinger children joined the Schanos in the United States.

While being far from home, migrants kept in touch with *significant others* who were left behind, they exchanged with them letters, and gifts, sent money home, and faced social control exerted by their relatives who stayed at home. The migrants exchanged gossips with them, and the relatives (in the *old country*) would eagerly do matchmaking for migrants.

Migrants wanted to get as much information from their home places, as possible. Letter in which a migrant asks for detailed information (from home) gives a flavor of an intimate relation kept across the Atlantic. For example Polish immigrant, Aleksander Wolski from Union City, CN., wrote to his mother in Poland (July 14th, 1913):

“Dear mother inform me please, whether the weather during the harvest is good or not, whether all crops were good, what others came to America after me”¹²

¹¹ W. Kamphoefner, W. Helbich, U. Sommer (eds.), *News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-London 1991, p. 545.

¹² W. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, *Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1927, p. 759.

In another letter sent home on November 2nd, 1913, he indirectly expresses how much he cares about his mother and the sibling:

“And now I request you, Julek, and you, Aniela, listen well to your mother, do what she says and she orders you to do. Learn well, because I am thankful to mother that I know at least how to write and to read a little”¹³

The parents who stayed at home, also expressed their worries about their children who left for America, as exemplified by a letter written on March 1st, 1909, by Jan and Ewa Stelmach from Poręby Wolskie (Galicia) to their children:

“We pity you very much that you have no health there now, and I wrote you already to move away from that Pittsburgh. I would advise you to move with your wife to Trenton, N.J. There in Trenton are people from our neighborhood and they are in good health and they earn well enough”¹⁴.

It should be noted that the parents apparently believe, they know better how to move in the United States, and where to look for a good job. Indeed (in the quoted letter), an information follows, about people from the home village who live in Trenton, NJ. The same family instructed further their children (a letter sent in May 1911):

“You write that you have a small lodging. Have you then nobody to live with you and help you pay the rent? Julka does not go to work now, so if she has no occupation whatever is in her hands she is tired. If you have people boarding, she would have distraction and she would even be more healthy, because when a man works, he is healthy, but when he loafs around in vain he gets weaker and weaker”¹⁵

Some letters were full of gossips, but next to the gossips, the authors usually addressed some serious issues. The example comes from a letter by Wilhelmine Wiebusch of New York (311 West 28 Street) who writes to her friend in Hamburg [Marie Kallmeyer]. The letter was sent on February 27th, 1887.

“You wrote me quite a lot of news. The proud Auguste is getting off to an early start giving her husband a hard time, isn’t she. You asked about Frau Loose? I got a letter from her the same time as yours, she is fine, she also asked if you were still living in Uhlenhorst [upper-middle class part of Hamburg]. If you have time, you should go see her, She is now living at Kantstrasse 11, 3rd floor, in Eilbeck [another part of Hamburg]. (...) **I am very pleased that you visit my mother once in a while** (...) Who is Minna at the Langs? Is that the scullery maid?”¹⁶

Wilhelmine Wiebusch who was a domestic in Hamburg, exchanges gossips with her friend who stayed behind. Sometimes she seems to be better informed about what is going on in Hamburg, for example, she gives her friend the address of a person who moved to Eilbeck. Between the gossips we notice, however, an important information about Marie Kallmeyer visiting the mother of her migrant friend.

¹³ W. Thomas, F. Znaniński, *Polish Peasant...*, p. 761.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 388.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 389.

¹⁶ W. Kamphoefner, W. Helbich, U. Sommer (eds.), *News from the Lond...*, p. 600.

Migrants were also curious about political situation in the *old country*, and often they followed news from there with a great deal of concern. The example comes from a letter by Johann Bauer who left his home in Baden for America in 1854. He moved several times within the United States, before settling on a farm in Missouri. On February 14th, 1867 he wrote to his parents, siblings and friends, expressing his interest in the Prussian-Austrian war:

“I was very pleased to see (...) that in the war between Prussia & Austria lovely Baden received a somewhat milder treatment than some other provinces and still has its independence. That was more than I expected, for I feared that Baden would receive the first blow from its powerful overlord, as a result of the old Prussian hatred of everything that bears the name »Revolution«”.¹⁷

It seems that Johann Bauer differed from most of other migrants in many respects, for example he settled far from other immigrants, but he probably shared with the German compatriots his interest in politics in the *old country*. In fact he was probably truly transnational, for he seems to have been fully integrated into the American milieu, and at the same time he still strongly identified with his home land.

