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## Polish Graduates: Migration and Its Media Representations

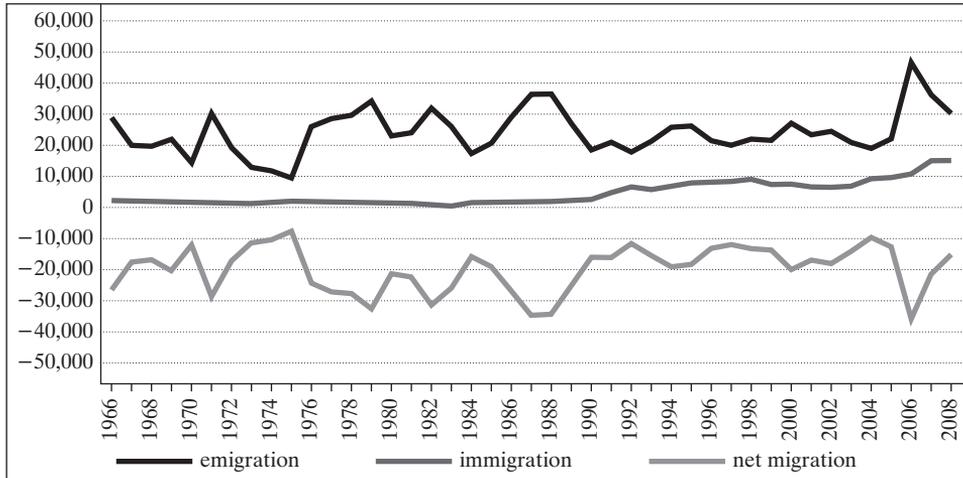
*Abstract:* The aim of the paper is to present the results of research into the dominant media discourses on post-accession migration within the context of the economic and socio-cultural situation of Polish University graduates. The first part of the article—based on an analysis of statistical data and recent studies—relates to the historical context of the educational boom in the late 1990s that led to the ‘devaluation of the degree diploma’, an increase in unemployment and increased numbers of tertiary-level educated Poles leaving Poland post 2004. The second part relates to the media debate on young migrants understood as a significant sphere (Jeffrey Alexander) in the construction of ‘common knowledge’ on migration and the ‘trigger’ transferring particular issues of migration into the ‘civic sphere’. This part is based on an extensive content analysis of migration representations as seen in four weekly magazines between 2004 and 2012 and a narrative analysis of two TV series: ‘Londyńczycy’ and ‘Wyjechani’. The media debate includes such issues as: young migrants’ careers abroad, cultural capital accumulation/waste, family break-ups, and the effects of migration at a local and national level. The analysis reveals the interplay between media representations/narratives and popular academic conceptualizations of the effect of migration on young graduates: the ‘crowding out hypothesis’ (Okólski) and double-marginalization (Iglicka) which are a part of the ‘brain waste *versus* brain gain’ discourse. The analysis reveals the main mechanisms of media representations: idealization (American Dream pattern of migrants’ careers), dramatization leading to ‘moral panics’ (Euro-orphans, family break-ups) and negotiation with the dominant conceptualizations in the ‘civic sphere’ (‘U-shape’ migrants’ careers).

*Keywords:* post-accession migration, graduates, media, representation, narrative, crowding-out

### Individual and Structural Perspectives on Migration

On the May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 Poland together with other nine countries joined the European Union. This historical moment meant new opportunities for hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens; young graduates being one specific category. After 25 years of transformation in Poland one can see a new generation of Poles: dynamic, open-minded, with high aspirations and expectations, raised in a free democratic country with a developing market economy yet with shrinking opportunities in the labour market. The estimate of over 1.3 million (around 3.5% of the whole population) Poles leaving for abroad after 2004 makes this outflow one of the biggest and most dynamic of the last 50 years. This fact is reflected even in those official statistics which dramatically underestimate the number of migrants by collecting information only on citizens who deregistered from their place of registered residence for a permanent move abroad. According to the statistics, net migration in 2006 was around 45 thousand (Figure 1),

Figure 1  
**Emigration, immigration and net migration between 1966 and 2008**



Source: Central Statistics Office (GUS), *Główne kierunki emigracji i imigracji w latach 1966–2008*.

a figure comparable only to the short period of 1987–1988 (the so-called ‘Solidarity migration’).<sup>1</sup>

