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## **The Centenary of the *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* through the Contemporary Concept of *Social Remittances***

*Abstract:* This article was motivated by the centenary (2018) of the seminal sociological monograph *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918). It shows that classics can be not only occasionally referenced but also read in-depth with the new contemporary concept of *social remittances* embedded in *transnational ties*. Reaching for the *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* aimed this analysis to revisit the preceding passages of migration history and to revitalise the preliminary knowledge about human moves and social change. The article is a reminder and a positioner of Thomas and Znaniecki's monograph in their contemporary migration historical writings of Central Europe, not commonly referenced in international sociology. The methodology of the qualitative content analysis with retrospective mapping the flow of information in the illustrative cases of migrant families applied in this article, helped to analyse resistance and changes of norms, values, practices and social capital affected by international migration and bundled as *social remittances*.

*Keywords:* social remittances, family practices, transnationalism, transnational ties, migration, Polish peasant

### **Introduction**

In 2018 one of the most seminal sociological monograph co-authored by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (5 volumes, 1918–1920) celebrated the centenary of its very first edition. Although focused on a specific subject of Polish migrants who had moved from partitioned Poland to America between 1880–1910, Thomas and Znaniecki explained migration processes in the wider context of the transition from traditional to modern society, particularly in relation to its family system. Both Polish families and individuals served as testimonials of social changes bridging periods before, during and after migration. Moving to America had just accelerated the processes of changes of the family system and the society as a whole.

The initial purpose of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* was to bring a new methodology for studying social change that highlighted the interplay of subjective and objective factors. Thomas and Znaniecki insisted that the focus of social theory must be on acting individuals or groups and not just on social class and its determinants, codes and structures, statistical quantities or other abstracted objective factors. They were the ones who claimed in the *Methodological Note* that any social process can be described by *social*

*values*, conceptualised mainly as group rules determining the actions of individuals and *attitudes* described as subjective personal traits connected to dispositions and inclinations of individuals (Zaretsky 1984). Therefore their main timeless message to researchers was about never studying attitudes without values and values without attitudes. This meant that objective and subjective factors always interplayed in the social processes and they were to be identified by researching both at the same time. They proved that by using data recording human lives such as: life stories, letters and other means documenting lived experience, we can analyse human society, grasping the subjective and objective processes.

Thomas and Znaniecki with their work of *The Polish Peasant* contributed to the founding of the Chicago School in the USA (Collins and Makowski 1972) and to the Central European circuit of young multilingual anthropologists who got trained in Warsaw, Krakow, Vienna, Lviv, Leipzig, Berlin, Paris, London and United States, as Znaniecki did, and became part of a transcontinental and transatlantic community of migration scholars (Harzig, Hoerder, and Gabaccia 2009).

Before discussing the conceptual and empirical details of what Polish peasants circulated between a destination and an origin, we refer to the historical research findings of other contemporary scholars from Central Europe whose findings are in line with Thomas and Znaniecki. For instance a Polish female scholar Duda-Dziewierz (1938) showed in her monograph of Babica—a village in Malopolska, Poland, what migrants conveyed from abroad to home, besides money. It may be argued, that identification of migration effects on the meso-scale was more feasible in this period due to the lack of other sources of innovations, migrants were literally the accelerators of novelty and change. Duda-Dziewierz wrote that through letters, newspapers, books, pamphlets sent from the USA and direct contacts with either visitors or even more with return migrants, the novelties, innovation, got transferred contesting old and creating new normative structures. Using established terminology in anthropology, she called it a ‘diffusion of custom patterns.’ Duda-Dziewierz wrote also about the rationalization of social attitudes: both individual and collective, e.g. the rational limitation of the influence of the Catholic Church on many spheres of life, such as criticism towards its social control and more selective approach to religious dogmas. This behaviours combined with the emergence of new types of leadership had contributed to individuals’ actions aimed at social, cultural and structural reorganization of the village. She also found new economic attitudes resulting from that new form of rationality, e.g. investing money in land or starting ones’ own business. However, in this context, buying land, in particular in impoverished regions of Poland may not be classified as innovation, but rather as tradition-bound form of use of migration funds. The size of the land plots was a sign of position in the local social strata, hence acquiring more of it, would be strongly embedded within the traditional social structure (cf. Grabowska and Engbersen 2016; Grabowska et al. 2017). As referred by Harzig et al. (2009) Duda-Dziewierz (1938) focused in her work on peasant villages in Poland in terms of transnational aspects of migration. Three key questions were guiding her analysis: who left from the local strata, what socialization outcomes migrants transfer to the destination but also what they bring back when they return from migration.

Thomas and Znaniecki’s works rested also on the legacy of earlier Polish scholars such as Krzywicki (1891; 1891b) who noted migration from partitioned Poland and described that participants of *Sachsengangerei* (mostly peasant migrants, from the Prussian part of

partitioned Poland to the German land of Sachsen) were changing their everyday practices in terms of outfit—started wearing shoes, and start using household tools used that time in Germany. Moreover, Krzywicki noted that female migrants after migrating to Germany, started executing more gender equality in Polish, male-centred, households. They also started bringing home more of the protestant ethic practiced in the ways of saving and investing money, new norms related to the value of money and social mobility within the local strata (cf. [Grabowska and Engbersen 2016](#)).

