WP 2 WORKING PAPER 1:
Transnational Polish Families in Norway
The Entanglements between Migration Trajectory and Labor

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Introducing Working Package 2 & Report Outline

A continuing importance of extended kin in the globalized world has been pinpointed by studies in sociology of family (Mason 2011, Charles et al. 2008), and particularly highlighted by migration research on transnational kin (Goulbourne et al. 2010). Under this premise, we look at the lives of Polish migrant families (parents, children and beyond) as defined as embedded in the dynamically constructed practices of managing ties and kin relationship beyond national borders (Bryceson & Vuorela 2003), signifying a constant interplay of ethnic identity components from the countries of origin, destination and beyond (e.g. Goulbourne et al. 2010, Reynolds 2008). In a nutshell, we thrive towards examining multi-sited/ transnational/ cross-border family practices found in Polish family migrants parenting in Norway.

The Work Package 2 Migrant families in Norway - structure of power relations and negotiating values and norms in transnational families is the second module of the TRANSFAM project. The main goals and research questions of this study concern the following:

1) experiences of integration/non-integration or, in other words, feelings of belonging, in the families of Poles parenting in Norway;
2) both structure-driven and individually-conceived modifications/alterations of values that guide transnational families (in a two-directional set-up where both re-traditionalization and various changes of practices and values may occur);
3) sites and types of power relations in the families (both in coupledom and on the parent-child axis), and, finally;
4) the practices and narratives concerning maintenance of family bonds beyond borders.

In this WP2 Working Paper we provide a very brief theoretical overview of the themes guiding the conceptual framework, methodology and picked up in the analysis. Secondly, we discuss the WP2 Methodological Approach in great detail – not only in terms of the research process “from above”, but also in regards to fieldwork experiences and good practices (a view “from below”). The methodological part smoothly turns into a bridging component of a paper, in which we discuss Respondent’s Characteristics, while already presenting some key characteristics of migrants and their correspondence with the broader
scholarship, as well as our analysis. In the third component we continue our discussion of findings by primarily focusing on three interviews and discuss them through the lens of entanglement of family migration trajectory and the labour market. This selective approach shows our direction in going forward with subsequent analyses and gives way to understanding how lives of migrants are actually lived and how family practices are done.

**Brief Theoretical Backdrop**

Transnational family scholarship is located at the intersection of family studies and social research into migration and mobility. Thusly, we draw on both these sub-disciplines, remaining aware of their mutual entanglements. All in all, in line with social constructivism paradigm, we see **family as being socially constructed and in a constant state of flux, dynamically inter-negotiated by individuals equipped with agency.** We therefore propose to use a broad understanding that moves beyond functionalistic paradigm, giving way to the recent ideas drawn in British family studies (Morgan 1989, 1996, 1999, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, Allen et al. 1999, May 2011, McKie & Callan 2012, Chambers 2012) and highlighting feminist and gendered perspectives (O’Reilly 2008, 2010; Kinser 2010), in researching the diversity of families in regards to both structures (forms, roles, power) and everyday life practices.

Morgan’s influential volume ‘Family Connections’ (1996) realizes the ideal of focusing on how family life is lived and puts forward a new dimension of concern, stating that family is not a given static object, but rather something that requires constant ‘doing’ of its members. As such our understanding of family is about “roughly, those practices to do with marriage or partnering and with parenting and generations (Morgan 2003:2), which “encompasses people’s identifications, understandings, feelings, values, interactions and activities that draw on the ideas […]”, expectations and responsibilities that step from these. It covers actual practices on the part of family members, accounts or evaluations of these practices by others, and aggregations or statistical summaries of them” (McCarthy & Edwards 2011:88). Therefore, our definition relies on ‘families’ (plural) rather than ‘family’ (singular, and allows for interrelatedness of both structure and agency, and focus on the family practices that are illustrative of (displayed, acted upon, imagined, enacted) our dimensions of interest (household formation – partnering, living arrangements and resources, care, kinship, to name a few, see also McCarthy and Edwards 2011:2-3).
In broad terms, we link fluidity, flexibility and individuality of family practices have taken center-stage in family research, providing a link between self and society (see also: Allan (ed) 1999, Allan & Crow 2001, Morgan 2011) with other notions. More recently, the idea of intimacy in the family has become prominent with the inclusion of beyond-familial relationships (ie. Jamieson 1998, Smart 2007), and resulted in sociology of personal life focused on the relational and socially constructed nature of people’s ways of building personal connections in the families and beyond (e.g. May 2011: 5-8). Furthermore, post-modern scholarships on family (such as ‘pure relationship’ defined by Giddens, 1992:58) which views familyhood and relatedness as built on a ‘rolling contract’ (May 2011:6), and take into account the advancements brought by individualization, disembeddedness (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1995; 1992). Linking practice to meaning, we base on Finch’s idea of displaying families that says that practices are done to be seen (by others). We further wonder how modern risks impact family life in general, and significant relationships in particular, especially in regards to power relations, both in a coupledom and in the parent-child dyad that grants formerly vulnerable and passive children an increasingly high degree of agency (Giddens, Beck, Smart).

