

# MIGRATION PATHS OF POLISH ROMA

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„BETWEEN TRADITION AND CHANGE  
– MIGRATION PATHS OF POLISH ROMA”.

**Research report**  
**Centre of Migration Research,**  
**University of Warsaw**

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OŚRODEK  
BADAŃ NAD  
MIGRACJAMI

## Between tradition and change – migration paths of Polish Roma

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### Research report

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Founding source: National Science Centre, grant Polonez: “Continuity or change – Anthropological analysis of Polish Roma migration paths to Great Britain”, grant no. 2015/19/P/HS6/04125. The project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 665778



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## **1. Introduction**

This report presents the main findings from a research project which explored international migration of Polish Roma since 1989. For many observers it may come as a surprise that a group stereotypically associated with mobility and nomadic lifestyle has never been the subject of interest from Polish migration scholars. Also, despite its rich traditions, the Polish Romany studies never looked at the issue. This research has therefore been a pioneering study, opening a new chapter in the area of migration from Poland. The report presents generalized findings and more specific issues are being explored in specialized scientific articles.

We would like to sincerely thank our respondents who has shown us hospitality and patience while talking to ethnographers. We thank also all those who have supported us during the project, both on intellectual as well as personal level. We would like to express our gratitude to the National Science Centre which funded the study and also to the Centre for Migration research at the University of Warsaw which offered institutional and personal support during our study.

For many reasons, Roma in Poland are a group facing social prejudice, exclusion and unfair treatment. We hope that this report will contribute to their better understanding and acceptance of both difference and similarities.

## **2. Main research aims and questions**

The study looked at international migration of Polish Roma from perspective of social anthropology with elements of social history. Since that area has never been systematically studied, the main aim was to fill this scholarly gap both in migration and Romani studies as well as to contextualize these migrations as part of overall migration from Poland post-1989 but also migration of Roma from the region during that period. The gap in scholarship is particularly surprising since European scholars in the last decade have produces an array of studies of migration of Roma within the EU – five academic journals have been devoted to the topic in last six years only<sup>1</sup> with a notable silence on Roma from Poland. We aimed therefore to construct a picture of Polish Roma migration from selected localities since 1989 and capture similarities and differences between various groups of Roma under study as well as between them and their

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<sup>1</sup> *East European Journal of Society and Politics* (2018), *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2017), *Social Identities* (2017), *Local Economy* (2018), and *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2012)

non-Roma, Gadjó, neighbours. Inevitably the research questions were broad, further specified during fieldwork. We were then focusing on issues traditionally explored in migration research such as: when and why did Roma begin to migrate? Are the reasons the same as non-Roma inhabitants of these towns? How migrations impact Roma communities? At the same time we aimed at looking into the other end of migration process and chose Great Britain – where according to very few publications on the issue (Acton, Ingmire, 2012, Staniewicz, 2011) Roma from Poland move since mid 90s (apart from other destinations, such as Ireland, Germany or Canada). We aimed also at analysing what is the impact of living in Britain on Roma culture, tradition, family relationship but also what can be said about their relationship with other groups they encounter during their migration trajectory – other groups of Polish Roma, Roma from other countries and other ethnic minorities.

Broadly speaking the study aimed at conceptualizing Roma as a transnational community which over long period of time has dealt with various structural and political factors such as collapse of the Berlin Wall, European integration and post-EU enlargements intensification of intra-EU mobility. The aim was to determine how these impact Roma communities, their life strategies and perceptions of the world. In this case, the concept of transnationalism is understood as a multi-layered “double orientation” of immigrants (Vertovec 2004: 970) resulting from the fact that communities, groups, families and individual lives happen in more than one nation states (Glick Schiller, Basch, Szanton Blanc 1995). A more precise and empirically viable concept of translocal connection is suggested and used by Anne White in her studies on migration from Poland (2011, 2014), pointing to the fact that migrants through their lives connect two specific localities, towns, villages rather than abstract nation–states. In this report both concepts are used depending on what aspect of life strategies of respondents needs to be emphasized.

### **3. Theoretical and methodological framework**

Since we were faced with an unexplored field, narrowing down the scope of study too early might have potentially result in missing important issues at initial stages of research, hence the aims and goals of the study were understood broadly. This approach stems logically from anthropological methods of conducting research used in this case where certain element of openness to unexpected outcomes of inquiry and to new angles and new problems is necessary (Hammersley, Atkinson, 2000). The key rationale in that ethnographic approach is to understand peoples’ worldview, how and why they make sense of the world, construct important meanings and “local knowledge” (Geertz, 1983) which in turn legitimizes their agency (Buchowski, 2004).

At the same time, the study is rooted in various aspects of migration theory, and uses and applies conceptual frameworks developed to understand human mobility and its consequences. In the context of Polish accession to the European Union in 2004 and subsequent large scale migration of Polish citizens, migration scholarship has produced a substantial number of approaches looking at macrostructural, economic determinants (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski, 2009, Kaczmarczyk, Okólski, 2008, Okólski, Salt, 2014), settlement and adaptation process in countries of destination or their dynamically changing migration patterns, transnational/translocal ways of living (White, 2011) sometimes captured under the term 'liquid migration' (Engbersen, Snel, De Boom, 2010), role of migration networks (Ryan, Sales, Tilki, Siara, 2009), or social remittances (Grabowska, Garapich, Jaźwińska, Radziwinowiczówna, 2017). Again, in that large body of research the lack of inclusion of Roma, begged for a question to what extent immigration of this minority fits the various conceptual paradigms presented and to what extent there is something unique, different.

It wasn't an easy task. Throughout centuries a thick layer of myths and stereotypes have grown around the popular imagery of Roma, their culture and place in society, including what scholars refer to as migration culture (Cohen, Sirkeci, 2011). One stereotype which presents scholars with serious problem is an essentialist treatment of Roma as fundamentally predestined to lead a mobile, nomadic lifestyle. As Sławomir Kaprański notes (Kaprański, 2009), it was the result of stereotypical perception of Roma as categorically alien, having a different attitude to history, past and future, or as Katie Trumpener (1992: 861) writes "living in eternal present". It allowed for the majority society not only to marginalize Roma but to question and undermine their attachment and sense of belonging to local, regional or national community (Gay y Blasco, 2008). Among general population or even those who have an expert knowledge of Roma, one may still find views that the nomadic past of Roma predisposes them to migrate, hence their willingness to put down roots is also somewhat weaker (more on this in relation to Polish scholarship, see Fiałkowska, Garapich, Mirga-Wójtowicz, 2018). In reality of course, Roma were not solely nomadic and among the populations that were nomadic, they weren't the only one (Okely 1983, Matras 2013). The roots of Roma nomadism are far more complex, linked with socio-economic status of Roma and their notorious marginalization (Fraser, 2001, Matras, 2013) rather than with some inalienable feature of their culture. These are not just academic deliberations over a semantic issue without practical consequences. In Poland as well as in Europe, perception of Roma as eternal migrants and wanderers without a home, offered the settled majority a moral and political justification for exclusion of Roma from mainstream society. These problems fitted well this study's agenda, as it explored two groups of Roma in

Poland – Polska Roma and Bergitka Roma<sup>2</sup> – whose historical experience and traditions related to nomadic lifestyles and mobility in post war Poland and after 1989 were very different. We were able thus to analyse how these diverse historical conditions and legacies impact on present strategies and migration culture of Roma. In case of Polish scholarship, conceptualization of Roma migration turned out to be a problem for both migration studies as well as Romani studies. As we argue elsewhere (Fiałkowska, Garapich, Mirga-Wójtowicz 2018), this resulted in an odd case of academic silencing of Roma migrations, which given the essentialist stereotype of the eternal migrant, seems quite paradoxical because a group categorically associated with mobility was conceptually ‘immobilized’ either in bounded closed world of Roma settlement, either through a conceptualisation of Roma migration as essentially different. In the light of huge interest in Roma mobilities in European academia, it seems therefore that Polish scholarship is stuck and due to perpetuation of some theoretical assumptions unable to move forward. We hope then that this report will shed some light on this yet unknown feature of migration from Poland and on a broader level inform theoretical and political questions around mobility in contemporary Europe.

#### **4. Field sites and fieldwork**

Fieldwork was placed in broadly taken transnational social fields, understood here as transnationally or translocally woven social networks between people living in two or more nation states. The locations where fieldwork was conducted were: Czarna Góra, Nowa Huta, Mława, London and Southend on Sea, in Essex. It corresponded with taking into account two of the largest groups of the Polish Roma – Polska Roma (Mława) and Bergitka (Czarna Góra, Nowa Huta) - and what was known about destination localities from few publications about the issue (Acton, Ingmire, 2012, Staniewicz, 2011). The choice of Mława was related to a significant analysis of Roma community there in the aftermath of the anti-Roma riots in 1991 (Giza-Poleszczuk, Poleszczuk, 2001, Kapralski 2012). In line with any research involving transnational migrants we aimed at meeting and talking to members of families living in two countries. This wasn’t always possible, either due to refusals to be interviewed, either due to declining numbers of Roma living in particular places (like Mława, see part 5). Overall however, we managed to capture lives of migrants at several stages of their transnational migration trajectories in all locations involved, but in addition, due to instances of inter-group intermarriages we managed to interview also people from the Chaładytka group and also Roma from towns like Krosno, Szczecin

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<sup>2</sup> Broadly speaking, Poland is inhabited by several groups of Roma – Polska Roma, lead a relatively nomadic life until mid 60s of 20<sup>th</sup> century; Bergitka Roma living mainly in Southern Poland, and were settled at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Their differences relate mainly to language, certain traditions and political structure (Mróz, Mirga 2001). Other, smaller groups include Lovari, Kelderasha, Chaładytka and Sasytka Roma.

or the Lower Silesia region. This proved to be very beneficial enabling to some extent to extrapolate some findings from the locations in question to other places where Roma in Poland seem to undergo similar processes.