To sum up, there are a few common findings of the historical texts, contemporary more or less to *The Polish Peasant*, which provide food for thoughts of this article about migratory non-financial transfers at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: (1) Individualization of attitudes among migrants which make possible the transfer of social non-financial novelties; (2) Breaking the social isolation of rural, remote areas and the promotion of a new type of man: mobile, world-savvy *bon vivant*, also operating in transnational social fields; (3) Emancipation from the patterns of traditional social system in Poland thanks to mostly transatlantic migration; (4) Being mobile was connected with opportunities for higher positions within the local social strata of the origin (cf. [Grabowska and Engbersen 2016](#)).

The main aim of this article is to look at Thomas and Znaniecki's seminal work through the contemporary concept of non-financial migratory transfers coined as *social remittances* ([Levitt 1998, 2001](#)) and embedded in *transnational family ties*. We argue that the phenomenon we deal with in this article is not new but we apply a new transnational lens to document it. Following Portes's (2001) interpretation of 'Merton's fallacy of adumbration' we can say that the moment a concept has been formulated it is easy to find its evidence throughout the history. Smith (2003) added the argument that if transnational life existed in the past but was not noticed, then the transnational lens does the new analytical work of providing a way of revealing what was hidden and not seen before.

The article is structured as follows. In the next part we discuss the theoretical concepts of *social remittances* embedded in *transnational ties* and argue the usefulness of these concepts in documenting and grasping migratory non-financial transfers which enhanced changes in the Polish peasants' families of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Central European society. Thereafter, we present our methodological approach of a qualitative content analysis of peasants' series of letters in order to reconstruct the information flow facilitating or blocking the processes of social remitting. Then we conduct both cross-case and case study analyses of selected families in order to showcase the process of social remitting. We conclude this article with some remarks on the purpose of revitalising classical studies, their contemporary relevance and the need of putting new conceptual and analytical tracks on them.

### Contemporary Theoretical Concepts

In their monograph *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* Thomas and Znaniecki advocated for a life history approach to migrant culture as a transnational bind of cultures of an origin and of a destination ([Harzig, Hoerder, and Gabaccia 2009](#)). It invites into our discussion the modern concepts of *transnationalism*, *transnational ties* and *social remittances*. Foner (2001) noted already some time ago that transnationalism has been with us

for a long time, and a comparison with the past allows us to evaluate what is new about patterns and processes of contemporary forms of transnationalism.

The aim of this section is not to review the vast literature on transnationalism (cf. [Vertovec 2009](#)), but briefly state that transnationalism refers to continuities of migrants' experience in two or more cultural spheres: the simultaneous living in different cultures, the inter-societal and trans-familial nexus of remittances both economic and social and the emotional and practical family ties ([Harzig, Hoerder, and Gabaccia 2009](#)).

Using the transnational optic brings the processes presented in *The Polish Peasant* into view. The concept of transnationalism is strongly connected with transnational and translocal families which still are perceived as social spaces or social units where one can grasp the relationship between migration and universal human commitment to form intimate social groups with their values and attitudes. Migration creates many incentives for communication in order to make social and economic family bonds and exchanges doable. *The Polish Peasant* allowed us to view all these aspects from the perspectives of mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, step parents and children, siblings, aunts and uncles, cousins, nephews, grandparents and grandchildren—all people who make up families. Money and goods often travel between family members. Sometimes these material remittances contribute to the future moves of the followers. Sometimes they are intended for consumption, sometimes for investments in both land, properties, own business and human capital. People, however, do not remit money and consumption goods (*economic remittances*) only. They also transfer norms, values, practices, ideas, aspirations, social capital which were conceptualised as *social remittances*.

*Social remittances* as coined nowadays by Levitt ([1998, 2001](#)) are local forms of transnational cultural diffusion and constitute non-financial forms circulated by migrants across borders and various social fields. One of such spheres relates to the family life. The concept of social remittances itself was coined and revisited by Levitt ([1998, 2001](#); with [Lamba-Nieves 2010](#)) to define specifically the diffusion of ideas, values, beliefs, norms of behaviours, aspirations, practices and social capital. They were categorised into three groups: (1) Normative structures: ideas, values, beliefs that include norms of behaviour, for example principles of family responsibility and neighbourliness, community participation, aspiration for social mobility; (2) Systems of practices: actions shaped by normative structures such as organizational practices: recruiting and socialising new members, goal setting and strategizing, establishing leadership roles, and forming interagency ties; including how individuals delegate household tasks and how much they participate in political, religious and civic groups (acts, actions, rituals); (3) Social capital based on values and norms which forms the resource for collective actions and facilitates the circulations of norms and values.

In *Transnational Villagers* Levitt ([2001](#)) distinguished three patterns of interactions within the host society which can be related to Thomas and Znaniecki's understandings of personality types: (1) *Recipient observers* who mostly work with their co-ethnics; they do not actively explore their new world; they take new ideas and practices passively by observations; they listen how the others describe them; count on others' interpretations; (2) *Instrumental adopters* who add and alter their routines for pragmatic reasons; they adjust their interpretations of the world to equip themselves better, in order to meet the challenges and constraints of migrant life; (3) *Purposeful innovators* who are 'sponges' actively searching,

selecting and absorbing new things; they want to get ahead rather than just get by; they do not change because they have to, they want to change based on their learning about the world around; they creatively add and combine what they observe with their existing ideas and practices, thereby expanding and extending their cultural repertoire.