The huge outflow from Poland within just 10 years has resulted in migration becoming quite a significant subject for public debate, a popular topic of media productions as well as the realm of everyday conversation. Nowadays it is virtually impossible to find any Pole who, if not having migrated themselves, does not have a relative, friend or colleague living abroad. Even though Poland has for decades been traditionally a country of emigration<sup>2</sup> one can notice that the recent migratory streams are occurring within the unprecedented context of European free movement and possess new characteristics and specific patterns. One of them is the mass nature of the outflow and its deep effect on the social consciousness of Polish society as a whole thanks to the media and the presence of the issue within the public sphere. What so called ‘common people’ do know on migration is quite often an effect of interrelated factors such as: their own subjective experiences, interactions with other members of society and their orientation with regard to media narratives, political and economic spheres. Such common knowledge has to be structured, according to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), in the form of types and to be commonly shared so that it could be applicable in everyday life and provide for a sense of meaning within human activity.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Central Statistics Office (GUS) 2013.

<sup>2</sup> It has been changing now, however, according to the Central Statistics Office the number of immigrants in Poland between 1966 and 2008 has risen significantly from 2,228 to 15,275; the numbers refer only to legal immigrants, source: Central Statistics Office (GUS) 2010.

It is possible to analyze the issue of migration from two opposing perspectives, which stand for two points on a wider axis. The first perspective leads researchers to focus on the everyday ‘lived’ experiences of those who migrate. The main question in this approach is the question of the inter-subjective meaning of the migratory process for the actor and the way the whole process is constructed in the form of an individual’s conceptual map. One can find it useful in this phenomenological perspective of migration studies to apply two of Alfred Schütz’s metaphorical figures—the *Stranger* and the *Homecomer* (1944, 1943). The figure of the *Stranger* evokes a wide field of study over the situation of migrants within a radically new socio-cultural environment; whereas the figure of the *Homecomer* brings to light the enormous and in fact impossible process of migrants’ re-adaptation after their return to the home country. These fields can be explored from a micro, individual perspective through qualitative, in-depth research.

The opposite perspective—that dominant in the social sciences—is the macro-structural approach within which the researcher seeks the understanding of the process of migration in its institutionalized, functional sense in relation to structures and systems (economy, society, culture, politics, power, etc.). Jeffrey Alexander argues that the division of macro and micro studies is merely a question of perspective. Talking about social structure includes both: the individual and their positioning within the structure and vice-versa (2005). In Alexander’s project of cultural sociology the most significant concept is the notion of the ‘sphere’. The sphere can be understood as a functional system within a society with its own rituals, rules, values and ‘language’. Spheres like politics, economy and media are interrelated with the civic sphere which brings to light some critical mechanisms of other spheres and may lead to social repair.

In our study we will answer the question about the media representations of the recent migration of young educated people from Poland and the significant role it played in the construction of social consciousness. The study can be deemed an analysis of Alexander’s media sphere. We pose the thesis that the media narratives focus mainly on the negative aspects and effects of migration with regard to its macro-structural effects and the positive in relation to the micro-individual dimension.

### **Young Graduates and the Labour Market. Crowding out Hypothesis**

The causes for the outcome of a large number of young Polish, especially, well-educated migrants after 2004 need to be discussed in the context of the complex structural changes after 1989—the year the communist regime in Poland collapsed. Polish transformation has been multi-dimensional in character including radical shifts in politics (communism vs. democracy), economy (planned economy vs. free market), society and culture (transformation towards a civic society)—with most of them being traumatic (Sztompka 2000, Alexander et al. 2004). The quick emergence of the private enterprise sector even if most of these enterprises were family-run businesses (Skąpska 2002), was to become the base for an emerging Polish middle class with its typical drive for a good but ‘applicable’ education. What is striking is the educational boom

experienced in Poland in the late 1990s. The number of higher educational institutions increased quickly and the number of students tripled. The reason for this rapid educational boom was obvious—a tertiary level education could lead to a significantly higher income. The income gap between tertiary-level educated people and those with no university degree—a state of affairs significant in the early 1990s underwent a process of shrinking and in 2004 we can observe the phenomenon of the ‘devaluation of a university degree’ in Poland (Domański 2010). This phenomenon means that there is little or no correlation between the level of education and potential income. The number of well-educated (tertiary education) people in the structure of the unemployed in Poland is seven times larger now when compared to 15 years ago. In 1999 only 2% of those unemployed possessed a higher degree whereas in 2013 this share was 15% (Table 1).