Research was conducted using a range of ethnographic methods – participant observations, non-structured interviews, group interviews, spending long periods of time with families involved in research, living in their proximity, participation in family events or rituals (like christening or funeral) and public community rituals (like the commemoration of Roma genocide by the Nazis<sup>3</sup>, or yearly pilgrimage in Limanowa<sup>4</sup>), dinners, parties or music concerts. Given the transnational dimension of our study, it fitted a popular in migration studies method of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995; Grabowska, Sarnowska, 2017), also used among Roma (Grill, 2012). This methodological approach helps considering the simultaneity of practices and relations between migrants and those who have not migrated (Amelina & Faist, 2012). In essence it aims at tracing people, ideas, norms, practices through space and time and to map their interconnectedness, interdependence and meaning for individuals and groups. In migration research, typically it involves ethnographic observations and interviews carried out at all stages of migration chain, with people who are mobile, non-mobile, migrants, returnees, second generation and/or independent observers. The diversity of locations dictated also a diversity of strategies of entry to the field and meeting future respondents. For example, among Roma in Czarna Góra, our fieldwork, interviews and periods of observations fitted into the natural rhythm of village life, and there was little problem in meeting and talking to someone or visiting their homes. On the other hand, in London, Roma families lead in comparison rather more isolated lives and are dispersed across the town, so it is necessary to rely on recommendations and specific gatekeepers. An important access point was gained through Jehovah Witnesses Polish congregations, to which a significant number of Roma belong. Our fieldwork was continuous without a clear end and throughout our study we maintained constant contact with several key respondents with whom we shared information, gossip, opinions and family news. With these people we carried out repeated interviews which allowed us to constantly keep track of dynamic developments happening in front of our eyes, which we account in this report (in particular when it comes to intergroup relations or religious conversions). In total we interviewed 80 people, although we have met and talked to many more. These were predominantly members of Polska Roma and Bergitka Roma, with few members of Chaładytka or Lowari. A subset among our pool

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<sup>3</sup> Tabor Pamięci is organized since 1996 r. by the Tarnowskie Muzeum Etnograficzne i Kulturalno-Społeczne Stowarzyszenie Romów w Tarnowie [http://romopedia.pl/index.php?title=M%C4%99dzynarodowy\\_Tabor\\_Pami%C4%99ci\\_Rom%C3%B3w](http://romopedia.pl/index.php?title=M%C4%99dzynarodowy_Tabor_Pami%C4%99ci_Rom%C3%B3w)

<sup>4</sup> Pilgrimage in Limanowa is organized since 30 years by Ks. Stanisław Opocki, Krajowego Duszpasterza Romów: <https://tarnow.gosc.pl/doc/4192610.Taborem-do-Matki>



of respondents were members of older generation with whom the interview was aimed at generating an oral history account of their lives in the context of migratory past of their locality of origin. On top of these, we also carried out twelve expert interviews with a selection of people who due to their work or engagement with Roma had a specific insight helping us to understand processes at hand. These were for example: a local priest, former diplomat, expert on Roma issues, artist, journalist, member of Jehovah Witness congregation, local government official, or NGOs members. An archival search was also conducted at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the unique collection of Polish newspapers articles kept at the Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów. Social media are very popular among Roma of all ages, so their content was constantly monitored and observed.

Historical experience teaches Roma that gathering information on them by the Gadjo (non-Roma), should be treated with caution. In the past, this information was often used against them and applied to legitimize oppressive state policies, surveillance practices of the police or racialized practices of identification, which in case of Nazi polices was used for genocidal purposes. The scale of refusal to our request for meetings and interviewing therefore did not surprise us. The study aim at maximizing the participatory principle of ethnography, meaning that it was the respondent's decision on the course and content of the interview broadly discussing everything that was linked with migrations. Interviews were thus inevitably unstructured and spontaneously sometimes evolving into discussions with the whole family over the kitchen table. The principle ethical driver behind our research was to conduct it with maximum sensibility and the principle of not causing harm to our respondents in any way and with full respect of their worldview. Our participatory principle stems from our mixed Roma-Gadjo research team often making our discussions over data interpretations dialogical debates over meanings of Polish, Roma, and European identity in contemporary society. In this context, we hope that our project was the case of (still rare according to many Roma and Gadjo) what Roma call *khetanes Gadzie Romenca* – cooperation between Roma and Gadjo where the attempt to understand each other is rooted in ideas of respect and equality.

## **5. Research findings**

### **5.1. Broad social and historical context of Polish Roma migrations**

The constraints on international mobility during communist rule in Poland (1945-1989) concerned all citizens, Roma included, and as many other Poles at the time, they engaged in various strategies aimed at overcoming these restrictions. In Roma case however, the issue that distinguishes them

from overall population was the forced sedentarization and “productivisation” of Roma nomadic populations, put into law in 1952, but implemented during the so called “settlement action” in 1964, which marks the end of nomadism of some Roma groups that still maintained this form of livelihood. (Drużyńska, 2015, Mirga, 1998, Mirga, Mróz, 1994). In theory, this concerned nomadic groups, but in practice also impacted on those who lead a settled life. The so called “productivisation” offered employment in various new industries, which was also attractive for non-nomadic Roma, which lead to considerable internal migration from their traditional settlements in the Carpathian region, to Nowa Huta (near Kraków) or Lower Silesia (Golonka-Czajkowska, 2013, Kapralski, 2016). For the nomadic groups, the tightening of communist state’s surveillance and restriction on mobility as well as economic activities associated with nomadism, was a stimuli to look beyond Polish borders, as noted by Ignacy-Marek Kamiński, in his study of Roma emigration (more precisely, a group of Kelderasha families) to Sweden in the 70s (Kamiński 1980).

Informally however, the communist state sometimes actively supported emigration of Polish Roma populations. In Dariusz Stola’s history of international mobility from communist Poland „Kraj bez wyjścia”, in the context of emigration of Germans from Poland in the 70s, he notes that: “With the restrictions in place, emigration was encouraged when it came to politically or socially unwanted individuals. In Katowice area the communists were getting rid of them to such extent that in 1974, a well informed colleague of Mieczysław Rakowski [a well know journalist, later one of last Prime Minister of communist Poland] was telling him that ‘there are almost no Gypsies (we sent them 2 thousand)’ ”(Stola, 2010: 239). As emigration of Polish Jews or Germans had political undertones, in case of Roma the readiness to give them “one way passports” was dictated by the communist authorities’ policy of getting rid of “socially cumbersome elements”. This was the authorities’ reaction to anti-Roma riots in Oświęcim in autumn 1981 (Kapralski, 2016, Mirga, 1998), where in order to pacify the local population, around 100 local Roma were offered a “one way passport” to Sweden. The Swedish authorities on the other hand were also aware that Polish government “wants to use the liberal visa rules to turn our country into a ‘dumping’ ground for people who for one reason or the other are seen as cumbersome in Poland. It may be about the Roma, as it happened recently”<sup>5</sup>. This takes place right after the imposition of the martial law in Poland in 1981, which triggered a rise in number of Polish refugees to West Germany and Austria, while Sweden remains one of few countries with a visa free agreement with Poland. As archives at the Ministry of Foreign

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<sup>5</sup> Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Departament Europy Zach. i Płn, Szwecja: This a translated exchange between Swedish minister O. Ullsten and an MP C. Bildt regarding the introduction of visa regime between Poland and Sweden; dated 6.04.1982

Affairs show, introducing visa restrictions by Swedes, was due to an increased number of Roma being allowed to leave.

The relative liberalization of mobility restrictions in the last years of the communist regime, meant that more and more Polish citizens – Roma included – began to move. As the report of the Association of Polish Roma notes (2012), end of 80s and early 90s are the time of intensification of migration of Roma, mainly to Germany, Holland and Sweden, with Great Britain appearing on the map of destination countries a little later in mid 90s. Therefore, despite this project focus on migrations to the UK, it seemed that in the lives of our respondents earlier episodes of migration to Germany were so widespread (from both groups) that it had to be included as part of building a historical picture of migratory paths of Polish Roma.

On a broader macrosocial level, international migrations of Polish Roma were determined by political shifts that have impacted the entire region in the aftermath of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and communist system. As many scholars note, the subsequent economic and political transformations have disproportionately hit the Roma populations (Stewart, 1997, 2013) – they were the first to be fired, to be subject of social welfare cuts and first to suffer the consequences of growing animosity of their neighbours, including raising racism and violence, also in Polish case (Bartosz, 2004 [1994], Giza-Poleszczuk, Poleszczuk, 2001, Kapralski, 2016). These processes will be described below in case studies of Mława and Nowa Huta. Our respondents' accounts, media reports and government communications, paint a very similar picture of migration of Roma. The roughly began in early 90s with migrations to Germany and then, in mid 90s, shifting to Great Britain. In most of cases Roma used the asylum application system, mainly due to raising instances of racism and threats of violence, of which the Mława riots is the most notorious example. The Mława case however wasn't isolated; it was a violent articulation of sentiments felt towards Roma in many other Polish towns (like Konin, Ziębice or Kołobrzeg). Significantly, from the account of respondents (not only from Mława), the relationship between migrations and raising hostility of Poles, had a feature of a feedback loop. As Roma began to leave the town, those who remained felt increasingly under threat since there were fewer and fewer Roma (particularly men) who could defend them and retaliate, making Polish perpetrators more embolden and prone to violence. This is a fairly common element of the narratives of that time – as more Roma migrated, those who left felt increasingly under threat stimulating further migrations. The effect of that feedback loop throughout the last two decades has been a significant depopulation of Roma communities across Poland.

As mentioned, Germany was the main destination country in early 90s. where Roma usually applied for political asylum or were choosing to opt for an 'unregularized' status taking advantage of freedom to cross borders with Germany. Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives point that the number of people without regularised status at the time is very high, but without specifying whether these are people whose asylum claims have been rejected or are they economic migrants. For German authorities, the main problem was to determine the citizenship of people without regularized status, which was necessary to implement the readmission procedure, the main change in post 1989 German migration policy. More restrictive subsequent policy did not offer any right for settlement nor asylum for migrants from the post-Soviet sphere of influence, and already in February 1990, Polish archives begin to document growing number of deportations of Polish citizens from Germany; the estimates at the time mention that around 200 thousand Polish citizens are encouraged to return<sup>6</sup>. This shift in migration policy was also related to other international challenges in the region – the growing flow of war refugees from the Balkans and increasing number of Roma from Slovakia, Czech Republic and Romania, who are often deported to Poland, causing diplomatic tensions between two countries<sup>7</sup>.