Levitt's typology of migration encounters can be juxtaposed with Thomas and Znaniecki's typology of personalities: (1) *philistine*—low reflexivity, structured but stiff character, the change is only possible after some time or as a result of shock; (2) *gypsy*—low/indecisive reflexivity, unstable character, inconsistent in action, chaotic personality; (3) *creative personality*—high reflexivity, stable character, ability to adjust to new situations, want to adapt social reality to own goals. In comparison to Levitt's typology, Thomas and Znaniecki credit less agency to individuals. Both typologies underline, however, the shifts from accidental, affectual to purposive and rational forms of encounters and actions of individuals.

Levitt also related in her analysis to the process of transmission of *social remittances*. She pointed out that *social remittances* exchanges occur when migrants return to live or visit their communities of origin, when non-migrants visit those in the receiving country; or through exchanges of letters, videos, cassettes, e-mails, telephone calls (Levitt 2001). In the time of *The Polish Peasant* rare personal visits, letters, sending newspapers, pamphlets and books were possible which brought a time lag in the communication and eventual transfer of social remittances. The conditions of transfer may foster or discourage social remitting. The similarity of situations, in which a migrant is at a given moment, may enhance transfer, such as: important life cycle rituals (wedding, baptism, funeral), house decorations, care for elderly parents, or setting up a new business activities. In these cases the migrant may intentionally observe and communicate novelties and imitate or innovate them in the origin community (Grabowska et al. 2017).

Transfer occurs both ways: from destination to origin and the other way round. This reciprocal transfer also means circulation of social remittances (Bocconi and Decimo 2013). Circulation of ideas, objects and practices is dependent on opportunity and the dynamics of dis-embedding and re-embedding items in the new local context (Mica 2013). The last point on circulation of social remittances is especially relevant for *The Polish Peasant*.

Outcomes of transfer in the process of social remitting are difficult to trace. Levitt (2001) enumerates several determinants of impact of *social remittances*: (1) The nature of the remittance itself- easy or complicated to transfer; (2) The nature of the transnational system, mostly social networks and community practices; (3) The characteristics of the messenger to emulate their peers; (4) The target audience: their gender, class, life cycle; (5) Relative differences between sending and receiving countries; (6) Features of the transmission process: social remittances travel in bundles; time matters: short-term, periodical regularity versus accidental transmission.

The concept of *social remittances* is a useful gaze to capture intra- and inter-family transfers that are hidden on the pages of the *The Polish Peasant*. Thomas and Znaniecki referred to the circulation of both material and non-material aspects in the families of migrants. They mentioned predominately the transfers from origin to destination communities and the intermingling of old and new norms, values and practices. They talked about 'social becoming' in the new context which means the re-fashioning of the way of life of individ-

uals and families. In their analysis families fused old normative systems from the sending country along with new normative systems of the receiving country (cf. Grabowska and Engbersen 2016; Buler and Grabowska 2017).

To sum up, in this article we apply the concepts of *social remittances* embedded in *transnational family ties* to a qualitative secondary content data of peasants' life records in the form of traditional postal letters, analysed in their original Polish language.

### Methodology

Thomas and Znaniecki ([1918]1976) published 50 series of migrants' and stayers' letters and one individual *Life Record of an Immigrant* which had a form of an autobiography. For the purpose of the article we focus on the postal exchanges between members of selected migrant families. Authors grouped them in four categories: (1) correspondence between family members—28 cases; (2) Individual letters and a part of letters that shows disintegration of family solidarity; (3) Correspondence between husbands and wives—11 cases; (4) personal relationships outside marriage and family—11 cases.

In order to select the series where the process of social remitting might have occurred, the funnel approach was used. First of all we read all the available correspondence between migrants and stayers in a systematic manner and chose those families (Maj 2013), where the exchanges of information could potentially turn into social remittances (Levitt 1998). Secondly we chose 13 cases that might be adequate for our study. Finally we decided to focus on ten families: Borek, Cugowski, Halicki, Makowski, Markiewicz, Osiński, Raczkowski, Stelmach, Topolski, Wróblewski. All cases were published in the first category of letters *Correspondence between family members*. Both financial and non-financial aspects of their lives recorded in the postal letters showcased the potential for *social remittances* embedded in *transnational family ties*.

In one case—Raczkowski Family—the studied mailing related to multi-directional letters: from stayers to migrants, from migrants to stayers and from migrants to migrants. Other nine series of letters selected for this analysis were letters sent only from stayers to migrant relatives.

In order to filter out the possible *social remittances* in the letter exchanges of migrant families, we focused on such expressions as: 'share with us information..., please,' 'as you advised us..., 'as you told us in the last letter,' 'help in making a decision..., please.' However most of potential remittances appear indirectly among other subjects and issues and we had to interpret the authors motivations. We are fully aware of the high-handedness of this method (Maj 2013) but for this kind of analysis it seems to be the only suitable approach to deal effectively with such a secondary, aged dataset.

The outcomes of the analysis are presented in this article in a double manner. The first approach related to the migration effects that might be observed across all selected cases of families. While change in practices, norms and social capital appeared in all presented cases, the shift 'from an old to a new' is at a different stage of the transformation in every analysed family. The second approach covered the presentations of case studies of selected families. It gave an insight into the social relations between family members and relatives

and affairs important to them. In order to grasp the information flows in each case family we used graphical visualisations. The concentric circles is the analytical tool reflecting relations and bonds between individuals, groups and wider social units. In this article we present three case studies of migrant families showcasing *social remitting* embedded in *transnational family ties* of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### Findings: Cross-Case Analysis

The selected secondary qualitative data was analysed in the original Polish language of the letters although they were first published in English and therefore translated by Znaniecki. The analysis presented in this part of the article is focused on the three elements that might have circulated between migrants and stayers in Poland: (1) systems of practices, (2) normative structures, and (3) social capital. In the analysed contents of letters, both systems of practices and normative structures were intertwined. In fact, it could be interpreted that practices influenced the changes in norms and at the same time they influenced the change itself. These two fields had undergone noticeable transition from ‘the old to the new’ of behaviours and attitudes. Social capital is the resource mostly exported from Poland to the USA and used even when the primary family group experienced disintegration during migration (Buler and Grabowska 2017).