Table 1

**Number of third-level educated people in the structure of unemployed in 1999–2014 (in thousands)**

Year	Total number of unemployed	Number of third level educated unemployed	Percentage of third level educated in the structure of unemployed	Official unemployment rate (%)
1999	2350	47	2.0	15.3
2000	2703	70	2.6	16.0
2001	3115.1	100	3.2	18.5
2002	3217	125	3.9	19.7
2003	3176	140	4.4	19.6
2004	2997	150	5.0	19.6
2005	2773	153	5.5	17.6
2006	2076	206	9.9	14.8
2007	1894	198	10.5	11.2
2008	1154	144	12.5	9.5
2009	1471	216	14.7	12.1
2010	1649	224	13.6	12.4
2011	1750	267	15.3	12.5
2012	1757	286	16.3	13.4
2013	1846	286	15.5	13.4

Source: years 1999–2005: GUS, *Little Statistical Yearbook*, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004; years 2006–2014: GUS, *Badanie aktywności ekonomicznej ludności (BAEL)*, IV kwartał.

Post-accession migration was not to change this tendency mainly as a result of the rapid and significant growth in the number of graduates from Polish universities. In ten years between 2001 and 2011 the number of graduates rose on average by an annual 6%. In 2001 there were 304,000 graduates in Poland whereas in 2011—485,000 (GUS 2001, 2002, 2003, 2011) (Table 2, Figure 2). This trend was to change in 2012, when the number of graduates declined as a result of the demographic process of Poland’s ageing society. Since then universities have begun to experience huge difficulties in the recruitment of new students, with some private universities and departments closing.

Table 2

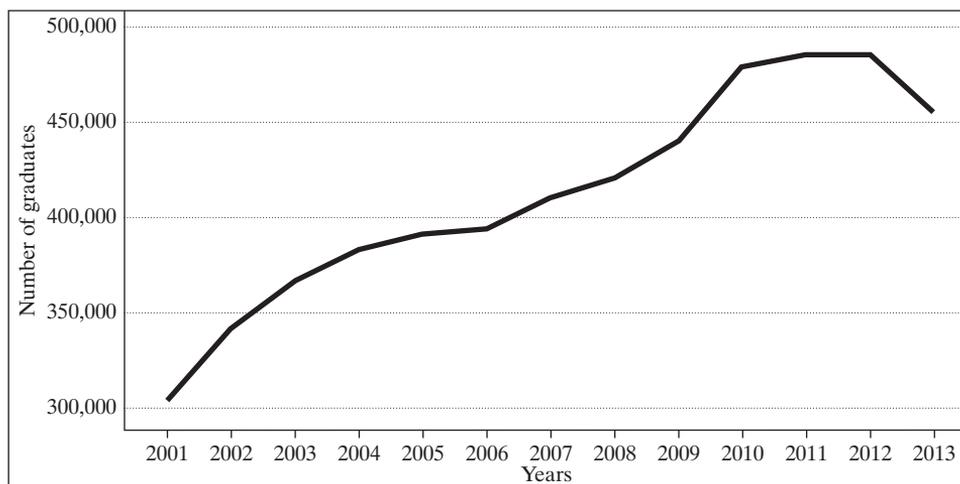
**The number of university graduates between 2004–2011 (graduates of all types of third level institutions)**

Year	Number of Graduates	Increase (2001 = 100)
2001	304,000	100
2002	342,100	113
2003	366,100	120
2004	382,851	126
2005	391,465	129
2006	393,968	130
2007	410,107	135
2008	420,942	138
2009	439,749	145
2010	478,916	158
2011	485,246	160
2012	485,200	160
2013	455,000	150

Source: years 2004–2011: GUS, *Szkoły wyższe i ich finanse w latach 2004–2011*; years 2001–2003: GUS, *Little Statistical Yearbook of 2001, 2002, 2003*.

Figure 2

**The number of university graduates between 2004–2011 (graduates of all types of third level institutions)**



Source: years 2004–2011: GUS, *Szkoły wyższe i ich finanse w latach 2004–2011*; years 2001–2003: GUS, *Little Statistical Yearbook of 2001, 2002, 2003*.

As a consequence of the educational boom that began in the late 1990s the number of Poles with higher education degree almost doubled. In 2002—9.9% of the whole population possessed university degree whereas in 2011—17% of Poles were graduates of tertiary institutions of education. In 2003 almost a half of graduates (157.9 thousand) were registered as unemployed. The reason for the high level of unemployment among young graduates is not simply the effect of the low demand for

educated people in the labour market but chiefly the inadequate profile of the higher education provided in Poland. The specifics of Polish university education have been for a long time a high proportion of humanities students and too theoretical, academic syllabi whereas a dynamically developing economy requires highly qualified technical staff in sectors such as IT, engineering, new technologies and the biotechnologies. Given such a catastrophic graduate situation with regard to the labour market the Polish Ministry of Higher Education provided a whole package of systematic changes to transform the system of higher education so that it would be more market-oriented and suitable for a model of economy based on applicable knowledge.