Additionally, drawing on feminist studies on motherhood and parenting (Nakano Glenn 1994, O’Reilly 2008), we put the issues of gender and power in the family under close scrutiny. As acknowledged by Allen (2009:3-4) “the ongoing transition from feminism and family studies to feminist family studies, [means] we cannot imagine a family studies not shaped by feminist contributions”. We therefore look at family practices in regards to how the following aspects are “done” and reproduced, potentially also being imprinted on the subsequent generations: gendered socialization, public/private debate, gendered care versus economic obligations, reproduction and mothering, perspectives of the earlier marginalized in terms of class, ethnicity and sexuality) agents, among others. In regards to the specifically Polish context, we tend to refer mostly to the new critical orientations to gender studies in family sociology and beyond (see ie Slany 2013, Hryciuk & Korolczuk 2012), yet noting that modern parenting is still under-researched from that perspective, thus indicating the clear gap that our study is setting up to fill.

Moving to the migration side of our family/mobility nexus, the key to understanding migration between Poland and Norway is the transnationality perspective. Revising the place of transnationalism in migration studies, we follow the assumption that maintaining relationships and creating expanded network of contacts form a transnational social space
(Mahler 1998). From the project objectives point of view the crucial are: multiplicity of social, economic and symbolic relations (also political but less) between countries of origin and immigration (Glick, Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton 1992). Higher importance here have the following types of transnationalism: **linear** (association of migrant (wo)man with country of origin sustained by the transmitted earnings and visits in the country and – albeit less – by creation of ethnic institutions in the country of inflow) and **recourse-dependent** (where migrants endeavour to establish or reconstruct relations with the country of origin, but they do that as far as gaining the material resources (e.g. care of the aging family members) and social capital) (Itzigsohn, Giorguli-Saucedo 2005), as well as the third type – **reactive** (as the reaction to negative migration experiences).

‘Transnational family’ is clearly a core concept within our study. We understand it in a broad sense of, as defined by McCarthy and Edwards (2011:187): “sustained ties of family members and kinship networks across the borders of multiple nation states”. We put forward a distinction between the “narrow” view of transnational family (separated nuclear family, parenting on remote) and “broad” understanding of transnational family that indicates multisited engagement for the sake of “familyhood” and “collective” (Bryceson & Vuorela 2001). The latter, which we incorporate, includes the extended family, and (transnational) migrant families, as well as in those families started abroad, reunited or having migrated together, where two generations of parents and children live together in the destination country), as well as those with children under 18 left in Poland in the care of others (the “transnational families” in a narrow sense of separation within the nuclear family involving “long-distance parenting”). Linking the two subareas of mobility and family described above, we further propose the treatment of migration as the way of deconstructing the family and social order or assigned social roles. The travel abroad for work (or other reasons) changes the family wherein the changes can be multidirectional and involve different dimensions such as authority, gender equality, etc. We treat the economic paradigm with certain reserves we note that families (as women) migrate in a different manner than individuals. We primarily agree with the arguments on the increased difficulty of being “settled in mobility” (Morokvasic 2006) when the family (especially with children) is the subject of an inquiry. Therefore, we are more likely to see **family migration as a somewhat settlement-orientated life-project for families who are not prone to return** (see White 2011).
Some specific themes present in earlier research that guide our enquiry into transnational families of Poles in Norway include:

- Family’s place in the migration decision-making processes (reunification for the sake of children/marriage, love-led or love-seeking mobility of individuals, role of broader kin networks on the desirability of migration and a capacity for mobility; long-term and life-course view on the family/mobility nexus in individual biographies);
- Family connections across borders (type of relationships and communication, as well as remittances– Levitt 2001, Bell 2012, Ignatowicz 2011);
- Creation of ‘global families’ – partnering/entering coupledom, intimate relations – gender and power in cross-border relationships (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2013);
- Maintaining and managing family resources across nation-states (e.g. Erel 2012);
- Forming, attaining and negotiating sense of belonging (particularly for children);
- Challenging notions of co-residentiality of families (Pustulka 2012), as well as the organization of gendered reproduction and consumption in mobility (Bjeren 1997, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 2007);
- Reconfigurations within ethnic provenience of families, cross-cultural negotiations (i.e. in mixed couples, children raised bilingually abroad, etc., e.g. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2013);
- Reframed care obligations across borders (Dreby 2006, Nicholson 2008, Krzyżowski 2014);
- Family rituals of sustaining continuation across borders – family life across space and time that include frontiering (practices of creating familial spaces and network ties across borders) and relativizing (how relational ties are created and maintained) as defined by Bryceson & Vuorela (2002).
- Families as recipients or subjects of state policies – both in sending country (diaspora engagement) and receiving society (i.e. in regards to educational system or welfare).

The above themes and frameworks recur in the analysis conducted in this paper, as well as across forthcoming and currently prepared WP2 publications.
Methodological Approach

The Migrant families in Norway /structure of power relations and negotiating values and norms in transnational families study constitutes a second standalone work package of Transfam and a first component with a robust qualitative approach. The sub-project is descriptive and exploratory in a sense that it seeks to provide a rich overview of transnational practices that Polish migrants engage in as parents and couples in Norway. It further maps the topography of the social phenomenon of transnationally-negotiated norms and values in the family, while it also includes an explanatory component in showing, from the participants’ standpoint, the relationships between events and the meanings that they produce (see e.g. Marshall & Rossman 1999:33-36, Babbie 2003:110-113, Silverman 2009, Creswell 1998, Olesen 2009).