Below, the migratory *social remittances* are specifically discussed across family cases in relation to: (1) norms and practices connected to mating and marriage; (2) gender roles; (3) traditions and rituals; (4) ownership and money—family versus individual, and (5) social capital.

Marriage was a very important issue in the peasant’s lives at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It used to be a collective family choice, bringing usually a deal and a union of families, not an individual choice of a person. A well-chosen spouse was a kind of a guarantee that familial land and other properties would not be lost. The importance of marriage was emphasised with the number of practices that a peasant should follow, imposing social control over a person. It was the family who advised and agreed or not on choosing a particular person for a husband or a wife. There were parents who might or might not give a blessing, again executing mentioned above social control. The family was also responsible for a dowry to the newlyweds with the land and/ or the livestock.

It had already started to change, however, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>. The main reasons were demographic and industrial changes (Pilch 1984). The number of children grew due to smaller mortality rate of infants and improving health conditions. On the Polish territory the population growth was around 109 percent in comparison to 70 percent in Europe (Jura 2002). The land area was limited and although people migrated internally to towns and cities, the number of unemployed peasants had been increasing. The development of industry in Poland was too slow to absorb the whole available workforce. Migration became the life strategy of many families.

In such circumstances the shift was inevitable. The forerunner appeared in the field of practices. Young migrants started to phase out their spouse choices arranged by their parents. The wide-spreading practice of migrants was just to inform family about the marriage

and to send the wedding photo attached to a letter. Parents' blessing was also a declining social practice. Sons and daughters of the Polish peasants no longer needed the symbolic approval of their life choices. On the one hand, it was connected with the geographical distance, but on the other hand, they might have been observing new patterns of behaviours and eventually to follow them. The old practices they were clashing, however, with those newly acquired in the receiving society.

The economic situation of many Polish households at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pilch 1984; Jura 2002) forced women to take up paid jobs. The works were available, however, mostly beyond villages they lived in, mostly in towns or abroad. Therefore they had to leave their villages to find an employment (e.g. Borek family). While they left home, they were also undertaking an education abroad, mainly the vocational one (e.g. Osinski family). Although their goal was still to get married and to have children, they searched for an urban, not rural life. Women started living apart from their parents and no longer they had to obey the rules imposed and practiced by them (cf. Krzywicki [1891a]2013, [1891b]2013, [1892]2013, [1939]2013). Women wanted to experience an upward mobility also through their work, not only traditionally through marriage.

In the data we also found some examples of migrant wives working in the industry as hard as their husbands. To a certain degree it might be assumed that they observed and followed the rules present among other migrants and American inhabitants. With the new models and social conditions it was possible that female stayers and returnees to Poland (cf. Duda-Dziewierz 1938) expected from their husbands-to-be a shift in their attitudes towards traditional gender roles and division of labour in a household.

Tradition always played an important role in sustaining family. For migrating peasants at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the tradition was the bridging link between the old fatherland and the new country. It was specifically visible in the circulation of various goods (Finch 2007). The most common circulations were linked with the catholic celebrations like Christmas and Easter. In almost all letters Christmas wafer (*opłatek* in the Polish tradition the holy symbolic bread shared during the Christmas Eve) and Easter decorations were present. Peasants were also sharing crosses and pictures of saints which were believed to bring health, happiness and God's care (e.g. in Makowski and Osiński families).

The dominant family model among Polish peasants at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the traditional one. It assumed the collective ownership of: land, money, livestock and information (Zaretsky 1984). It brought further consequences: individuals were not used to take up a decision on purchase (even those connected with such trivial items as clothes). The revenue gained from the family work, usually on the land had to be invested in family property. Parents were those who made authoritarian decisions for the whole family. It applied to grown up offspring as long as they lived in the family house. Information was also a resource shared and not perceived as an individual matter. Readings of someone's letters aloud was a norm as a privacy was not understood as an individual right.

Sharing money, property and information were signs of family solidarity and strong ties. Every member felt responsible for the other member of the group. With the growing distance and financial independence one could notice an eclipse of this norm and social capital connected with it. It had changed from 'what is the best for the family' into 'what is the best for me.'

As we read in the letters, people migrating to other towns and abroad started to perceive money as their individual not the collective family asset. They started to become individual workers not a part of a family venture (e.g. Cugowski family). Very few migrants who were sending money back home made clear instructions how the family left behind should spend economic remittances (e.g. Halicki family). If the family solidarity was still in power, family felt obliged to confess how they spent the migration money (e.g. Markiewicz, Borek, Osinski, Wróblewski family). However, in some cases those who received economic remittances were not willing to share them with other family members (e.g. Topolski family).

The same process concerned the privacy of information conveyed in letters. Not sharing mailing with family and neighbours was rare and used to be perceived as a lack of good manners. News from migrants belonged to everyone. Over time, however, not sharing the mailing content became a norm and a private issue of the letter's addressee (e.g. Halicki family).