It is precisely at that time, Roma from Poland began to alter their migration strategies from Germany to Great Britain where they most often claim political asylum. Similarly, this also generates tensions between London and Warsaw, and in 1995, the Polish General Consul is being informed by the British about the "abuse" of asylum application system by Polish citizens, who are identified by Polish diplomats as Roma<sup>8</sup>. Britain responded with changes in asylum procedures, cuts in welfare, while Poland joined the list of so-called safe countries. The number of applications falls the following year, but in 1998 it grows substantially, which again causes diplomatic tensions – with real prospects of reintroducing visas for Polish citizens. Our experts recalling that period remember that during the bilateral talks of Polish and British officials on various levels, Roma are presented as "the problem"<sup>9</sup>, casting a shadow on ongoing negotiations about Polish membership in the EU. It is perfectly illustrated in the wording of the letter by Tony Blair in September 1999 to the Polish PM Jerzy Buzek, where he points that more than thousand Roma plus dependants has applied for asylum and that "I am sure you find it as frustrating as I do that we should have to face this problem". Interestingly, he then points that 150 thousand Poles visit this country each year, the vast majority as genuine

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<sup>6</sup> Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Departament IV: Komitet Ekonomiczny Rady Ministrów, Zespół Doradców: Uwagi Zespołu Doradców dotyczące powrotu do Polski z RFN około 200 tys. polskich uchodźców oraz ich readaptacji w kraju.

<sup>7</sup> Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Departament Europy, Niemcy: Ambasada Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Kolonii, Raport polityczny za rok 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Departament Europy I, Wielka Brytania: Ambasada Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Raport polityczny za rok 1995.

<sup>9</sup> In the internal correspondence, prior to meeting the British, Polish officials are explicitly advised not to raise the subject of "gypsy issue" on their own, only to react when it is raised by the Brits.

tourists, students, or on business” and they are “welcomed warmly”. Similar letter has been sent in 2002 to then PM Leszek Miller and also his Czech counterpart (Sobotka, 2003: 113). In both, Blair emphasizes the need to work with Roma community leaders in the country to convey the message that applying for asylum is unlikely to succeed and will result in deportation. The British PM notes also that Roma migrations seem to be well organized. Table 1, demonstrates the dynamics of asylum applications from Polish citizens during years 1991 – 2004. The numbers relate to adults, without dependant children. As usual when it comes to refugees, the numbers may be to some extent misleading as they are collected on the basis of citizenship of the claimant. In addition in this case, in the pool of claimants there are certainly some non-Roma Polish citizens, who claim asylum either on a different basis, or were “passing” for Roma, a well known (among many others) practice of navigating the mobility and employment restrictions by Polish migrants (Garapich, 2016b: 101). Broadly taken however, the table showing asylum applications from Germany and Britain very well confirms what we heard from our respondents.

**Table 1.**

**Asylum application by Polish citizens in Germany and Great Britain 1991-2004**

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Great Britain	20	90	155	360	1210	900	565	1585	1860	1015	630	990	122	21
Germany	b.d.	b.d.	b.d.	b.d. <sup>10</sup>	200	190	210	49	42	260	185	66	44	24

Own elaboration from data of:

- 1) Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1999, Jo Woodbridge, Di Burgum, Tina Haath, 17/00, 12 Oct 2000
- 2) Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 2000. David Matz, Rachel Hill, Tina Heath, 25 September 2001 17/01
- 3) Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR 1998 Statistical Overview, Geneva
- 4) Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR 1999 Statistical Overview, Geneva, July 2000
- 5) Dane za lata 2000-2004 w Wielkiej Brytanii i Niemczech: UNHCR Population Statistics Reference Database (data dostępu: 21.08.2018)

It is worth also mentioning that one of the political outcomes of British interest in halting the flow of Polish Roma, has been their engagement in various capacity building and humanitarian projects directed at Roma communities in Poland. In early 2000s, through the British Embassy in Warsaw several initiatives were organized aimed at working with Roma, which later with the committed help of government officials, activists, and Roma communities evolved into a specific social assistance programme (*Pilotażowy program rządowy na rzecz społeczności romskiej w województwie*

<sup>10</sup>Despite lack of statistical data for that period, it is safe to assume that the figure was substantial, in particular in the early 90s.

*małopolskim na lata 2001-2003* ) aimed at improving the socio-economic situation of that minority<sup>11</sup>. This further confirms arguments made by some scholars that migration of Roma lead to growing recognition of their situation in wider Europe at all levels of the government (Van Baar, 2018). In Polish case, this lead to some positive outcomes, as the abovementioned programme shows.

As stated, majority of our Roma respondents in England share a similar migration trajectory – going to Germany in early 90, then coming back to Poland, and then moving to Great Britain. The regularity of that route shows the importance of social networks in these processes. At the same time, it must be stressed that this route, seems to be first tested by Polska Roma group, then disseminated to Bergitka Roma (see next section). Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 is the last structural shift affecting Roma mobility, however with a mixed impact depending on the locality and Roma group in question. From our findings it is clear, that after 2004, migration becomes more accessible and possible for those who weren't able or couldn't make that move earlier – due to low level of social capital, funds, connections or qualifications. These differences will be expanded upon in later section looking in more detail at our research locations, but it is important to note that in the mass movement of Polish citizens after 2004, Roma have “disappeared” and are not a subject of any special interest nor concern for Polish authorities. Not that they are invisible, however. According to our information, at the level of local government directly involved in Roma issues in the towns under their authority, it is not uncommon to find an attitude alike to the one demonstrated by communist authorities in case of Oświęcim in 1981 – where authorities treat emigration of their Roma neighbours as a positive outcome that will solve the problem of socially “unwanted elements”. Summarizing the assessment of macrostructural factors influencing Roma mobility which is not dissimilar from what occurred to Roma populations across the region (Matras, 2013, Sigona, 2005) the notable disproportion between the numbers involved and reaction of the governments having hallmarks of a moral panic (Clark, Campbell, 2000) needs to be noted, in particular in the context of non-Roma migrations from Poland which in the run up to EU enlargement in 2004 raises to 200 thousand a year. Migration of Roma seem thus either silenced or attracting disproportional attention.

## **5.2. Microhistory of Polish Roma migrations - Mława, Nowa Huta and Czarna Góra**

Knowing how and where to migrate, who to contact and what social networks one can access is part of social capital that is not always evenly distributed. As in cases of other immigrant groups, the history of Polish Roma migrations bring forward hierarchies and divisions among them, various

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<sup>11</sup>[http://romopedia.pl/index.php?title=Pilota%C5%BCowy\\_program\\_rz%C4%85dowy\\_na\\_rzecz\\_spo%C5%82eczno%C5%9Bci\\_romskiej\\_w\\_wojew%C3%B3dztwie\\_ma%C5%82opolskim\\_na\\_lata\\_2001-2003](http://romopedia.pl/index.php?title=Pilota%C5%BCowy_program_rz%C4%85dowy_na_rzecz_spo%C5%82eczno%C5%9Bci_romskiej_w_wojew%C3%B3dztwie_ma%C5%82opolskim_na_lata_2001-2003)

positions stemming from economic status as well as the specifics of places of origin. The sedentarization policy of communist regime has made some Roma to look beyond state borders, and living on the road for generations facilitated keeping in touch with various members of the extended kinship networks scattered across the region. It also put a premium on knowing the routes, finding information and implementing various strategies of dealing with mobility restrictions – which has been showed in Kamiński's (1980) account of a spectacular escape of several families of Kelderasha in mid 70s., from Poland to Sweden (via Balkans and Italy). "People of *tabor* are more entrepreneurial" – as one of our experts said, meaning mainly an ability to navigate hostile mobility regimes restricting migrations. This refers mainly to Polska Roma group, and this stereotype is often reproduced by Bergitka Roma who often point to vast transnational family connections Polska Roma has. How these networks operate in practice, is illustrated by the case of Mława, the town where part of our ethnographic study took place.

Roma in that town come from Polska Roma group, with the subgroup self-referring term of Pluńaki; they lead nomadic lives until 50s. and 60s. They have engaged in intensive migrations to Germany from early 80s. due to social networks established there much earlier, we heard of at least few cases of Roma from Mława who settled in Germany in the 60s. These international contacts were a source of significant economic status and social mobility due to engagement in used car dealership, which at the times of chronic shortages of the socialist economy was a source of considerable wealth but also political influence in town. But these connections weren't evenly distributed and both the analysis done at the time, as well as our respondents' narratives, frequently note the economic disparity within the local Roma community, so not everyone benefited from that lucrative trade hence not everyone benefited from access to migratory social capital (about the role of migratory social capital more in Górny & Stola, 2001). In 1991, due to an incident of young Roma causing a car accident in which a Pole was killed, the town become the site of infamous anti-Roma riots, with groups of local Polish Gadjo attacking Roma houses resulting in widespread destruction of property (Mirga, 1997). Subsequent diagnosis of underlying causes of the riots show that migration driven accumulation of capital by Roma, their display of wealth and influence, along with the sudden impoverishment of local Gadjo coupled with the widespread crisis of legitimacy of power in the aftermath of collapse of communism lead to outburst of violence (Kapralski, 2016; Giza-Poleszczuk, Poleszczuk, 2001). As noted by scholars, but also emphasized often by our respondents, the main focus of the attack were the wealthy households of Roma, not the *baraks* where poorer families lived.

The Mława anti-Roma riots have been the accelerator of international migrations. This and other cases of riots and ethnic violence helped to justify asylum claims abroad, first in Sweden, then

Germany and at the end in Great Britain. During that time, according to our interviewees as well as literature (Horton, Grayson, 2008: 9) the largest outflux of Roma from Mława took place. However, it has to be noted that post-riot migrations have simply increased in frequency within an existing migration culture, so have accelerated a process Roma were engaged in since at least a decade. Interestingly, some of our respondents have come back, sometimes few years after the riots. These early returns were mainly linked with the property they have left, but also relative lower economic status of the returnees. It seems the wealthier families had more resources both to leave and to settle abroad. Roma from lower end of social strata in Mława had less incentives and resources to leave permanently.