Simply put, the narratives collected during the fieldwork consist of both (shorter) thematic stories and a (longer) life-story that presents a biographic sequence covering a substantial part of the respondent’s life (Chase 2009:17). They are concentrated on the “turning points” or “hub-events” that were framed as moments of ‘epiphany’ on a ‘biographical axis’ (Denzin 1989, Apitzsch & Inowlocki 2000) and largely identified at the beginning of the interview through the use of a visual ‘life trajectory of important events’
tool. The practical interviewing scheme was derived from Wengraf (2001) in a sense that first biographic sequence was generated by a targeted SQIN (Single-Question-Inducing-Narrative), which took the earliest occurring relevant biographic even as a departure point. The second part of the interview relied on the dynamically-adjusted semi-structured interviewing scenario, which covered those important areas of individual’s migrant parent and migrant coupledom lives that were not apparent from the biographic component. The interview concluded with ‘concentric circles’ visual tool that further enabled discussions of the social networks that are crucial for respondents’ negotiations of multi-local and cross-cultural values in a transnational kinship setting.

Fieldwork Challenges & Good Practices

The fieldwork conducted in two phases in February and March 2014 began with throwing “a wide net” in hopes of capturing a plethora of diverse stories. A sole foregrounded criterion of being an adult member of a Polish family who is settled abroad1 was employed with an underlying assumption that purposive selection of a small group of interviewees facilitates in-depth data analysis and enables generation of a holistic view within a single case and, eventually, across the group (Mason 1996:121). Such recruitment aimed at “maximum variation” at both the sites and the channels of extending interview invitations (Seidman 2013:55-56, Glaser & Strauss 1967: 56-57) was intended to ensure that a wide range of experiences to which people can connect would be represented.

Both direct and indirect recruitment strategies were used and appropriately alternated (Babbie 2003:205). A large number of interviewees came forward as a result of a direct approach and call for participation issued by the research team in Polish Saturday School in Oslo and the Polish Embassy School, which may be seen as educational and cultural environments for maintaining ties with the country of origin and diaspora (Mayrol et al.2010, Lacroix 2010, 2011, Praszałowicz et al. 2013) and were found to respectively tend to the needs of migrants based in Oslo city (Embassy school classes over the week) and facilitate access for those scattered in the 300-km radius of the capital and commuting to school every fortnight on a Saturday. Some respondents were found at religious gatherings at Polish catholic parishes in Oslo (St. Hallvard Church, St. Olaf Church), as well as local events – eg

1 At the same time, we wish to point out to the subsequent Transfam components’ researchers that we decided not to seek out a representation of childless couples, ethnic minorities (eg Polish Roma), as well as second-generation Poles in Norway.
Polish cinematic screening. Among the indirect strategies, extensive online recruitment did not yield expected results. Instead, snowballing participants through respondents, community experts and leaders, and through researchers’ personal networks proved more fruitful.

The proactive attitude of fieldwork team was paired with a set of good practices that facilitated establishing rapport with the prospective participants. Those included highlighting shared migrant status – understanding and commonality of experiences, being flexible and accommodating when it came to setting up interviews, discussing the envisioned practical implications of Transfam – e.g. mentioning ideas for producing a brochure, promoting the Polish school, or organizing workshops for Norwegian social workers and other personnel.

**Data Analysis Strategies**

The interviews are being analysed in a case-by-case and in a thematic/cross-sectional manner in a multi-step process. First, Analytical Grids were filled in (in English) immediately after each interview, supplying both methodological grounding (field reflections), and broad spectrum of the most prominent data. Next, the data will be entered into QDAMiner database for coding. The code-frame relies heavily on the cross-work-package matrix of contents, focusing on those areas, for which WP2 generated the core and in-depth thematic details. Nevertheless, open coding procedures are to be used as an elementary data analysis process for breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising text units of the interviews (Inowlocki 2000). For a selection of exemplary cases we are producing structural descriptions that consist of thematic temporal segmentation of family/migration biographic narratives and their sequential interpretations, reflections on presentation modes (meta-analysis of arguments, para-verbal evaluations etc.), content summary, interlocutors’ dynamics and additional hypotheses on research themes and research methodology ((Wengraf 2001, Cresswell 1998, Breckner 2007, Weiß et al. 2009, Chamberlayne 2000). Overall, the data analysis entails narrowing the selected empirical evidence through a careful winnowing process, acknowledging that the researcher exercises a degree of judgement over the selection of data in crafting the vignettes and the profiles of the respondents (Wolcott 1994, Seidman 2013:120-123). All cases will be then cross-sectionally compared to provide contrasts and determine the level of validation in regards to the planned diverse range of stories.
Respondents’ Characteristics

The respondent pool comprises a core of 30 cases, including both couples and individual men and women. Below, we present some key socio-demographic data in the visual form to serve as descriptive backdrop-specific details on the sample.