It may be assumed that migrants who finally could count on their resourcefulness and diligence only chose to focus on their personal aims that might be achieved with individual resources like money and information. Contrary to migrants, stayers did have the family support, nevertheless, they also started gradually to perceive money, information or goods as their individual property. It seemed that the process of individualization was clearly remitted through the borders and diffused among stayers with the help of transnational ties.

The social capital used to be the 'commodity' among migrants they bring in with them abroad. Those who were leaving home country needed support from those who were staying. It was financial, organizational and social help. The ticket and some pocket money were given to the migrant, usually nominated by the family to go for America. It was a kind of a 'family credit card' connected to the familial solidarity and obligations towards left behind (Harzig, Hoerder, and Gabaccia 2009). When a migrant got a permanent job abroad, he or she could in return help other family members to come to the USA. Other Polish migrants were usually assisting in buying ship tickets, gave board and lodging to the newcomers and support in searching for a work abroad (e.g. Osiński, Raczkowski Families).

As argued before, peasants in Thomas and Znaniecki's study had been undergoing a gradual process of individualization. It had had direct and indirect impacts on their perception of family solidarity and collective decision making. In two cases (e.g. Stelmach and Raczkowski Families) migrants had already completed their emancipations from familial subordination by focusing on their own goals and by refusing to support not only stayers but also newcomers.

Regardless of the above it seemed that social capital was the last to change in the course of transnational social remitting. In the typical chain migration (Faist 2000) social and financial support was still essential. It was the issue valued above all others and even when the practices and norms were changing, social capital was always the reference point.

### Findings: Selected Cases

In this part of the article we present three selected cases of migrant families which display some *social remittances* usually combined with economic remittances. We chose Wróblew-

ski, Raczkowski and Osiński Families as illustrative representations of social remitting processes at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These three families have different density and forms of identified *social remittances*.

The social relations between family members and the direction of mailing is presented on the infographics designed for this analysis. In the Wróblewski and Osiński cases we placed the migrant in the centre of the concentric circles which facilitate us with reconstructing not only family composition but also information flows which might circulate social remittances. In the second circle, there are those who were sustaining contacts with the migrant. On the outer circle, there are family members mentioned in the letters but not exchanging letters with the migrant. The direction of arrows in the infographics show the direction of available correspondence.

In Raczkowski family in the inner circle there is the sister who sustained contact with the whole family. In the second circle, there are family members who migrated in different points of time. In this case, letters were not only exchanged between stayers and migrants but also between migrants themselves. On the outer circle there are family members mentioned in the letters but not directly mailing to the migrant. The direction of arrows, the same as in the first two cases, is a direction of available correspondence.

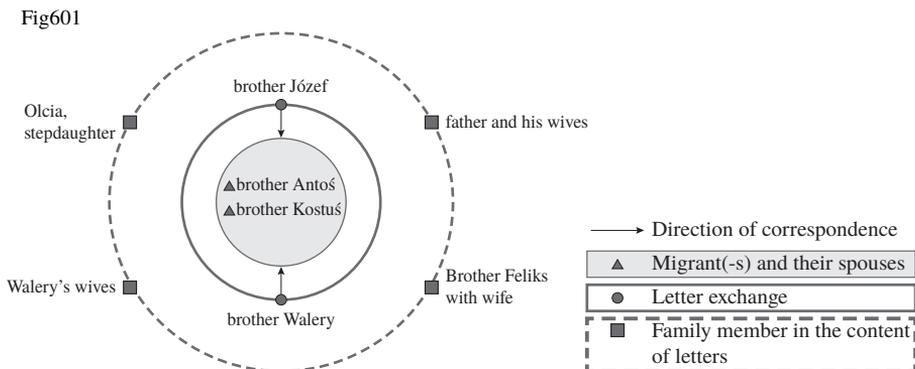
**Wróblewski Family**

The Wróblewski family was the impoverished gentry living in the villages near Białystok (Łapy, Płonka) in Podlasie, in the northern Poland. They were peasants who did not have aspirations for the upward mobility in the local social strata. The poverty seemed not to be the factor of change. We met the family in a moment of time when father was transgressing the rules of intergenerational solidarity. At the same time, his children tried to defend old norms and values. Letters were sent to brothers—Antoś and Kostuś—living in (most likely) San Francisco in the USA by Walery, their brother.

The Wróblewski Family is difficult to classify among other analysed families as the carrier of social remittances was the father not his children. He was not willing to follow

Figure 1

**Mapping Information Flow of the Wróblewski Family**



the generational solidarity. He preferred to get married for the third time, sold his land to the strangers and cut off the blood bonds than passing the land to the sons and living with one of them.

We have called upon him [father] more than once, with Józef, asking him to make some division of the farm, but he got stubborn and refuses to do anything for us (...) if he is determined to waste all this, let him waste it; if his own children are not dear to him, only strange children, for everything there is free to strangers [Walery to migrant brothers; Thomas and Znaniński 1958, 352, letter 31].

Contrary to the father, his children left behind—Walery and Józef, the representatives of young generation, lived according to the traditional rules, where the information was a common good, family members did not have any secrets and the land was the collective family asset.

In the relations between stayers and migrants brothers were trying to maintain the old rules including family solidarity and traditions. Walery, similarly to his migrant brother, felt the family solidarity when Antoś and Kostuś displayed it through sharing the economic remittances, Walery—by investing in family.