In the *new country*, migrants often clustered in neighborhoods populated by people from their regions of origin, even from the same villages. Sometimes it seemed that European villages which experienced *migration fever*, had their “branches” in the United States. This phenomenon is typical for both *old* and *new migrations*. The example which relates to the *old migration*, comes from a letter sent on December 6th, 1870 from Indianapolis, by Margarethe Winkelmeier who wrote to her father and brother in Arrenkamp, in the Prussian district of Minden (Eastern Westfalia):

“I had to go to three weddings, first Wilhelm Schlacke and Engel Berens, second Louise Geldmeier and Gan Hadwig (...) and third, August Wulf, by brother-in-law’s brother, I don’t know his wife’s name. Now all the girls have gotten married who came from our villages and with us across the water, all except Margareta Winkelmeier [the author of the letter]. Because I have no mind to. (...) The old Holles have bought a house for almost 9 hundred talers, old Holle is just like he was in Germany. All my friends and relatives are quite content, and Wulwes too, as far as I know”.¹⁸

The letter presents life within an immigrant community where primary social bonds are preserved, and endogamy seems to be practiced within the local group. Such a community gave a sense of security, but it also demanded that the members obey certain rules. For example, Margarethe Winkelmeier, felt she should explain, why she did not marry.

Within the migration nets, relatives tried to help each other on one hand, but on the other, they exerted a social control and informed the *significant others* left at home, in case of troubles. The example is to be found again in the correspondence between the Schanos and the Klingers (the letter sent in February 1853) by Frank Schano to his parents in law:

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 162.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 586.

“Babett made an acquaintance, which we could see from the start would not be to her advantage, and we tried everything to dissuade her, but to no use, and now what we foresaw has come true, she now has a baby son that was born on February 17th this year for whom she has a father all right but no husband, and when we noticed that she was expecting, we urged him to marry her but then he said he had never promised to marry her and he wouldn’t ever marry her (...) he asked that a *Contrakt* be drawn up that he’ll take care of her six weeks before and six weeks after the birth and then afterwards they will share expenses for the child equally (...) One week after the birth he told us he had decided to pay her off completely (...) and so we demanded one hundred dollars, then he wanted to pay fifty, and so we made a deal that she gets fifty-five now and twenty-five in six months”.¹⁹

It should be noted that Frank Schano supported his sisters in law, and helped her in the financial negotiations with her partner. This kind of support made Babett less vulnerable.

Another example of social control kept across the Atlantic can be found in letters written by a Polish woman migrant, Aleksandra Rembieńska from Brooklyn, NY, who wrote on October 14th, 1911, to her parents in Poland:

“And now, dear parents, I will write you that I have an opportunity to be married. I have a fine boy, because uncle and auntie have known him for 3 years. He is good, not a drunkard”.²⁰

The man was a boarder in the uncles’ house, and in another letter, dated on November 20th, 1911, Aleksandra Rembieńska rushes to explain:

“Now you ask about this young man about whom I wrote, whether he is a Catholic. (...) I hope I am not yet so stupid as not to know with whom I have to speak. He is even from the country not far from ours, government and district of Łomża”.²¹

Apparently a marriage out of Roman Catholic group would not be approved by the Polish parents. Moreover, the positive opinion about the *fiancé*, by the uncle who lived in the United States, was to persuade the parents that they had no reason to worry.

In case of marriage contracted in the United States, the family tried to obey the rituals, despite the large distance. Such situation is exemplified in a letter sent on May 24th, 1906, by Wiktoria Osińska from West Prussia to her son in the US:

“Dear Son: You wrote us that you intend to marry and you asked us for our blessing. We send it to you. May our Lord God help you, and God’s Mother of Częstochowa, and all the saints”.²²

¹⁹ W. Kamphoefner, W. Helbich, U. Sommer (eds.), *News from the Lond...*, p. 546.

²⁰ W. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, *Polish Peasant...*, p. 777.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 779.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 416.

IV. Conclusion

The text aimed to encourage researchers to look at the current migration from the historical perspective. Diachronic analysis and comparison between *old* and *new* migrations provide more insight into migration mechanisms than synchronic studies. While re-examining old sources, we notice similarities between migrations *now* and *then*. Another words, we learn something new about the contemporary human flows. Moreover, we could use new concepts (like transnationalism) to theorize old migrations processes, and to develop better explanation of the forces behind them.

The examples (which were given in the text) of the old sources, were limited to migrants' letters. The letters shed light on everyday life of individuals, families, and local communities. Content analysis of letters and another personal documents is an inherent part of studies at the micro-level. Such research make us aware of uniqueness of personal, and family, experience. Still we seek broader trends, and form generalizations. While broadening the scope of the study, we move from the micro-history, and micro-sociology up to the meso- and then to macro-level. We combine qualitative and quantitative methods, and pick appropriate methods developed in a variety of disciplines within social sciences. We try to capture the global dimension of the migration flows, and to present them in a *longue durée*. But the most telling history, refers always to individual and his/her family.