On the eve of Poland's accession to the European Union, in 2003, the rate of unemployment in Poland was around 20% and was to fall successively till 2008 (9.5%)—the year of the economic crisis and was subsequently to rise again to 13.4% in 2013 (Tab. 1). The huge outflow of labour is generally seen as the cause of Poland's lower unemployment rate. Among those who migrated was a rising number of graduates escaping the unemployment situation. Whereas in the years 1999–2003 the average share of graduates in the structure of those who unregistered for permanent residency abroad was around 1%, in 2004 this share was 4.3% and in 2005—8.5% (Tab. 3). Izabela Grabowska-Lusińska and Marek Okólski have estimated that the general share of migrants with a higher degree was before accession around 10% whereas after accession—16.5% (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2009: 101).

Table 3

**The number of individuals deregistered for permanent move abroad  
with the share of university degree holders**

Year	Number of deregistered	Number of people with third level education	Percentage of people with third level education
1999	23,561	300	1.3
2000	29,531	322	1.1
2001	25,183	277	1.1
2002	25,929	221	0.9
2003	20,813	228	1.1
2004	18,877	806	4.3
2005	22,242	1886	8.5
2006	46,936	—	—
2007	35,480	—	—
2008	30,140	—	—
2009	18,620	—	—
2010	17,360	—	—
2011	19,858	—	—
2012	21,200	—	—
2013	32,103	—	—

Source: GUS, *Migracje na pobyt stały zagraniczny według typu i wieku migrantów*, NTS-2, years: 2004–2013; GUS, *Migracje na pobyt stały zagraniczne według typu i wykształcenia migrantów*, NTS-2, years: 1999–2005.

The opportunity of free movement and an open labour market initially in Ireland, the UK and Sweden was seen as a godsend by thousands of young (not only graduate)

Poles, who even if employed in Poland could expect salaries 6 times lower than those abroad.<sup>3</sup>

The economic reason for ‘young migration’, however crucial, does not explain the dynamics of the recent streams of migration. One should focus on the socio-cultural dimension, which is changing dramatically and rapidly, to fully understand this phenomenon. The new generation of Poles born after 1989, growing up in an environment of new communication technologies, compares their situation to their counterparts in western countries. Young graduates grew up in a society undergoing a changing model of the family (partnership, a rising number of divorces, alternative relationships), secularization and new alternative lifestyles. Besides these characteristics, this is a deeply divided society. The division does not end at the level of economic discrepancies but goes deep into the core values shared by the members of Polish society. Part of Polish society appears to be deeply rooted into the past, strongly fighting for traditional values and a traditional way of life. The other part of society is enthusiastically looking for new post-materialist values such as an alternative lifestyle, self-realization, individual development, a career and natural environment. Such a set of changes might be seen as a shift from the public into the individualistic, private sphere where the public became more and more commercialized.<sup>4</sup> Between the two points of the division there is wide scope for hybrid attitudes. The hybridity is well-illustrated in the academic debate about the Polish intelligentsia—the historical social category which developed in the nineteenth century at the time of Polish uprisings against its aggressors. The specific ethos of the Polish intelligentsia formed between the two world wars included such values as: high level of education, patriotism, honour, self-development, a social mission and leadership, active participation in cultural life. Some researchers argue that the former Polish intelligentsia transformed itself into the present-day middle class with an alternative ethos under the market economy. Hanna Palska reveals in her research that in fact within the construction of today’s category of the young and well-educated there exists a kind of hybridity (Palska 2008). Young people to some extent want to and do continue some of the elements of the ‘intelligentsia’ ethos but in the same time they feel the urge to adapt to the new environment of a market economy by applying those new values typical for the middle classes of old western countries.

In the case of the young generation of Poles one cannot underestimate their search for a new identity as a citizen of Europe. This search is based on the need for alternative lifestyles, ones not limited to the traditional patriarchal society with the continually strong influence of the Catholic Church, and politics viewed as a cynical fight for power and money. Migration in search of an alternative lifestyle or simply ‘lifestyle migration’ affording new post-materialist values, patterns of behavioural norms, the ethos of work and study is seen as very attractive for young people. These are the core characteristics that allow one to talk of a ‘new’ young Polish migration.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2004 the average salary in Poland was 175.25 euro whereas in Ireland 1073.63 euro (Source: Eurostat)

<sup>4</sup> In the diagnosis of Piotr Gliński the dominant type of culture in Poland is the culture of commercialization within which there are a lot of enclaves such as ‘intellectualism’, ‘escapism’, ‘the connoisseur’, which do not take part within the mainstream culture, source: Gliński 2010, pp. 44–81.