Polish accession to the EU have been a crucial macrostructural determinant in migrations for Roma in Mława, as this time they encompassed everyone regardless of their economic status. Great Britain again becomes the main popular destination due to lack of transition periods for employment but also relatively straightforward system of social support in terms of schooling and housing, which was then used as the basis for bringing other members of the family. Today, these migrations between Mława and England (but also Ireland) are mixed in nature – some members of the same household live abroad, others circulate, others remain in Mława engaging in occasional transnational care or trips abroad. Not all migration projects were successful and some families clearly have financial difficulties and the money earned is usually spend on consumable goods, a car or flat improvements. In that sense, post-Accession migrations from of Roma do not differ from migrations of their Gadjó neighbours. Some migration projects are marked by unpredictability, open-endedness and transnational ways of working and living with plans of future retirement in Poland (Eade, Drinkwater, Garapich, 2006, Grabowska i in., 2017, White, 2014). Commenting on the younger generations approach, one of our elderly respondents for example says:

*...they have their flats here... got it ready, but won't leave it... they got it ready, earn there, come over the summer, stay a month or two and then again go there....*

But regardless of migration strategies, the long established migration culture and modernity driven macrostructural factors, mean that Roma community in Mława is undergoing significant changes that are not easy, and may also indicate a state of demographic crisis. Young Roma are often confronted with diverse lifestyles and possibilities in Poland as well as abroad that may be contradictory to what their families and elders expect from them. Material status of various families also seems to have an important impact. Families with more economic and social resources (such as family connections abroad) had more means and motivations to leave Mława early on, the less wealthy families chose a



more transnational strategy of engagement between their town and England or Ireland. Strong family bonds of course still matter, and sometimes Roma reunite to keep the extended family together – for example during our fieldwork a daughter has returned after 20 years of living abroad to take care of her elderly parents. Some families engage in well known in scholarship among Polish migrants practices of transnational care (Bargłowski, Krzyżowski, Świątek, 2015, Wagner, Fiałkowska, Piechowska, Łukowski, 2016, White, 2011), where usually grandmothers take care of their grandchildren while their parents work abroad. Those who remain or who have returned often express strong sense of local patriotism. Mława is seen by them as a safe, known world without risk associated with losing local connections due to migrating, but also due to the safety net of having a house or flat, or access to state assistance. As one respondent told us, it is a place “I can go out in the evening and meet people I know”, as opposed to the sense of anonymity and solitude experienced abroad, outside the closely knit Roma community. In the context of Mława’s bad reputation among Polish Roma, this emotional attachment is significant. It relates not only to Roma respondents’ understanding of local history, but is a way of articulation ones’ local roots and the status of being an integral part of town’s landscape – we were often reminded, that despite the fact that in general Mława riots cast a shadow over Roma-Gadjo relations, personally, they have experienced friendship and neighbourly care from their Gadjo co-habitants. In the context of migrations from Mława, this relates to the fact that the rioters specifically targeted the wealthy households which were the first to leave; the poorer families seems to have had some level of support from their Gadjo friends, which later translated to a stronger sense of acceptance and safety<sup>12</sup>.

Despite all this, in the view of local experts, and some of our Roma respondents, the Roma community in Mława due to migration is in decline. From more than 300 people (roughly 70 families) at the beginning of 90s. (Giza-Poleszczuk, Poleszczuk, 2001), the community numbers now around 20-30 families (according to local *wójt*, the leader of Roma community) or 100 individuals according to the city authorities<sup>13</sup>. At the same time this is clearly a transnational community with each household having strong family bonds with their kin in England, Germany, Canada or Ireland. They still maintain strong links with the town, kept for example through yearly visits to their ancestors’ graves. Traditionally, every All Saints Day on 1<sup>st</sup> of November, Roma from Mława gather to pay their respect at the cemetery, and then to meet in a larger gathering for a dinner. Our respondents noted however that every year less and less people take part in these gatherings. As one member of the

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<sup>12</sup>In some narratives of the elderly Roma from Mława, they recall the social environment of the „baraks”, sort of run down social housing, where poorer Roma families lived along poor Gadjo families creating a social space where class solidarity seemed to bridge the ethnic boundary and – as Roma say – „the Polish even talked to us in romanes, we were such friends”.

<sup>13</sup>Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, Wystąpienie pokontrolne, 2014 r.: P/14/119 – Działania administracji publicznej na rzecz ochrony praw mniejszości romskiej w Polsce

elders told us: *These days we only have funerals, no weddings, nothing...* Tellingly, last year the local property market registered some shifts indicating further out-migrations of local Roma. According to estate agents some of the grand houses built in the 80s by Roma (easily identified due to their size and style) have been put on sale for the first time ever, and an increasing number of private flats owned by local Roma are rented long term to immigrant labour force – from Ukraine or China. This shows that some families have possibly begun to cut ties with the town. It is difficult to generalize on the whole country, but we also spoke to Roma from other towns in Poland that underwent a similar process of depopulation due to migration movements which began in the 80s, resulting in social decline of local Roma life.

The second group among which the study was carried out were Bergitka Roma (called also Mountain or Carpathian Roma), a group originally living in Southern Poland, due to post-war internal mobility living also in Silesia with small communities in the North West. The ethnographic research was carried out in two locations – a rural settlement of Czarna Góra in Spisz region, and an urban, industrial suburb of Kraków, Nowa Huta. Unlike Polska Roma, Bergitka Roma were a population leading a sedentary life previously mainly employed as blacksmiths and musicians, since 50s. increasingly employed also in industries (Mirga, Mróz, 1994; Golonka-Czajkowska, 2013). Besides incidental and sporadic individual migrations, Roma from Czarna Góra did not engage in international migrations in 80s or 90s. Few exceptions where some migrated to Britain or temporarily to Sweden were the results of intermarriages with Gadjó, or incidental contacts with foreigners and did not resulted in establishing a migration chains stimulating further outflows. It was Poland's accession to the EU that has had the biggest impact on that community. According to our respondents many families decided to use the opportunity of opening the British labour market to move to the United Kingdom. Our observations and interviews indicate that almost every family in that village (roughly around 25 families) have participated in these migrations to some extent – they have family members living in England, plan to leave soon, or have recently returned. Respondents' accounts indicate that just after 2004 migrations had hugely depopulated the settlement, whole families were leaving together. Table 2 is a compilation of official data and our own observations and interviews, indicating the scale of outflows from Czarna Góra and Nowa Huta:

**Table 2.****Number of Roma in Czarna Góra and Nowa Huta**

	<b>90s.</b>	<b>2004 - 2006</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>
<b>Czarna Góra</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Nowa Huta</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1800</b>

Own estimates based on:

- 1) government Roma assistance programme in Małopolskie voivodship in 2001-03  
(<http://mniejszosci.narodowe.mswia.gov.pl/mne/romowie/program-na-rzecz-spole/pilotazowy-program-rza/6721,Tresc-pilotazowego-programu-rzadowego-na-rzecz-spolecznosci-romskiej-w-wojewodzt.html>)
- 2) government Roma assistance programme Poland in 2004-2013  
(<http://mniejszosci.narodowe.mswia.gov.pl/mne/romowie/program-na-rzecz-spole/program-na-rzecz-spole/tresc-programu-na-rzecz/6670,Tresc-Programu.html>)
- 3) Roma integration programme in Poland in 2014-2020  
(<http://mniejszosci.narodowe.mswia.gov.pl/mne/romowie/program-integracji-spol/8303,Program-integracji-spolecznosci-romskiej-w-Polsce-na-lata-2014-2020.html>)
- 4) Data from local Roma organisations

The threshold of 2004 for development of migration networks points toward an important finding of our study relating to role of ethnic boundary in migration networks. During our research and interviews we did not encounter any case of Roma – from Czarna Góra, but we asked also about Roma from nearby Zakopane and Podhale region – who would tap into traditional and very extensive transnational networks of local Gadjo, Poles who developed a distinct migration culture (mainly to Chicago) since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century (Pilch, 1984, Walaszek, 2007). Some respondents were surprised by the very idea, as in their worldview it was obvious that as a result of social and economic marginalisation local migration capital which helps Gadjo migrate and work in the US, was and still is unavailable for Roma.

Low level of economic capital, qualifications and migration social capital of Roma from Czarna Góra, meant that it was mainly the post 2004 opening of labour markets which stimulated their international mobility. To some extent, the stabilisation of migratory status of their kin (from other towns, like Nowa Huta, see below) already in Britain, played a role in their decision making, as some could use their presence and assistance during first steps while abroad. Certainly the post 2004 migrations, affecting every family in the village and as our estimate shows with more than half of its population leaving, have contributed to established transnational networks helping people moving back and forth. The interviews with returning migrants however, have brought forward a slightly different assessment of these migration episodes, as they are often talked about in terms of loss,

mistake and emotional stress. They are seen as a difficult dilemma of being confronted with economic improvement on one hand but tensions stemming from family separation and lack sense of security on the other. And similarly to Roma from Mława, the returnees are keen to emphasize their close connection to the local space. This was clearly linked in the interviews with a sense of culture shock felt by some of our respondents who are confronted with the complexity of large urban centres in Britain. But it also indicates that for Roma – as for many other groups maintaining close family bonds – migrations are a potentially disruptive situation, able to put pressure on family ties and sense of security provided by natural space of local Roma community. *The community is here* – as one of the returnee told us. This means that for some, migrations can lead to economic advancement, but at the same time they may also lead to the loss of status within Roma family, due to being outside the local stratification structure. A similar point is made by Jan Grill, whose research shows how gendered status of Roma men is being threatened by living abroad, and as a result may end up in prioritizing status over economic prosperity (Grill 2012).