The respondents’ pool consists of 10 couples interviewed together, and 20 interviews with individuals, among whom 2 were men/fathers and 18 were women/mothers. For the following data presentation, we chose two strategies, as some data is relevant on the household-level (n=30 cases), while the specifically demographic details are broken down for actual individual respondents (n=40).

To start with the latter, the basic socio-demographic portrait of the group is an age range of 29 to 54, with the average age of 37.5-years-old. The group is predominantly female with 7 men and 33 women. At the same time, we somewhat provide the ‘view from the other side’ by focusing on women as primary respondents, and even more so by dealing with families, in a sense that while men in fact dominated this migration stream but are, with few exceptions (e.g. Friberg 2012; Sokół-Rudowska 2010, Ryndyk 2013), consistently discussed in the studies void of any reflection on gender and family (e.g. Rye, Andrzejewska 2010, Aniół 2009), and/or are portrayed in specifically stereotypical male occupations as, for instance, workers in the construction sector (Bratsberg, Raaum 2012, Napierała, Trevena 2010, Napierala 2010). We have already addressed this disproportion elsewhere by giving voice to men (Pustułka, Ślusarczyk, Struzik 2015, forthcoming), although it is important to state that this disproportion is not uncommon in family research, where women tend to be the ‘default’ informants on family matters and men are difficult to access (see e.g. McKee, O’Brien 1983, Letherby 2003:100-101, 1993, as well as Kilkey et al. 2013 and Pustułka (2015:154 – the latter two in the Polish context). The respondents have settled in Norway between 1990 and 2013, but only 8 individuals migrated before the EU accession. The average length of stay abroad of just below 8.5 years corresponds with the pivotal significance of the year 2004 for Polish mobility’s intensification trend. The respondents largely live middle-class lifestyles, but represent an array of educational backgrounds – from degree holders (62%), to high school/technical school graduates (30%), to those with vocational training (8%). Similar variety can be observed in regards to professional status, though a fifth of a group entails people who do not work and the rest can be broadly divided equally between those in white collar (40%) and blue collar (40%) jobs.
Switching to a household as a unit of analysis, it has to be noted that all respondents were in heterosexual relationships and majority was married. There are also three cases of informal relationships (cohabitating couples) and three single parent households in the group. The average number of children was 1.9 with a median of 2, though the number of children ranged from 1 to 5. The age of children varied greatly, from few months to early adulthood (23 years of age). The WP2 informants’ families lead mainly middle-class lives and reside in the proximity of Oslo (a 200km radius). The place of residence (Chart 1) is important in so far as it supports a rather scattered than concentrated geographic pattern of settlement (Ryndyk 2013, Napierała 2010).

An Overview of Key Findings in the Context of Earlier Scholarship

The transnational families and their everyday practices must be analysed in regard with their particular type/form, the life-course phase, individual agency of members, but also the dimension of migratory decision and settlement strategies. In addition, the institutional context of both the sending and receiving countries’ policies cannot be overlooked (see Figure 1).
Figure 1. Transnational Family Practices – Aspects and Themes

The data collected in WP2 covers the following dimensions:

- Types of family forms and living arrangements among Polish migrants/couples; transnational arrangements in regards to multi-sited kinship membership negotiations;
- Migration trajectories of the respondents (with coverage of earlier mobility and investigations of the decision-making processes);
- Gender issues – both in relation to coupledom and intimacy in marital dyads, and the broader notions relevant for the Norwegian context, such as new negotiations of gendered division of labour, reconciliations of work and family, new practices of children’s socialization in the equality-oriented Norwegian society; particular attention given to the intersection of gender and power, as well as gender and ethnicity negotiations and values.
- Notions around belonging: negotiating values and norms of ‘feeling’ or ‘being’ Polish, attachments to Norway, other orientations (e.g. impact of globalization, individualization, cosmopolitanism);
- Transnational family practices of the daily life (e.g. routinized and ritualized norms), general views on multi-local responsibilities (e.g. cross-border care arrangements, home visits and holiday plans);
- Transnationalization and transferability of educational and cultural capital in a practical dimension (e.g. recognition of one’s degrees, bilingualism of children), labour market experiences, as well as social participation (e.g. diaspora/migrant organization/church involvement) as transnational practices contributing to the ideas about belonging.

As in other works on families and kinship, certain characteristics or dimensions remain vital for analysing’ transnational family practices (Thorne 1982, Cheal 1999, 2002, Allen 1999, Chambers 2012, McKie & Callan 2012). For WP2 the visible differences could be unsurprisingly noted between couples and single parents, with the latter group seemingly facing more disadvantages, but also shedding light on the issues related to post-divorce childcare arrangements. Similarly important was the axis of mixed (inter-ethnic) versus homogenous ethnic origin of the parents in the dyad. Preliminary analysis of this however low number of mixed marriage cases (n=5) suggest that having a spouse from the majority (Norwegian) makes it easier for the migrants to integrate and increases their resources in terms of social and economic capital. Conversely, there were no noticeably consistent differences between migrants in informal partnerships (cohabitating) and the married couples. As stated above, the broad range of children’s ages (at migration and in general) facilitated a cross-cases long-term perspective and yielded parental narratives on all levels of educational institutions (nurseries, kindergartens, schools, universities) in Norway and Poland, often in a comparative perspective. Detailed data on intra-family relationships was paired with extensive landscape of broader kinship structure for each interview household. Looking at networks is crucially important for both family and migration research (White 2010; Hansen 2005, Irek 2011).^2