As to the money, when I receive it I will as you wrote; I will give 10 roubles to father and will keep by me the remaining 240, or I will put it somewhere until you come back. (...) I have sold also the horse which you bought, for 62 roubles, and I have bought another for 64 roubles [Walery to migrant brothers; Thomas and Znaniński 1958, 335, letter 19].

The circulation of goods is the second aspect to be analysed here. American brothers were sending simple decorations for Easter that were not available in Poland. Antoś and Kostuś took also with them to the USA attachment and devotion and respect to land. They decided to become farmers in the USA. This was the new common ground in brothers' correspondence. They were exchanging seeds and knowledge about crops and livestock which clearly showed the exchange of social practices- parts of the bundles of *social remittances*.

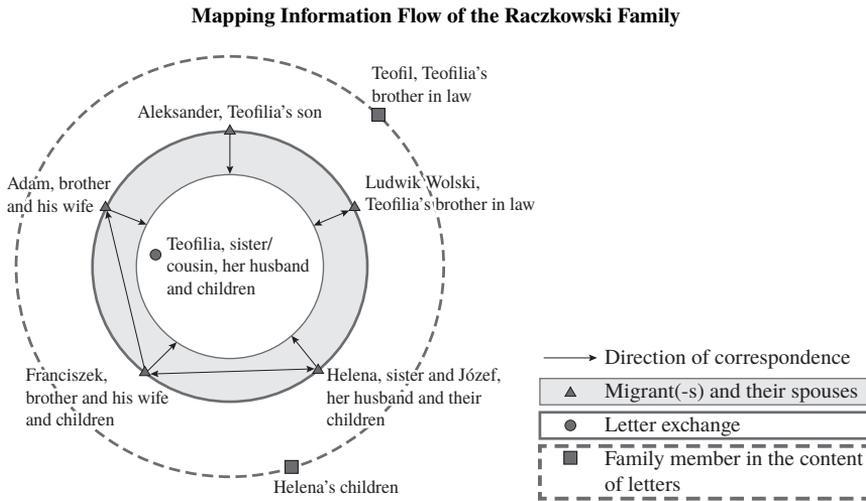
I thank you for your letter. Now it is somewhat clearer to me about America. I learned much from your letters, what grows there, what are the prices, and in which locality you are settled [Walery to migrant brothers; Thomas and Znaniński 1958, 367, letter 45].

This correspondence might change Walery's and Józef's ways of acting as a farmers. American seeds (pop-corn, cotton) got introduced to the Polish soil. He also learnt about different farming methods which might be applicable to the local practices.

#### *Raczkowski Family*

The Raczkowki Family is the only case, out of ten analysed, in which correspondence was sent from migrants to stayers and between migrants. We met them during the process of assimilation to American values and practices but various family members were on different stages of this process. The older the member was, the less culturally assimilated she or he appeared. The Raczkowski family came from different parts of Poland, including Masovian district (Przasnysz) and Greater Poland (Leszno). The letters were sent to Ansonia, Wilmington, Del. (Adam Raczkowski) and to Union City, Conn. (Helena Brylska/Dąbrowska). Several families of their kinship network members, namely Franciszek Raczkowski, son of

Figure 2



peasants and his brother Adam, Helena Brylska/Dąbrowska, their sister, Aleksander, her nephew, and others migrated to America. The family combo in the USA was almost as big as the one remaining in Poland. The connections between them suggested the existence of a classical kinship network with strengths and weaknesses. Having such a unique research material, it was possible to reconstruct potential *social remittances* relating to social capital, norms and practices.

In the Raczkowski Family the solidarity had started already transforming before the migratory moves of the family members. For some members it was still the most important and fundamental family norm one should always obey (Franciszek Raczkowski, Helena Brylska and Aleksander Wolski), for some it was a burden (Ludwik Wolski) and for others it was an outdated norm but one could be generous and could offer some help to the family members (Adam Raczkowski). According to Thomas and Znaniecki (1918/1976) this depends on the personality type and adaptation to the American lifestyle. The more, one was living up to it, the less familial solidarity one showed.

The family support was displayed when the new members of the community came to the USA. Migrants paid for the tickets, tried to organise education or work and gave board and lodging to the newcomers. In Helena Brylska's case it was also a way of gratitude to sister Teofila. The sister was caring of Helena's children when she had migrated. It lasted for a few years: mother was sending money and sister was responsible for childrearing. So when Teofila's son—Aleksander—decided to migrate to the USA, Helena offered help.

You ask me, sister, to send you money. I have some dollars with me, but now I have no work, and I am also looking around me [I am careful] because I do not know what will become of me during the carnival. (...) As to those several hundred dollars that I have with brother, on that house which he bought, he will not give them back at once because he has no money no [Adam Raczkowski, migrant writing to Teofilia, his staye sister; Thomas and Znaniecki 1958, 728, letter 397].

The similar situation was between brothers from Raczkowski Family. Franciszek Raczkowski helped Adam to settle in America. He and his wife bought him the clothing from

the head down. Adam 'repaid the debt' by helping Franciszek in purchasing a house. This meant he did not have any funds to share with stayers.

It is worth saying that not all members of Raczkowski Family saw it the same way. For Ludwik Wolski familial solidarity was a burden which he rejected along kinships relations. He broke the contact with the family and he was not willing to help anybody.