Our third field site, Nowa Huta, provides yet another, slightly different migration history of Polish Roma. Inhabited mainly by Bergitka Roma group who moved there in 50s and 60s, to work around the steel factories, international mobility began also in the 90s. unsurprisingly with the collapse of large state owned industries due to socio-economic transition and subsequent loss of jobs for many local Roma (as well as Gadjó). Similarly to Polska Roma group, Bergitka from Nowa Huta began to move to Germany mainly asking for political asylum. Our research indicates clearly that the connections with Polska Roma were vital for establishing these migratory routes – these connections helped to plan ahead, get information how to interact with authorities, and how to settle, find jobs and assistance. The key role for establishing these networks was played by people with double group affiliation – usually men from Bergitka married into Polska Roma families. From various independent sources we were able to identify these “migration brokers”(Lindquist, Xiang, Yeoh, 2012, Xiang, Lindquist, 2014). These crucial actors on migration scene, were responsible for dissemination of migration strategies and organisation of travel on one side and on the other were tapping into international connections provided by Polska Roma group. These persons were actively involved in planning and carrying out of many families’ migrations from Nowa Huta (termed „przerzut” – meaning transfer, shift), both to Germany in early 90s and to Great Britain later on, following the pattern described in previous section. The information that was passed on rapidly to other potential migrants was crucial for preparation and carrying out the trip. The scale of these activities and the fact that they connected different Roma groups, points to level of sophistication in planning which also was noted by the authorities – as shown in the correspondence between British and Polish PMs. The scale of migration from early 90s. means that Poland’s accession to the EU did not have a similar

dramatic impact on outflows as in the case of Czarna Góra. Nevertheless, as in the case of Mława migrations also contributed to significant depopulation of Roma from that town and their visibility – the well known, Nowa Huta “Roma block” on Osiedle<sup>14</sup> Willowe (Golonka-Czajkowska, 2013) isn’t „Roma” anymore. Table 2 based on a combination of statistical data, estimates of Roma associations and our own assessments indicates the scale of that process:

Unlike the case of Mława however, it cannot be said that Roma community in Nowa Huta is in decline. There are numerous annual concerts there, several active Roma associations, Roma educational assistants are employed in local schools, there are a number of social and cultural projects carried out. In addition, several Roma families from Romania settled in the town, opening another chapter of Roma presence in Poland. In that sense, despite large scale emigrations, Nowa Huta maintains its status of the “capital” of Bergitka Roma.

### **5.3. Social, family and migration networks – migration collectivism and its contestations**

In numerous aspects – such as transnational migration strategies, the role of migration brokers, macro-structural factors and reasons for leaving – migration of Polish Roma do not differ from migrations of their non-Roma Polish neighbours. As noted above, in understanding their developments we need however to take into account their specific collective feature, the fact that they are often group based, and in this chapter using examples from our study we will demonstrate what we mean by this.

For a large majority of our respondents, migrations were a collective, family endeavour. Emigrations prior to 1989 during Cold War as well as now, involve families, large groups who intensively try to convince other kin to follow them, stimulating migration chains operating on a transnational scale. Cases of individual migrations – very common in case of non-Roma Polish migrants – or when someone decides to lead a separate life, away from his/her extended family, are rare. The collective nature of Roma mobility is often noted by scholars, such as Yaron Matras who says that *Roma are generally prepared to take risks of migration because they are supported by the social and economic network of the extended family, which in turn means that Romani migration is a migration of extended families and not of individuals* (2013: 24). Historically, it is a logical consequence of Roma communities’ survival where group solidarity and maintenance of strong family bonds equated with ethical obligations was fundamental for social, cultural and physical continuity in a hostile and more powerful environment. In that context, migrations as economic or livelihood activity is a group act, since it has consequences for all members of the family or larger kinship unit. At the same time,

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<sup>14</sup>Osiedle - estate

migrations as a group activity are ambiguous in nature since they consist of both risk and opportunity – they are an opportunity for economic advancement also offering security from hostility and violence, but at the same time due to inevitable separation and fragmentation of family units, may result in loosening family bonds undermining group solidarity and their ethical obligations. Collectivism as a strategy then, aims at maximizing advantages from having a large networks of kin, increasing social capital (as we seen in case of migration chains linking Polska Roma and Bergitka Roma) and minimizing risks stemming from separation which may challenge the fulfilment of these obligations. This second aspect is very frequently raised in our interviews in all locations. An individual migration or migration of one basic family unit, may result in decreased loyalty towards larger kinship group or even risk cultural reproduction. This dilemma is illustrated by a Roma woman comment on impacts of migrations on tradition:

*.... I think that a big influence is what kind of Roma you stay with. If you are with Roma that keep to their traditions, they will keep it, no one will wear trousers there [women]; but if there are Roma who left within their own small group, there is not a lot of them and there is no one who would control them, then these traditions may be lost...*

The collective nature of migration therefore has a double function – on one hand it ensures the security of the group in terms of increasing its social capital, access to information, resources and offering social, psychological and economic safety. On the other it also ensures certain degree of social control over group members. For groups for whom pollution taboos are an important part of traditions, this has an additional dimension of risk; someone who is separated from Roma world, risks entering into impure relations with the Gadjó world, making him/her lose status within the Roma structure. Migration collectivism in that case is a way to deal with migration associated risk. The example of the returnee affirming the value of local community, quoted above, confirms this. His family migration in his account was associated with family crisis, and endangering his own feeling of belonging to the community in question and resulting sense of security given by that particular Roma village. The English city's environment coupled with dependency and tensions with his kin there meant that it was in Czarna Góra where he felt at home and where his place in local hierarchy is most meaningful.

These factors mean that migrating Polish Roma need to negotiate two, sometimes contradictory strategies. On one hand, maintaining strong family and group bonds safeguards economic, psychological and social sense of security. On the other it reproduces a system of social control over individual autonomy, limiting the range of available options. In our study we came across numerous

examples of how people negotiate these dilemmas. Collective characteristic of Roma migrations is quite apparent when usually small family units (parents with children, sometimes with their own parents) leave first later to convince other families to join them, in order to – as one respondent told us – *be together, no matter where*. Once abroad, a lot of energy, time and resources is put into ensuring that a larger family unit lives close by, in same area, same street. It is visible in the phenomena of town in Essex, Southend on the Sea, where few hundred of Roma, mainly from Bergitka Roma group, live. Living in same area or smaller towns allows frequent visits, organizing communal events and opportunity to stay in touch. Returns, when they happen are also group oriented, collective. We encountered several examples, where a Roma family dropped its asylum claim in Germany or Great Britain, in order to return to Poland to link up with the rest of the family with which due to asylum procedures they were unable to connect and visit. This separation was particularly problematic during a family crisis, such as illness or death, as this account paints clearly:

*... there were cases, when someone died, so you had to go to funeral or stay; because you couldn't just go and return, we had no passports, so you have to give up everything [family]... it happened that here in Poland parents fell ill, or died and it was stronger than staying there on asylum, so they were leaving these houses, everything, leaving there are returning to Poland...*

In their migration histories, our interviewees used existing family networks, sometimes also establishing new ones, or making a connection with other Roma groups. These networks provided substantial social capital which was beneficial, but which also involved certain degree of mutual obligations, dependency and social control. Obligations encompass usually readiness to help, care, assistance in looking for work but also maintaining family bonds through participation in important rituals (such as christenings, weddings, funerals) that nurture these bonds. As in many groups balancing traditions and modernity, not all Roma are keen to reproduce some obligations that place group solidarity over individual freedom and aspiration. Several of our respondents, in particular young ones, for various reasons deliberately distanced themselves from “Roma life”, understood here by them as dense network of dependency and responsibilities stemming from living close to an extended family. The fulfilment of these commitments carries sometimes substantial financial investments, so someone who wishes to spend money on other things (such as education, or send them to Poland) needs to choose and sometimes even contest family obligations. They do this through – for example - living away from dense networks of kin (such as a neighbourhood far away, or in a different city). As one respondent said: *I prefer to stay away from them... you're good with the family only on a family picture...*

On the other hand, for those who have less favourable economic position, obligations stemming from family life are a source of support and they expect wealthier family members to meet them. When they are not, it is met with strong criticism seen as a way of contesting traditions of group solidarity. This dilemma is perfectly illustrated by a philosophical statement of one of Roma from Czarna Góra who commenting on the behaviour of better off family who apparently did not meet their obligations towards them, says: *when you got the money, who needs the family?*

The collective characteristic of migratory strategies is thus predominantly linked with Roma history as a marginalized group for whom family bonds and subsequent group solidarity presented basic protection from majority society and a guarantee of social, economic and emotional security. In migratory context it also constitutes a risk, hence a natural way to offset its negative outcomes is to migrate together or attempt to settle in close proximity while abroad. This isn't always possible, hence many Roma families lead rather atomised lives as families and keep close links with their localities of origin. But in England, as our research indicates, this tendency to seek each other out has another new outcome – an unprecedented intensification of relationship between different Roma groups, the subject we move to in our next section.

#### **5.4. Tradition and intergroup relations**

As noted in the case of migration brokers linking various groups of Polish Roma, their international migrations have put these groups in relative closer contact with each other. Relative, since one need to remember that cases of mixed marriages were not unheard of. Polska Roma and Bergitka Roma were isolated from each other in Poland geographically, but broadly knew about each other's existence as evidenced by various terms used to refer to other Roma, sustaining also a specific hierarchy of groups (Ficowski 1965; Mróz, Mirga 2001). Social and political shifts in Poland after the collapse of socialism and subsequent emergence of Roma associations, sometimes linking all Roma groups (Grzymała-Kazłowski, 2015), led Roma activists to seek a common political ground in their relations with the Gadjo and began a more open and formalized struggle against discrimination, racism and economic deprivation. But these contacts were confined mainly to ethnic leaders. As noted by Agnieszka Kowarska, until fairly recently members of Polska Roma group regarded Bergitka Roma as 'impure' and were of a view that contacts with them needed to be limited and marriages discouraged (2010: 6). For the first time in Polish Roma studies we can claim that these contacts are becoming increasingly numerous resulting in mutual partnerships, family links but also tensions and conflicts, which leads to important changes in the cultural lives of Polish Roma. It is clear that migrations were a stimuli of that process. This is not only our observation from the field, but a widely



shared view of most of our respondents – two groups come into contact more and more often abroad which as a result leads to more intergroup marriages and interactions.