In this Working Paper we focus on demonstrating some examples from a key family practices area. It relates to migration trajectories and the resolution of labour market and

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^2 This topic will be elaborated on as one of the further data analytical tracks.
family life obligations that mobility patterns necessitate. While we discuss practical implications of migration for families, we embed them in the broader discourses of coping, integration and belonging, as well as labour market and other economic outcomes (e.g. employment, housing).

We begin the discussions with ‘giving voice to our respondents’ and present three nuanced cases that are then embedded in a plethora of broader findings.

**Migration Trajectories: Illustrative Case Studies**

The first type of migration trajectory is Sabina’s story, where an entire household was consulted and considered in a broader decision-making process, and could be seen as an exemplary of the middle-ground shift between macro-reactionary and fully individualized pathway under the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) theory of structural and functional capabilities of nominating ‘stayers’ and ‘leavers’ within the kinship group (see eg. Stark, O. & Bloom, D.E. 1985, Stark & Taylor 1991. Górny & Kaczmarczyk 2003; Faist 2004). For Sabina the strategy meant incurring a (temporary) deskilling individually but beneficial for the family due to husband’s qualifications-matching and very well-paid job offer. Sabina, aged 40, came to Norway 2008. While she made initial inquiries about possibility of employment, it was her husband who got a lucrative job at the garage as a car mechanic specialized in painting and panel beating. Sabina holds a law degree from a Polish university, has gone abroad as a student and spoke English quite well, and so the move to Norway meant a significant level of deskilling for that she began her employment in Norway as a low-level manual labourer at a carwash, and in that pattern she reflects the broader issues of the brain-drain observed among Polish migrants (eg. Trevena 2011, Iglicka 2008, Grabowska-Lusińska 2012, Lutz 2011). The couple described here decided to go abroad because they perceived it as a chance for the whole family. Sabina’s son (then 4-years-old) initially stated behind with his maternal grandmother, but joined the parents relatively quickly. At the time of the interview, the family had spent 7 years in Norway and in a meantime became an owner of a magnificent modern home in a picturesque Norwegian village. However, the journey was bumpy: during the first four years of hard work at the garage Sabina invested her income in Norwegian language classes and eventually gained fluency, which was an investment leading to a significant improvement of her career path, as Sabina is now a public administration employee with a lot of responsibilities. She is now
considering to further use her savings to finance formal recognition of her university diploma, even if it may also entail weekly commute for special courses or classes to Oslo during the next three years. In sum, she is determined in returning to the professional training she has once left behind. Sabina said that migration was good for her family and especially for her son:

“Looking back now I think it was a good decision because I would not have been able to achieve that much in Poland, financially and in relation to my child – that he is bilingual, and… well, overall I think that he likes it here […] Comparing to Poland, I think he has better opportunities here”

The second story is particularly interesting for its long-term life-course perspective, as the respondent – Antonina - has lived in Norway for the past 25 years. There is a first-glance similarity in her account to the extent of the initial migratory decision having been dictated by her husband’s employment. Conversely, it relies on a rather distinct assumption of the life-course stage aspect: Antonina and her then-boyfriend did not have children, treated the move to Norway as an adventure and a great chance for the future-husband’s professional career. In a way, leaving Poland was somewhat of an experiment dictated by love and having nothing to lose, and not much to worry about in the country of origin. As Poland was only just entering democratization phases, Antonina had no work plans of her own and seems to have adjusted her career path to what was possible under the new conditions that the family faced in Norway after marriage and having children. The 47-year-old Antonina and her husband are somewhat atypical migrants for this particular stream, as they were both very talented sportsmen, competing on the national and international level back in the 1980s in volleyball and softball, respectively. Their migration story highly concurs with what is known about the mobility of the highly-skilled sought specialists and expats (see eg. Pluss 2013, Favell 2008). Once Antonina’s husband professional player’s career was over, he was immediately offered a couching position in Norway. Originally, the contract was supposed to be temporary and our respondent strongly underlined that she presumed that a return to Poland was at their not-too-distant horizon. Concurrently, they did not put much effort into language acquisition and planned to be back in Poland at the conclusion of the two-year contract:

“We did not have plans to stay in Norway, it was just simply like going to see how people live there, how it is, because everyone around [was going abroad], so yes, someone to Germany, somebody else to England, somewhere else, so, I don’t know, it was really nice [here] but it was not like I was deciding to settle and live in Norway – not at all, it was not a possibility at all… So I decided that I would start working in
Poland, and that I would wait for my husband. But then I sent out an application and heard about the salary and realized I would be living with my mother, so it was, it was really depressing for me. So we talked on the phone and I said to him I was coming”

Soon thereafter, the respondent’s husband was offered a promotion that entailed even better working conditions, which led (at that point highly sceptical) Antonina to begin looking for work in Norway. Their short journey was ultimately transformed into a long-term settlement, and couple’s three children were born in Norway and here attend school. The teenage children are also signed up for Polish Saturday School, as using Polish is important for Antonina, even though she admits that Norwegian and English are seemingly more valuable. The mother still shared that:

“The fact that we go to Polish school unfortunately does not matter [for Norwegian education]. So it is, I have to say, a very big challenge for us, Polish school is, especially as far as time is concerned”

Both spouses managed to get their educational qualifications from Poland recognized and Antonina has by now changed jobs many times, starting as a dance couch in a culture center, and then moving to teaching at a high school, now finally arriving at the post in higher education. At the time of the interview, Antonia declared she would return to Poland following retirement.