The individualization is a process which can be observed among the youngest members of a given migrating community. There were some cases of Helena's sons displaying the on-going process of individualisation. After a few years spent with their aunt in Poland they migrated to the USA and started attending the local school. During this time they had stopped being subordinate to their mother and as a result the mother lost her authority. On the one hand it might be linked with her tough personality and discipline. On the other hand, it seemed that before migration the authority was connected mainly with the age and social position in the local strata and after migration the power of it and social control ceased with the geographical distance. When Helena's sons became financially independent, they left home and redefined relations with the mother. The role of American school cannot be underestimated in this process with the empowerment of a pupil.

The younger generation of Polish peasants did not feel the familial solidarity and took for granted very quickly the limited social control in America. In new circumstances they could live their lives almost unsupervised. Even though that thanked to this family solidarity their migration and chance for better life were possible. It may be interpreted as a generational gap and clash that might spill over to stayers left behind.

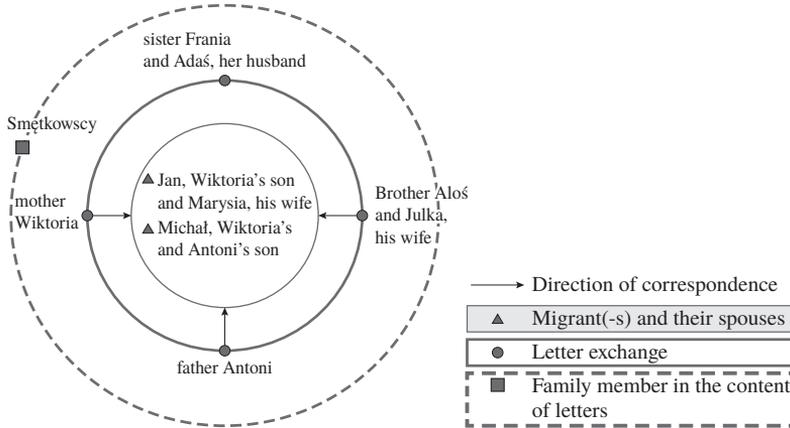
#### *Osiński Family*

The Osiński Family was a peasant family living near Toruń (Lasoty, Rypin and Dobrzyń) in Kuyavia district. The readers met the family during the time of the on-going family transformation. The older generation still lived up to peasant rules, norms and practices. They valued land, family and collective solidarity. However, the financial situation did not allow them to live up to all the traditions, including the assurance of a dowry, and the younger generation was forced to migrate and searched for the economic stability somewhere else. This family had not yet managed to develop the new organization. The letters were mostly dictated by Wiktoria Osińska, the illiterate mother and written by her daughter—Frانيا and sent firstly to Jan and later passed to Michał, migrants in the USA. The contents are quite rich, showcasing the circulation of social remittances. Some of the Osiński Family members were mostly remitting social capital and traditional norms to the USA but at the same time some of them were transferred back to Poland some practices and norms elaborated below.

In the Osinski's Family the older son Jan was firstly nominated to migration. He settled in the USA, found a wife and offered family a help in resettling to the USA. The only younger brother Michał decided to reunite with Jan. From the very beginning Jan helped him in finding a job and settling without obstacles. Migrant-brother offered also some help to Aleksander, step-brother but parents did not agree. They had been working to pass the farm to their children and if all sons migrated, there would be nobody to inherit it. For this reason they did not let the third son to leave for the USA. Clearly Jan followed the familial solidarity which was highlighted by his financial remittances.

Figure 3

## Mapping Information Flow of the Osinski Family



We thank you nicely for 10 roubles. You wrote us, dear son, that we might make [from this money] a better tree (...) and make ourselves merry during this holidays. (...) This money has been of use to us, for we were owing 8 roubles to the carpenter, so your father gave them back at once [mother to Jan, migrant son; Thomas and Znaniecki 1958, 404, letter 73].

Jan sent money to Poland with and without dispositions. The family decided to repay the debts and invested in Frania—younger sister's education which showed the will to educate the young women also due to the absence of her male siblings, that time to be usually prioritized for education. Jan suggested spending his economic remittances for Christmas festivities, for extra payments to hired workers and as a dowry for Frania. It definitely helped family in its everyday life, however Christmas or extra payment for workers might be considered as extravagance. Nonetheless family followed Jan's instructions.

The Polish peasants were usually not used to take loans in the financial institution unless a mortgage was a support in purchasing a piece of land. In smaller cases some of them practiced usually informal private-person based usury (*lichwa*). Majority of peasants based their purchases in Poland usually on family savings. Those peasants who left for America started using the instrument of mortgage to facilitate the fulfilment of life goals like purchasing the land. Michał was one of them who bought a farm in the USA. The process of remitting seemed to circulate in this family case. The son had taken with him the peasant style of earning a living and exported to his family the idea of mortgage. The outcome of connection of these two practices was the approval for the institutional loans to purchase the land also in Poland.

Many gifts that were exchanging between Poland and USA may also be considered as *social remittances* because they were getting new social meanings as a result of these transfers. Peasants missed the Polish traditions and stayers helped the migrants in sustaining the Polish rituals by sending artefacts. For instance Jan and Michał received from their parents and siblings some traditional Christmas items, like Christmas wafer or dried flowers. Through letters they also shared best wishes, blessings but also pictures of local saints, saint crosses and traditional local folk items.

I, your sister, dear brother Jan, thank you heartily for your gift and for your noble heart. You sent me a token, which keeping it with care, I can have for my whole life [Frانيا, to Jan, migrant brother; Thomas and Znaniecki 1958, 431, letter 109].