On broader level the reasons behind this process lie in structural factors but also the collective characteristic of Roma migrations strategies in general, this time linked with the process of settlement. The new situation in a new country with an unsecure immigration status, economic anxieties and problems with settling in lead, according to some accounts, Roma families to seek each other and some were met and helped by Roma from other groups. Sometimes it lead to more organized and structured form of cooperation, as in the case of establishing of one of the most active and known Roma lead organisations in the UK, the Roma Support Group<sup>15</sup>, established with the help of British academics, human rights activists and people engaged in supporting asylum seekers. Describing the circumstances of that organisation's creation, Acton and Ingmire (2012) note the important role Roma from Poland – mainly from Polska Roma but also Lovari and Kelderasha - played. Today members of Bergitka Roma are also active there and in that sense we can talk of a similar process going on as in Poland, where new Roma identity emerges, bridging, negotiating and sometimes contesting previous distinctions, group differences and hierarchies, in particular when they interact with the authorities that are not well tuned to the complexities of Roma identities. As this is a normal fact of life for Roma activists who during the course of their work frequently meet and interact with Roma from diverse backgrounds, for many Roma who are not engaged in transnational ethnic mobilisation movement, this intensification of group interaction is a novelty.

This isn't to say that old divisions disappear, they are still important dimension for most of our respondents' identities. We met members of Polska Roma who do not have and wish not to have any contacts with Bergitka Roma and heard stereotypical terms used by each group to describe the other. However it is clear that as Roma from Mława had little chance of meeting a member of Bergitka in their town, or Bergitka to meet a member of Polska Roma in Czarna Góra, in London or Southend this probability is highly increased. During various rituals and events during our fieldwork we were able to observe it first hand.

One of the outcomes of more frequent inter-group relations and greater number of mixed marriages in particular, is the need to negotiate certain Roma traditions and customs understood differently by different groups, especially in relation to the status of women, gender roles and sources of authority in conflict resolution. For example, among many women from Bergitka group we spoke to, there is a

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<sup>15</sup><http://romasupportgroup.org.uk/>

prevalent view that some of their kin who dressed “normally” in Poland (which usually meant wearing trousers or short skirts), become more “conservative” in England, dressing in a way more associated with women from Polska Roma group – for example with long, black skirts. In similar way a stricter division between male and female sphere, and pollution taboos are being raised as a point of negotiation between groups, in particular in the context of mixed marriages. Interestingly, the dominant position of Polska Roma group is often negotiated and confirmed here – so for example, when a female from Bergitka Roma marries into a Polska Roma family, she is expected to adhere to their traditions and customs, but the same is also expected from a Bergitka man who marries into Polska Roma – it is he, who needs to adapt. For some it is a proof of conservative and dominant position of Polska Roma (also financially, as often they are regarded as wealthier and more entrepreneurial). For others it is a proof of Roma traditions revival, in particular in a more tolerant and diverse context of British multicultural policies. There are however voices from Bergitka Roma group which sees this process as an attempt from the other group to assert its dominant position and they do not hesitate to contest it. Old hierarchies are being contested and questioned, with intermarriages as well as Roma activism negotiating old stereotypes, since the latter rests on the assumption that Roma are a national/ethnic minority and internal difference are secondary to a common Roma identity. These discussions take place in Poland and in England simultaneously and can be heated and very emotional – which again points to the intensification of intergroup contacts due to migration. What differs in our view, is that discussions that were common among Roma activists, move to households that were previously indifferent to these processes.

This development can be challenging for both groups. On the one hand, some members of Bergitka Roma can feel dominated by Polska Roma, and concerned that in order to prove themselves they are forced to take on traditions that were not common among them. On the other hand, for Polska Roma, inclusion of families not adhering to certain rules can be treated with concern, in particular when it comes to certain pollution taboos. Crucially, more interactions and intermarriages, mean also more potential for dispute requiring a coherent and legitimate system of conflict resolution. Traditionally – and that places Roma in Poland apart from Roma in other countries – the top judiciary authority in Poland in custom Roma law, is the Sero Rom, the Roma king, currently living in Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki near Warsaw (Kowarska, 2013, Mirga, Mróz, 1994). His rulings are generally accepted by all Roma groups in Poland, except Bergitka Roma who regards him as a member of the elders but not as ultimate authority (although there are also members of that group who do accept him as such). The dilemma thus is that in case of a dispute between members of Bergitka and Polska Roma, the former may refuse to accept Sero Rom’s ruling, undermining his authority. The way out of that dilemma is to convince elders from Bergitka Roma to accept the king’s dominant position, and

we are witnessing an increasing number of attempts to do just that – for example during our fieldwork in winter 2018, a prominent member of Polska Roma, came to Nowa Huta for a special gathering of local Roma (from Bergitka) to convince them (a part from many other things) to accept Sero Rom's authority. Besides many other aspects and complexities of these Roma internal politics, it is important to stress that the discussions about that process are very lively in Roma households in Poland and England and are not solely connected to migrations but wider socio-political changes that Polish Roma undergo. Nevertheless we argue on the basis of our fieldwork, that migrations do seem to accelerate this process. This also points to an important dimension of Polish Roma connection with Poland. The ongoing political negotiation of Sero Rom's judicial authority sets Polish Roma apart from Roma from other countries and it may be interpreted not just as an attempt to unify diverse groups but a strategy aimed at keeping them linked through a common connection to Poland. In other words, the uniqueness of Sero Rom institution distinguishes Polish Roma from other Roma. As noted earlier Polish Roma – regardless of their group and kinship affiliation – maintain close links with Poland and in particular their locality of origin and are often keen to emphasize that, so the uniqueness of their king, is one aspect of these links. Another, linked to this element binding two groups is their more frequent interactions with Roma from other countries – in particular from Slovakia, Czech Republic and Romania. Here again, on the level of cooperation in formal organisations such as Roma Support Group, these relations run relatively smoothly and Roma are able to collectively work together to fight for their rights and offer crucial help for those in need, regardless where they are from. Some of our respondents however voiced their distance towards Roma from other countries and for example in Southend, some tensions between Polish and Czech Roma were present during our fieldwork.

Social media are of course a huge accelerator of this process. News about events, family rituals, conflicts and tensions travel fast across borders and it is quite common for Roma we met to live stream parties, christenings, weddings or other family events to their kin in other countries, or post them on YouTube. These interactions very often involve Roma from diverse groups and one of the interesting linguistic outcomes of that process is the emergence of a hybrid Polish-Roma-English idiom with which Roma communicate in writing bridging linguistic divides. This in itself is an evidence of increased inter-group interactions, in particular among younger generation. The very issues of distinct Roma groups is often raised in these debates, as shown in this post on Facebook made by a young Roma from a mixed group family: *Only Roma divide Roma into groups, not the Gadjo, no, they simply say Gypsy is a Gypsy*. The argument above isn't an attempt to determine whether we witness the birth of Roma nation, as some scholars would claim (more on this Stewart, 2013). It rather demonstrates how Roma in a dynamic and new context negotiate their complex and multi-layered

identities in their own way, using own cultural resources and ideas linked to the importance of family, wider kinship group but also sentiments towards their locality or nation of origin. In the context of living in London these issues become important as they clearly negotiate diverse ways of being Roma, Polish but also British, Londoners and/or European.

### **5.5. Life in England – education, work and diversity**

For many families we talked to, migration and settlement in England was an opportunity for social mobility and improvement of their economic and educational status. They gain new contacts, friendships, skills, experiences and new ideas. In that context, interviews with economically active people do not differ much from what is known from research on non-Roma Polish migrants, who often stress the social mobility aspect of migration to the UK helping them to lead a “normal” life without economic hardship (Eade in., 2006, Lopez Rodriguez, 2010, Rabikowska, 2010). Security understood in terms of social assistance, housing, professional opportunities and in particular educational opportunities for younger generation are most often highlighted as benefits of living abroad, even if the price to pay are relatively weaker family bonds or less engagement in Roma community life resulting in loosening some of Roma traditions. Some, especially older generation Roma are clearly pessimistic about it – noting that their grandchildren sometimes do not speak the language or are not interested in maintaining certain ideas and norms. There is no rule here however as we have also encountered families who ensure the intergenerational cultural reproduction is not disrupted by living in England. For many, this is sometimes easier in a diverse society at ease with multiculturalism where they feel more accepted in comparison to Poland<sup>16</sup>. Many in Poland note that the recent anti-immigrant rhetoric directed towards racially constructed “others” has implications for their own sense of security and feelings of being accepted as part of Polish society. It is their experience of melting in a diverse crowd of English cities that makes them realize the level of hostility in some places in Poland, as one Roma we met summarized: *in Poland I was black and here I am white*. Overall they value strongly British tolerance and multicultural policies, in particular when it comes to educating their children. In England, when asked “where they are from” they respond “from Poland” and they stress that very often they are regarded as such – as Polish. Paradoxically, it happens also that other non-Roma Polish migrants transplant their anti-Roma prejudices and experiences to England, questioning their „Polishness” in front of the English, as illustrated by this exchange:

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<sup>16</sup>Personal experiences aside, it needs to be emphasized here that more general assessments of experiences of discrimination in England of Roma of immigrant origin point that it remains a persisting problem, especially in the educational sector and employment (Brown i in. 2016, Marley, 2016)

*E: so tell me please, about your experiences with racism or you witnessed something? Because actually, you don't look like Roma...*

*R: Yes, they liked me there, because I am this...*

*E: you have Roma spirit but look like a Pole...*

*R: yes, Italian, yes I did not speak Polish, just walked like this and everyone spoke to me in English, this is how I look, so I felt it but those who looked like Roma, they had conflicts with Poles...*

*E: so they were discriminated against by Poles, not English*

*R: yes, Polish...*

It is difficult to assess the general pattern of employment among Polish Roma in England on the basis of our sample, which was rather limited, with a number of people at retirement age, not working. Majority of respondents who worked did so in low paid sector – car wash outlets, construction, restaurants or domestic services. Among people who came as children or who were born in England, educational aspirations seem to dominate, and among that group we talked to an accountant, financial corporation employee, social worker, professional musician or restaurant manager. Most of our respondents in England live in social housing. According to vast majority of statements, life in England is simply easier – in economic and social terms, there are greater educational opportunities for younger generation and being Roma is not a cause for discriminatory practices from dominant society.