Finally, our third story is from Zosia (41) and Maciek (43) – a family with a plethora of migratory experiences gathered across several decades. What is characteristic for the couple is that their dynamic in terms of gender roles does not mirror the traditional male-female division: they are both equally sharing the responsibility for the financial well-being of the family. Moreover, they represent a trajectory of “labour migrants”, for whom the wage differentials, employment instability and a need for a quick method for acquiring monetary resources constituted the first and foremost motivation for mobility. Thus, one can find neither the plans about professional development, nor investments in locally recognized capital in their narratives. Maciek and Zosia were both (at different times) working seasonally in Germany, then moved back and forth between Poland and Norway between 2003 and 2007. They eventually settled in Oslo in 2007, having started with seasonal agriculture jobs (fruit picking), moving on to construction sector (general contractor role - Maciek) and a low-level 3-D-type job at a hospital (Zosia). For them, migration became a way of life not straightforwardly because of no work, but rather because wages they could have counted on
in Poland were not satisfactory and their employment conditions persistently precarious, giving no chance for becoming independent of parents as a young family:

“Everything was just to get by, to survive, the income was really only for that, it was difficult to start something, to become independent, have one’s own flat... we were then.. highly relying on the parents all the time”

The first trips abroad the respondents have made for work were largely chaotic and strictly temporary, regardless of the potential for a possibility for earning more money by staying abroad:

There were perspectives [to stay in Germany], but as I went our child has just been born, my wife stayed behind, so I was really wanting to go home; at present there is Skype and all sorts of other communication tools, but then [in the 1980s], it was almost impossible to call from a payphone, the cost was enormous. During the entire time I am not sure if we have even spoken once”

Accepting an old house as part of an inheritance turned out to catalyse further mobility, as costs incurred by renovations required our respondents to expand their migratory pathways. The couple made rotational arrangements as this time the wife went to Germany as a cleaner – substituting for her friend for a year. Finally, they decided to try Norway, which was presented to them as a country of unbelievably high basic wages. By then, they have fallen into debt and receiving a contact to a farmer in Norway who spoke some German was a life-line at the time where the respondents began to struggle to make ends meet. They admitted:

“We caught the bug – we realized that you could earn more money somewhere”

After a period of some turbulence where always only one of the spouses was able to be abroad, they followed advice of the local priest on reuniting their family for the sake of their marriage. Their son – then 12 years-old accompanied them to Oslo and began school here, while their 16-year –old daughter decided to continue her education in Poland. Recently the daughter and her fiancé have also moved to Norway. At first glance, the migration as a way of life for this family should suggest flexibility in mobility projects. However, the respondents still display a high level of ambivalence. The wife said:

“I miss Poland a lot and when I go there I am not bothered by anything”.

On the contrary, the husband was highly critical of both political and economic situation in Poland. He was also very sceptical to his wife’s declarations about a definite return in a near
future. Maciek believed that once their grandchildren are gone in Norway (which is likely to take place), it will become highly unlikely that neither of them moves back. They were both conscious that their declaratives for the years to come may simply operate as means of convincing themselves that they have not really left for good:

Everyone plans like this. Other [Polish women in Norway] also said the same – just waiting for retirement and then would return to Poland, but there comes the time when children settle down here and start families, and you have your grandchildren here, so you really have nothing to really go to there, the family is here, the family there is diminishing”.

**Migration Trajectories and Labor Market vs. Family**

As shown on Chart 2 below, the dominant pattern of migration for Norway identified as a primary male migrant and the later family reunification after a separation period holds for our group of respondents.

![Type of (Family) Migration](chart2.png)

Every third WP2 family had endured a split with either one partner in Norway, while the other remained in Poland with children or (in four cases) a phase of transnational parenting with both parents working abroad and children left behind in the care of the relatives (by default - grandmothers). Simultaneously, in as many as 11 cases, the first child of the couple was only born after relocation to Norway, suggesting that not only family reunification pattern, but also starting a family abroad option are observable. While some couples made a decision to move to Norway together without “a test phase”, this approach
was predominantly reserved for couples with high educational or human capital and often stemmed from a predetermined career trajectory – for instance Kamila and her husband came to work as medical doctors, while Sławek and Kalina’s husband were both head-hunted as engineers through corporate transfers.