I inform you that I send you a small cross through [our cousin], for you wrote, dear brother, , that I would be the first [to send you a token] [Frانيا, to Jan, migrant brother; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1958, 432, letter 110].

The marriage as a norm in the Osinski Family was a significant issue. In their letter exchanges marriages of family members were elaborated many times. It was also a good topic for gossiping and for sustaining the contacts and transnational ties as a result. The older generation wrote about its importance in one's life, while younger generation focused on the practicalities like finding a wife, getting married and attending wedding ceremonies. Jan was trying to connect this two perspectives. He was getting married without consulting this with his parents, however he asked them for a symbolic, distant blessing. They fulfilled his wish as they did not have any other option. Marriage was no longer a collective family choice. The geographical distance made it more an individual decision.

### Concluding Remarks

The analysis presented in this article brings us to the concluding remarks relating to the *social remittances* embedded in *transnational family ties* of the time of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* as recorded by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918/1976). In this article we made a retrospective trip through the transnational social space of migrant families. We tried to reconstruct the transnational family ties and to catalogue the local forms of cultural diffusion driven by migration. We bundled them, followed by Levitt (1998, 2001), into *social remittances* relating to: the systems of practices, the normative structures of norms and values and social capital as a kind of a conveyor of *social remittances*.

The Polish peasants in Thomas and Znaniecki's seminal work ([1918]1976) were usually introducing and transferring new social practices as *social remittances*. They related to: marriage as an individual choice of a spouse without a family collective decision; work—by choosing waged labour, which was not the case in Poland before, also with the income aiming to fulfil individual needs and life goals; gender roles through an appearance of women independence and gradual quest for renegotiation of a traditional, patriarchal division of labour in the household. It does not mean, however, that migrants fully dropped the traditional practices of the origin country. In many cases they maintained the traditional customs fusing them with Western ideas.

The normative systems were also undergoing changes and were impacted by international migration of family members. As a result of migration marriage became an individual issue not an element of a collective family decision. Furthermore, gender roles in a household were changing due to everyday needs connected mostly to women's waged work outside of a household. Moreover, more individualised notions of money and property came into being. Peasants started considering money and property as 'theirs' not 'ours.' Also, information became a private and not a collective family issue anymore. These are exemplifications of wider processes of individualization which were transforming conventional familial normative systems.

Last but not least, the nature of social capital changed. Social capital was the conveyor for *social remittances*. Migrants needed the support from those who stayed, and those who stayed needed the support of those who migrated. The migration chain needed stable and predictable resources of social capital which were used in order to leave a village, to settle abroad but also to support and instruct family members who left behind in the Polish villages.

If we compare the contemporary situation, after the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007, to the period of the *Polish Peasant* important things have changed, such as: (1) the means of communication, including the speed of delivery (from postal letters and parcels to instant communication in the real time); (2) selectivity of migrants: in the past they recruited themselves predominantly from peasant classes, contemporarily they represent all social strata, including the first generation of new post-communist middle classes.

It is also worth highlighting, however, that clearly important migratory patterns and behaviours have remained. It means that similar settings, including rather free movement of people, wage differences, opportunities for better life at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are still valid for the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They still drive modern migratory flows which paradoxically, as in the case of Poland, have remained at the proximate level of 2.2 million of people who left Poland both at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Zaretsky 1984) and 2.4 million of Poles being on the move since the EU enlargement in 2004 (CSO 2015).

Bringing into this analysis the concept of *social remittances* allowed us to pin the analysis down to the meso level of local communities and families and observe both resistance and openness to changes affected by migration. Families are both collective and intimate spaces which facilitated our understanding of migratory impacts in relation to norms, values, practices and social capital. In both periods of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> and of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries we observed that changes in the family systems, mostly in relation to values and norms, have already started before migration and spatial moves only highlighted and accelerated these processes. The most visible aspects of family life which clearly got affected by migration were family practices which we were able to capture to some extent in the letters documented by Thomas and Znaniecki (Buler and Grabowska 2017).

Social practices refer to the relations of people with the social order and they are located on the continuum from resistance to change. Although contemporary world brought many technological developments which affect family practices in general, family system allows in both periods for: (1) a gradual introduction of new practices brought with migratory experiences, (2) correcting and improving existing practices as a result of migration. The more down-to-earth practices are easier to be incorporated and implemented into family life which seems to be a universal finding over time (cf. Levitt 1998).

*Social remittances* travel in bundles both ways between an origin and a destination. It means that both Polish peasants and contemporary post-accession migrants influence people and social places they encounter in the destinations. They also return as people with new experience to their origins which again do not stay unchanged. They are also in social flux. These processes contribute to social changes in both sending and receiving societies.

This article manifests that classics can be not only referenced ritualistically but also read in-depth with a new conceptual and methodological gazes. The revisiting of early migra-

tion thoughts and findings with contemporary concepts brings new comparisons and new commentaries to migration processes. Reaching for classics such Thomas and Znaniecki's *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* allowed us to discover the preceding passages of migration history and to revitalise the preliminary knowledge about human moves and social change. With this analysis we agree with above mentioned Portes's (2001) approach to 'Merton's fallacy of adumbration.' The contemporary concept of *social remittances* allowed us to uncovering the remitting of normative systems of values and norms, practices and social capital described in the *Polish Peasant*. Definitely *social remittances* existed in the past but were not seen this way and therefore they make new analytical discoveries visible (Smith 2003).

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