Acton and Ingmire (2012) note that one of the differentiating features of Polish Roma, were their engagement with the musical scene. During our ethnographic data gathering we could witness that – London as well as Southend on the Sea is home to some great and famous Polish Roma musicians, who perform at family and community events, but rarely make a living out of it. Their migration lead to the decline of Roma musical traditions in southern Poland, in particular in the Tatras region. One of our interviewees in Nowa Huta stressed that, these days it is hard to find a musician in Poland, since they have all left to Britain. The fact that on the streets of Zakopane and Kraków, it is Slovakian Roma who play these days is a testimony to a decline of that particular tradition of Polish Roma culture.

## **5.6. Religious conversion and migrations**

One of the dimensions of our ethnographic study focused on religious conversions among Polish Roma and an interesting fact that Polish speaking Jehovah Witness congregations experience a growth of number of Roma among their ranks. This has been also noted by Acton and Ingmire (2012) without however an in-depth exploration of the dynamic behind this process, which in the context of

popularity of Pentecostalism among Roma, is additionally intriguing. It isn't easy to estimate the number of Polish Roma who are Jehovah Witnesses, although the testimonies as well as comments from non-believers Roma indicate that the trend is upwards and began with the migration flows in mid 90s. During our research, the first Memorial of Christ's Death (a yearly ritual when Witnesses gather in great numbers) has been organized specifically for Polish Roma and the sermon was delivered in Romani language, attracting around 250 people. According to Witnesses, there may be around one thousand Polish Roma who regularly come to Kingdom Halls, although it is difficult to verify that data. As noted, majority of literature on Roma religiosity focuses on Pentecostalism, a hugely popular religious and ethnic revival movement across Europe (Acton, 2014, Roman, 2018, Podolinská, 2014). It seems however that Polish Roma chose to join the other spectrum of Christianity (although about Polish Roma who are Pentecostals see: Nowicka 2004). The fact that religious conversion to Jehovah Witness is a very frequent topic of conversations among Polish Roma we interacted with during our fieldwork (both believers and non-believers) indicates an important cultural shift and change as a result of migration and living in England. In three locations in Poland where we conducted research, we did not encounter any Roma who is a Jehovah Witness and did not hear about a distinct Roma congregation in Poland. We heard of some individuals scattered across Poland, but were told that their conversion actually took place abroad. All this points to migration as the key factor in that process.

Why this is the case and what attracts Roma to the movement? We identify several factors behind this process linked with: 1) social appeal of the congregations; 2) compatibility with some elements of Roma culture and traditions; 3) ability to contest some of its elements. First, for our Roma respondents, the congregation is a safe space with a warm family atmosphere. According to some respondents, after their arrival to Britain the congregations became their "second home" where they felt included, safe and where linguistic and cultural proximity to non-Roma Polish co-believers helped to overcome feeling of stress related to the uncertainty of their immigration status, alienation due to living in a new country, or financial difficulties related to prohibition of employment. At some point of their settlement, practical aspects of being in a congregation also mattered, as it was a space where they could ask for information about accommodation, legal matters, employment. But it wasn't a determining factor, as a number of our respondents had their own immigration lawyers or were helped by advocacy organizations. To some extent, the congregation acted as a similar social space to a Polish Catholic Church for Polish migrants which was a safe place to come, meet, pray and exchange information. It seems the shared experience of exclusion from Polish society (Jehovah Witnesses being one of most disliked groups in Poland) brought these two groups together.

The social appeal of the congregation is also linked to a set of beliefs and practices that blend modernity with tradition. James Holden relates this to relationship with modernity that is stronger and deeper than it would seem on the surface from a millenarianist group, such as Jehovah Witnesses. As he notes: *On the surface, it would appear that Watch Tower theology represents a backlash against secular life, but closer investigation reveals that, in other respects, it is part of the very forces it condemns.* (Holden 2002: 15). This refers to business model of the evangelical work and a “desire for rationality” (2002: 65) visible in dress code, layout of Kingdom Halls, rejection of emotional responses during meetings, style of preaching and debating the issues of Watchtower during weekly meetings and the authoritarian nature of hierarchical structure of the movement – both at the level of organization and observable interactions between followers. Holden uses the Weberian notion of “technical reason” (2002: 81) to argue that the Jehovah Witness have used characteristics of modernity to achieve appeal of followers along with social cohesion. Our Roma Jehovah Witnesses respondents directly engage with that discourse, saying simply that their religious path is also framed as a learning progress and they are educating themselves through the Bible. The modernity driven message of advancement through knowledge and education is thus re-constructed in religious terms. Many Roma we spoke to see Bible readings sessions, coaching in public speaking, role-playing exercises aimed at teaching how to evangelize people, etc. as education per se. We heard many stories of people actually learning to read and write as a result of becoming Witnesses. This exchange for example illustrates this perfectly:

**Respondent (female, 50 years):** *So there are many cases like this, they are now more enlightened to learn. They don't take just facts... but want an answer: where is this written? Where the Bible comes from, how do you know it is authentic? And they compare facts... so they are more educated now you may say... and they finish schools... so I think they are not so backward anymore... (Interviewer: so they crave some knowledge right?) R: Yes, they want knowledge and the younger generation too, thirty, forty years... and not all of them know how to read and write, and this is a great thing because they want to learn something new right?*

From accounts gathered it can be said, that the process of conversion is linked with migratory routes and clearly went along family ties and extended kinship group networks, hence the growth of popularity of Watchtower congregations also stem from the abovementioned collective feature of Roma migration culture. There are however several more specific issues that Roma themselves highlight in Watchtower dogma and practice as relatable to their norms and traditions – mainly conservative patriarchal gender roles, emphasis on strict moral norms around sexuality, modesty in dress code, respect for the elders or the institution of exclusion from congregation which for Roma is

seen as the equivalent of *magerdo*<sup>17</sup>. Some also noted other aspects of the religious dogma and practice that are strongly similar, such as Witnesses' general separation from the public, national affairs, in particular their resistance to national symbols and prohibition of their members to carry arms, join the army and the police. Prohibition of blood transfusions also is relatable to some Roma taboos on blood.

Simultaneously however, the congregation setting, practice and dogma, offers sometimes a possibility of contestation and resistance to other elements of Roma culture that some may find problematic or difficult. Being a Jehovah Witness allows sometimes to distance from family based ethical obligations and to refuse to participate in certain practices – for example christenings or Roma weddings. Sometimes it can also act as a tool of resistance of traditional gender roles. The best example is offered by one of our respondents who was caught in a family dispute requiring a decision of the elderly to issue a binding ruling. The ruling required from her making an oath in public, something that not only Witnesses are forbidden to do, but since the opponent was male would put her in a disadvantageous position. She was sure the judges will not listen to her but to the men and she refused to make an oath citing her religious beliefs.

Our observations among Roma and non-Roma Witnesses in congregations in England, identify one more crucial factor behind the growth of popularity of Watchtower movement among that group. The last and very important piece of the puzzle, in the light of our findings, is the fact that the Polish members of the congregation during our visits were very eager to stress that the “Roma brothers” are an important part of the congregation. For them cultural and ethnic diversity in congregation is vital in order to challenge it and bridge it through the Jehovah Witness dogma. Roma presence is regarded as a proof that Polish members are following the path of the script – to overcome individual features and ethnic or national labels, to create a community of faith. Paradoxically then, migration and conversion has brought two different groups who live in Poland in isolation, together.

In this context it is important to note that during our study we met also mixed Roma and Polish Gadjo couples which indicates that sometimes the boundary between what we understand as “Polish” or “Roma” communities are not distinct separate sets, but rather groups that may overlap in the context of the family (although seemingly more commonly among Bergitka group) but also other “Polish” social spaces such as Polish shops, concerts, work and – as in case of Jehovah Witnesses – religious congregations. In that sense we can view Polish Roma social lives in the UK as a modality of

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<sup>17</sup>*Magerdo* is a social sanction of – temporal or permanent – exclusion from Roma community



migration from Poland in general, adding to its diversity and homogeneity (Garapich, 2016a, Kucharczyk, 2013, White, 2011). The common language, sharing of similar cultural idioms, popular culture (in almost all households in England we visited, Polish TV is on), culinary tastes and links with specific localities in Poland, makes Polish Roma very close to other non-Roma Poles living in the UK. This picture is complex, as we seen above some Gadjo try to deny Polishness of Roma, stressing their “racial” difference. But when we asked our respondents about Roma identity, we often got the response: *But I am Polish too!*

But if on the informal, family level these worlds sometimes overlap, it must be stressed that on formal and institutional level Polish Roma and Poles’ social worlds in the UK are isolated and kept apart. We did not come across any Polish organisation (and there are a large number of them, see: Kucharczyk 2013) that would work with Roma or have Roma members, we are unaware of any cases of Roma children attending Polish Saturday schools and we did not hear about any activity towards that group from the Catholic Church. From our initial assessment, there is also little awareness of Polish Roma from the part of Polish consular offices. A small study among Polish civil society organisations in England, funded by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, found that the Polish Roma feel totally cut off from the interest and scope of Polish diaspora engagement policy, which the Ministry and the Polish Senate is engaged in (Garapich 2013: 154). This topic however was not among our key research questions, hence these observations are based only on broad assessments.

### **5.7. Returns and Brexit**

Our respondents, especially returnees, talk also about migrations in negative terms - as risk, lack of networks of support and associated individualistic attitudes or dependency on family members abroad. Their return to Mława or Czarna Góra is then a return to known and safe environment where social relations are embedded in traditional networks, not in a new migratory situation. This is probably why, in our returnees’ narratives a strong emotional bond with locality, familiar space of town or village is evident. *Roma are local patriots* – as one of our expert argues. Returnees we talked to, emphasize this link with local space and nostalgia towards their community, since it was difficult to recreate it abroad. A return helps them realize the value of what community means and what it has on offer – sense of security, stability and position in local social structure, which is at risk when abroad. So an attachment to their locality of origin is thus strengthened by migration experience, an issue commonly observed in literature on migrants’ returns, dilemmas of transnational living and care and nostalgia (Erdal, Oeppen, 2017, Carling i in. 2015, Erdal, 2014, White, 2011, 2014, Grabowska i in 2017). Some returnees may chose this sense of belonging and social status over relative better economic position in England.