Two distinct pathways could be observed in reference with mobility trajectories. Firstly, for some migrants going to Norway was a first and only experience of going abroad. This was especially true for younger people, with or without a university degree, generally originating from smaller towns in Poland – they could be seen as joining the mass-migration trends intensified in recent years (Grabowska-Lusińska 2012:46, Trevena 2011:71, Slany 2008, Rabikowska 2010a:286, Slany & Ślusarczyk 2013, Iglicka 2008; Burrell 2008a, 2009, 2011b, Garapich 2011), which is not the same as saying that it has revolutionized the core of the phenomenon (Grabowska-Lusińska 2012:51, Dziegielewski 2012, Irek 2012:25-29). Illustrating the latter, many stories were exemplary of earlier framings of being “socialized to migrate” (Botterill 2011:51, White 2011) – a Polish migration culture that predetermines men and women to being constantly “on the move” (Morokvasic 2004:9). We did not include a particular story for this type of migration in this paper, but some examples include Karolina’s “global family”, as she and her (Norwegian) husband initially met and lived with their two older children in the Netherlands. Several cases supported statistical findings about migrants’ responsiveness to the 2008 financial crisis and its impact on the UK – the former top destination of Polish post-2004 migrants. Klara, Marek and Joanna, as well as Anna all had relocated to Norway from Britain. Several respondents (Karolina, Jan, Malwina) worked in the United States in the earlier decades, again showing the high preponderance for transnational mobility and the changed directionality of recent population flows from Poland.

Looking at the respondents’ accounts, we can observe a narrative of long-term or even settled migrants who are well-adjusted and integrated into the Norwegian receiving society. Unlike the Polish migrants of the earlier decades whose stories of the so called romanticized “exile” (Garapich 2011:6, 2009) and were marked by nostalgia, sadness, regret and guilt over having left (e.g. Thomas & Znaniecki 1976, Slany & Malek 2005), the Poles settled in Norway share their mobility “success stories”. It is perhaps noteworthy to state that contemporary Polish migrants largely benefit from a practical incarnation of a transnational optic – they often see it as relatively easy to navigate between both sending and receiving countries, especially in the context of new technologies, cheap travels and broader
cosmopolitanization of everyday (Beck 2006, Beck & Schneider 2009). In that sense, they appear similar to certain groups of Polish migrants in other destinations – especially the post-EU accession UK-based Poles (see e.g. Ignatowicz 2011, Pustułka 2014). In what would earlier be unheard of, visits in Poland become increasingly optional, Christmas and Easter celebrations take place in Norway, and summer vacations take migrant families to exotic resort destinations. The comparatively improved quality of life for many migrants and their families signify more flexibility and a wider range of choices in regard to family and parenting practices, transnational engagements, work-life balance and other areas.

In sum, it appears that migration pathways in the case of Poland->Norway (or in a more extended version Poland->Germany/UK/US/Netherlands->Norway) rarely take a form of spontaneous and ad-hoc journeys observed in the past (Slany & Ślusarczyk 2010, Garapich 2006, Malek 2010, Szczygielska 2013), but rather support the more recent findings from research on Poles in the United Kingdom. For instance, Ryan and Sales have recently concluded that their research subjects discussed careful planning of mobility, additionally noting that “the education of children emerged as a significant determinant of the family migration decisions, with the children’s age crucial for the choice about whether to move” (2013:93, cf. Pustułka 2015). The migrant networks of the respondents are rather extensive and include relatives, friends, as well as professional settings of the companies they work for. Travelling abroad for many meant relying on contacts reworked via shared experiences of those who have previously operated transnationally and thus verified intermediaries (e.g. travel agencies, recruiters), thus supplying a diachronic finding about the persistent heritage of the former decades of mobility from Poland, as described by Morokvasic (2004:10), Kalwa (2006), Irek (2013), as well as Okólski and Jaźwińska (2001), among others.

The dominant pattern of male migration is elicited mainly by the economy and specific labour market niches (Friberg 2012, Napierala & Trevena 2010), which means that comparatively fewer cases of the so called ‘female birds of passage’ ((Morokvasic 1983, 1984, Kofman 1999, Kofman et al.2000, Mahler & Pessar 2001) – primary female migrants – were found. While women in our group generally aligned their career plans with what is seen as the most beneficial for a family, some exceptions can be noted for those who migrated as unattached singles simply “for adventure” and/or those who revealed a gendered face of mobility that happens when one is consistently unable to find a suitable partner/husband in Poland (as in the cases of Emilia, Karolina, Ela, Patrycja and Helena, who eventually all married Norwegian men). Finally, we also observe cases of a pronounced escapist migration
in, for instance, the story of Klara, who moved abroad to somewhat be able to deal with her parents’ deaths and the consequences of separating from her partner. The various pathways of mobility will be explored through the lenses of various typologies developed for the Polish post-EU accession context (Eade et al. 2007: Storks, Hamsters, Searchers, Stayers; Duval and Vogel 2006: return, settlement, bi-national transnationalism; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009: goal-oriented typology, Engerbsen et al. 2011: degrees of attachment) in one of the upcoming papers.

Finally, we want to draw the attention to the fact that economic variables on their own cannot explain (and sometimes event blur) the crucial role of non-material and non-financial rationales. Importantly, for some individuals (e.g. Beata and Przemek, Michal and Magda), migration on the entire family actually led to an initially worsened financial situation, as the male migrants needed to cease living in cheap or substandard housing, and the earlier powerful remittances were now of a much lower purchasing power in the destination country. In spite of the economic irrationality of family reunification, a settlement in Norway was often discussed through accompanying benefits that relate to economy in sometimes rather peculiar manner. As such, the respondents discussed the much improved relations between family members, a chance for a real ‘togetherness’ in the face of not being required to work ‘all the time’ and a capacity to live a decent life without severe financial hardship that the family experienced in Poland. For some couples, this new environment also fostered a change in a scale of partners’ involvement in household and childcare, leading to some social change of gender roles, gender orders, and gender division of labour. This change transpired also in the descriptions of work setting and environment, as the respondents narrated the peace, fairness and tranquillity within work relations, as well as feeling of safety and security (see also Bivand Erdal 2015). Below we presented three selected cases with more in-depth discussion.

### Closing Remarks, Outlook and Recommendations

The preliminary data analysis of the WP2 data confirms the suitability of the general transnational family scholarship frameworks, while the specific themes decided on from the ‘family practice’ lens facilitate connections between earlier works and identification of the innovative findings.
In this paper, we illustrate the interconnectedness between the somewhat macro-patterns of labour market performances, and the mezzo-level of migration trajectories-organization of mobility from the perspective of a transnational kinship group, or, in other words – the place of family in migratory decisions. We demonstrate the initial inquiry and analyses of the individual and biographic solutions, all applied to a particular case of Polish migrants parenting in Norway. The ‘family practice’ and ‘sociology of personal life’ allow for ‘connecting self to society’ (May 2011:5-8, see also: Allan 1999, Allan & Crow 2001, Morgan 2011a), in which we seek to introduce a dialogue between different individual choices (e.g. migrating for the family, for adventure and love, acceptance of deskilling), performed in the actual ‘families we live with’ (Gillis 2004:989), while keeping an eye on the broader social structures and their relationship to ‘families we live by’, that is the ideals we hold for our family life, however unrealized these might be (McKie & Callan 2012:83-86, 215). As Morgan argues, they remain mutually entangled:

“in carrying out these everyday practicalities, social actors are reproducing the sets of relationships (structures, collectivises) within which these activities are carried out and from which they derive their meaning. […] There is, therefore, an inevitable circularity between these practices and the sets of other individuals and relationships within which these practices have meaning”. (2011b:3)

Continuously, we seek to pinpoint broader significance of this qualitative study for examining trajectories of migration in a non-simplistically economic manner. Nonetheless, we are also driven to the concerns surrounding the migration/family/labour nexus, as we believe that both edge-modules (mobility and labour market/work) centralize what actually happens in families and within the biographies of individuals as family members. For instance, it is not enough to state that migration is male-dominated by the labour niches, but rather see the conditions under which women follow men just as much eagerly (“adventure”, “career development”) as because of seeing it as a choice they make for their families (children) and not for themselves (“deskilling”, “danger of divorce”). In this context, it remains continuously crucial to look at gender orders and power, namely – the consequences of postmodernity and mobility culture on the one hand, and the traditional norms and values in the dichotomy of (female)caring and (male)financial provisions. While the transnational space invariably necessitates redefinitions and transformation of the families, the changes are not occurring universally – the same values that are abandoned in one family might be positioned as the ones see as “necessary to be kept” for another couple with children. In this
matrix, the role of culture for identity processes and belonging of adults is one of many exploration-worthy themes in further research and analyses.

References


Slany K, Ślusarczyk M (2013). Migracje zagraniczne Polaków w świetle NSP 2011. Trendy i charakterystyki socio-demograficzne, w: D Praszałowicz, M Łuźniak-Piecha, J Kulpińska (red.) Młoda polska emigracja...


Appendix 2: Overview of the respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics

Interviews conducted WP 2 research (February and March 2014)

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<th>Education level</th>
<th>Current work position</th>
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**Table Legend /column headers from left to right/:**

- **Name**: respondent’s pseudonym (anonymized code name);
- **Age**: respondent’s age recorded at the time of the interview;
- **Family type**: denotes a broad categorization of a respondent’s family situation – married, cohabitating or single;
- **Mixed marriage**: distinction between Polish-Polish and Polish-Norwegian couples;
- **Date of migration**: date of the interviewee’s migration;
• **Area Type**: indicates a type of residential area of the respondent’s current residence: village, small town, suburb, Oslo.
• **Children**: number of children with dates /years of birth
• **Education level**: ranges from Vocational (8+3: primary school+ vocational training, Technical and High School (8+4: primary + secondary comprehensive or technical school, both with A-levels), and University (8+4+3/5 : primary + secondary A-levels + university BA degree of 3 years or MA of 5 years),
• **Current work position**: indicates a labour market status and type of employment with either a job title or self-identification.
• **Social Class**: researcher-assigned positioning on the social stratification continuum comprising: Upper-class, middle class, working class.
• **Separation Phase**: this column shows which families endured a period or phase of transnational separation, No = family moved together, N/A= family was started abroad