In other instances families are so dispersed that there is no one to return to and their property has been either taken away (in case of social housing) or they have been sold or rented. Coupled with the fact that children sometimes do not speak Polish, for many Roma a return is not an option, and their link with Poland and local community is being severed – as we seen in case of Mława. A general negative experience of schooling in Poland that parents refer to, makes then doubtful whether their returning children from England will be well catered for in Polish schools, in particular that they usually hold English schooling in high esteem. It should be stressed here, that Polish schools struggle also with other returning non-Roma Polish children with a migration experience. On the other hand, a new policy of child benefits (so called 500+) have been noted to be an additional incentive for some families to return.

The dilemmas our respondents articulate, do not differ from what we know from studies on migrants from Poland in general. They focus on problems with transnational care (Kordasiewicz, Radziwinowiczówna, Kloc-Nowak, 2018), or the constant need to find an equilibrium between economic benefits of migrations with social and emotional costs of family separation and sense of alienation in a new environment. These similarities are also evident in the context of the Brexit referendum and its social and personal consequences, as for many EU citizens they generate heightened sense of uncertainty and unease, in particular bearing in mind the wave of anti-immigrant sentiment in the aftermath of the referendum. However, some scholars note that outcomes of Brexit may disproportionately affect Roma populations (Marley, 2016) issue also raised by organisations such as Roma Support Group. There are various reasons for this overall, but from the narratives of our respondents, some made preparations securing their status – getting a resident certificate or applying and getting British citizenship. There are however cases that certainly will make that process difficult – due to lack of paper trail related to employment or past criminal convictions. Again, these are not specifically issues affecting Polish Roma, but overall relate to all EU citizens in Britain.

## **6. Conclusions**

As we indicated in the introduction, this study was pioneering in its focus on Polish Roma migrations. At the same time, it should be remembered that ethnographic studies touch upon narrow space of social reality and one should be cautious with making generalization. By applying the multi-sited ethnography, a method popular in migration research, we managed to include in this space towns in Poland (inhabited by various Roma groups) and two very different cities in England, as well as social

spaces in which Roma communities in Poland and abroad live and constantly discuss topics which are important, migrations and their consequences among them. Our data includes not only in-depth interviews, but also a large number of informal conversations during important ceremonies, Roma youth meetings and conferences, discussions with community leaders, ordinary uninvolved Roma, discussions on social media forums and notes from participant observation.

As a result, our conclusions touch upon two parallel phenomena, to which this study was devoted. On the one hand, they concern directly the localities where the research was conducted in Poland. On the other, they concern broader nationwide and transnational processes regarding Roma minority in Poland and in Europe, which in our views are currently taking place. In this sense, our research requires continuation and extension to other regions, other Roma groups, and other places of residence in order to verify some of our findings. We are not saying that we have been able to answer all our questions in a satisfactory manner. Also, as we have already mentioned, studies in pristine terrain may generate more questions. The phenomena described above are dynamic in nature, and they can certainly meet counterarguments and may be subjected to further research, which we hope will happen. Therefore the conclusions will be to a certain degree generalized, but we are convinced that they have a solid basis in our empirical findings regarding phenomena we have witnessed and participated in.

One of the main conclusions is the realization that for more than a quarter of a century we have been dealing with the largest – since the post-war emigration of Germans or Jews – exodus of ethnic minority from Poland. What is more, this ethnic exodus went almost unnoticed. The small numbers involved should not offer an explanation for this situation, since we have seen the reaction of the Polish and British authorities and diplomatic tensions regarding the arrival of a thousand families with children to Great Britain. The cases of Mława, Nowa Huta and Czarna Góra, at different times and in different ways show that in comparison to their non Roma neighbors, the Roma migrate to a much greater extent. The unprecedented scale of their emigration was suggested by some Roma organizations, but this report is the first independent confirmation of this fact. As a result of migration, many Roma communities in Poland are in a demographic decline.

Another conclusion is that Roma migrations are not fundamentally and generally "different" or more "exotic" and are not an outcome of their culture, but are sociologically, economically and historically an integral part of the history of Polish society, the region or the city that they live in. At macro structural level, migrations of Polish Roma are on the one hand the effects of the liberalization of mobility regimes after 1989, on the other hand, they are related to the costs of the socio-economic

transformation, when Polish citizens applied various livelihood strategies. Some people were involved in circular, informal migration. Others were leaving in groups asking for political asylum. In the context of the post-socialist trauma of great change (Sztompka, 2000) and pauperization of society and ethnic tensions, the Roma, like other victims of systemic transformations (Rakowski, 2009), were left mostly on their own but, most importantly, could rely on the supportive network of their own families, offering them economic and social capital necessary for survival. Due to the collective characteristic of Roma migration strategies, the most rational option was applying for asylum, especially given the atmosphere of growing hostility of the impoverished non-Roma neighbors who were looking for a scapegoat.

The same holds true for the Roma migrations after the EU enlargement in 2004, which for some communities was the beginning of large scale migrations. Their migration strategies, transnational ways of dealing with family issues and transnational care, upward social mobility abroad, as well as emotions related to migration, separation and returns do not differ from their non Roma neighbors. In some cases lower levels of education and a higher level of obligations resulting from family relationships impact on Roma migration choices, but generally speaking, one should refrain from exoticization of Roma migration. They do not result from the "nature" of the Roma, nor from the deterministically interpreted Roma culture stemming from their nomadic past. They are conditioned by the same macro-structural processes and the agency of social actors as migrations of their fellow non Roma citizens. Both cases of Czarna Góra and Mława show it very well. Obviously, certain Roma groups have had rich resources of migratory social capital, which allowed them to better navigate the new environment, understand the regulations or structural conditions. But other social groups in Poland were also in possession of such capital, which allowed them to effectively undertake migration and eventually settling abroad or circulating. Polish inhabitants of Podhale, Podlasie, Opole used and sustained it in a similar way (Górny & Stola, 2001; Jończy, 2010). The conceptualization of Roma migration as the result of their "urge to wander" abstracts them from the entirety of Polish society and is, in fact, a sociological and historical positioning of the Roma on the margins of the society.

There are, however, some specificities to this group. We have mentioned the migratory collectivism as a feature that distinguishes Roma migration from that of non-Roma. Still, one should not over-generalize, but understand it in a relational perspective, as a form of preservation and behavior which becomes normative in a long-term process. Collectivism is a direct result of understanding family ties in ethical terms. It was formed as such in the long process of adaptation to the hostile society excluding the Roma. There is no single cause and one effect here – it is a feedback

mechanism in which group solidarity generates an aversion of the outside social environment, and this in turn increases the sense of separateness and group solidarity. It must be remembered, however, that this collectivism is constantly contested and negotiated, and differently understood by Roma themselves. Also, Roma are not exceptional in this case. Similarly, Polish migration culture is characterized by negotiations by individuals and elites the dilemmas related to the consequences of emigration and tensions between individual profit and collective loss for society. Mary Erdmans defines this construction of migration in Polish culture as a "moral issue"(1992). To a certain extent migration collectivism explains a number of phenomena that we were dealing with during our research: the scale of migration, the way they were organized, the intensification of intergroup relations, and the popularity of Polish-speaking congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

As a result of migration, there is an unprecedented intensification of contacts between different Polish Roma groups, which is understandable by the logistical issues related to settling in, looking for friends and new relatives or expanding marriage opportunities. Due to migration, the circle of Roma is perceptually expanding, including members of different Roma groups. This results in a greater number of social spaces where groups so far isolated or even not knowing about themselves come into contact. In the case of two groups among which we conducted the research, the result is more interaction, mixed marriages, joint initiatives and activities. The consequences of this process are of a multi-faceted nature. On the one hand, we are witnessing a stronger identification with the conservative approach to the customs of the Polish Roma from the Bergitka Roma, a specific process of accepting Polska Roma traditions as their own. On the other hand, we witness a resistance from Bergitka Roma, especially when it comes to attempts to impose the superior authority of Sero Rom. Ultimately, it affects the emergence of a new dimension of Roma identity, which transcends the old intergroup divisions and hierarchies, which is the main aspect of the Roma movement since the 1970s, constructing the Roma as a nation with their own specificity and history.

The next conclusion concerns Polish identity of the Roma. Research findings regarding: a) intergroup relations; b) the popularity of Jehovah's Witnesses movement; c) returns and emotional attachment to the place of origin – prove its significance in the identity construction process. Polish Roma, among whom we conducted ethnographic research – at least the majority, there are always some exceptions – identify (apart from being Roma) also as Poles, Polish citizens, people who, on the equal footing with the Gadjó are part of the Polish socio-cultural landscape which is a source of their sense of identity, belonging and emotional ties. Like other migrants from Poland, they also feel an affinity with other Poles and the Polish culture in which they grew up. The attractiveness of Polish-speaking congregations of Jehovah Witness is indeed connected with their Polishness – other Poles go there,

rituals are in Polish, and it is important to them to be accepted by other Poles as equals. Similarly, the relations between Polska Roma and Bergitka Roma today are intensified as a result of migration, because in both cases we are talking about groups of people connected to Poland who are abroad and are looking for a thread of commonality. We can even risk the statement that the Roma abroad, beyond the greater assertiveness regarding their own sense of identity as Roma, also become more aware Poles, aware of the value of the place they come from, Polish diversity and specificity. This is not a nationalist declarative patriotism of flags and marches but a kind of "grassroots", ordinary, everyday patriotism based on sentiment to food, landscape, childhood memories, customs, television, music, cultural idioms (such as the great respect and admiration for musicians like Don Vasyi or Edyta Gorniak). As in the case of Polish non-Roma migrants, the settlement process and the emergence of the second generation will have significant effects on further cultural reproduction. Likewise, the generation which arrived to Great Britain as children, or was born abroad, will inevitably treat these issues differently and their identity will be much more complex. They may still be Roma, but also Poles and Britons. Like in the case of their Polish peers, the links to the country of origin are their family networks and some customs, but the school, educational and social environment as well as the world of their peers is British. It is difficult to say what long-term consequences it will have. These and other issues are for further exploration in future research.

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