Social analyses and diagnoses of the post-accession migration appear to be ambivalent in relation to its effects. From the prism of modernization theory the outflow of significant number of ‘useless’ cohorts especially from rural areas can be seen as an asset. The ‘crowding-out’ hypothesis promoted by Marek Okólski (2012) states that the depopulation of underdeveloped rural areas and migrant transfers speed up a country’s modernization. On the other hand, an analysis of the situation of young migrants on the labour market leads to the opposite conclusion. Krystyna Iglicka argues that young graduates leaving Poland have to take up low-paid McJobs in the secondary sector of the economies of western EU members (Iglicka 2010). This situation results in a loss of their academic qualifications and skills. What is more, in the case of their return migration to Poland, they are doubly-marginalized on the domestic labour market. As a result of many years spent abroad they are no longer qualified for a proper job in Poland. Alternative studies which are part of the brain drain—brain waste—brain gain debate based on the theory of cultural capital and social remittances—reveal that young migrants are quite active actors on the foreign labour market following a ‘U-shape’ type of career. The first months abroad they work in the so-called ‘3D’ sector, but this period of time is seen as essential for learning the language, acquiring new skills and professional competences to gain a better, professional job appropriate to their educational level (Dzięglewski 2013). The question on the transferability of accumulated cultural capital and its impact on the modernization of the country seem to be the most significant challenge for future migration studies.

Recent research indicates that unexpectedly one did not observe a spectacular, massive flow of return migration as a result of the economic crisis in the EU in 2008. Research conducted by Peter Mühlau in Ireland indicates that the earnings and employment status of Polish migrants—especially in higher wage categories—seem to be very stable (2012). Difficulties with employment were experienced mainly by those working in manual, temporary positions in the construction industry. Even if many migrants did lose their jobs abroad they decided to stay on in the host country with some support from the local social security benefit systems.

### **Young Migrants in Weekly Magazines and Soap Operas**

The sphere of the media plays in Jeffrey Alexander’s theory the specific role of the trigger—bringing to the light of the civic sphere some aspects of social life devoted to the rules of a given particular sphere—politics, the economy, the church etc. Representations of post-accession migration and migrants in the media have placed within the social consciousness some of its—mainly negative—aspects causing a ‘moral panic’ effect. In our study we focused on the press debate in the main weekly magazines in Poland (*Newsweek*, *Polityka*, *Wprost*, *Gość Niedzielny*) analyzing 172 articles for the period of 2004–2012 together with two popular TV operas: the soap opera ‘Londyńczycy’ (2008–2009) and docu-soap ‘Wyjechani’ (2006). The first part of the research is based on the classical content analysis of over 172 articles on post-accession migration. The second part of the research is based on a narrative analysis of 29 episodes of

‘Londyńczycy’ and 33 episodes of ‘Wyjechani’. The basic analytical unit in this part of the research has been the narrative of the life trajectory of the characters presented in both series, in which we identified 59 migrant characters (16 in ‘Londyńczycy’ and 43 in ‘Wyjechani’). Among many research questions on the representation of the socio-cultural effects of migration from the individual, local and macro-structural perspective, we addressed the question of such issues as: the migrants’ adaptation process, career, cultural capital, identity (ethnic and co-ethnic relations), lifestyle and values.<sup>5</sup>

In the content analysis of the articles we used a coding frame consisting of 3 groups of codes (macro, mezzo and micro perspective) relating to the research questions mentioned above. All the articles have been coded in QDA Miner software. The application—among many complex functionalities—allowed us to assign the main variables to each article: the magazine title, year of publication, main topic and genre of publication. The quantitative part of the analysis allowed us to reveal a pattern in the dynamics of the press debate, differences in the representations of migration between the analysed magazines and the focus on specific topics and perspectives (frequency of codes). The qualitative—the most important part of the research—has been based on an in-depth analysis and categorization of the data within the given code as well as analysis of the links between the various codes.

The narrative analysis of the two series has covered two levels: the audio and the visual. As the analytical unit in the research has been the narrative of a character’s life trajectory, parts of the audio transcripts from each episode have been assigned to identified characters and then coded with the same coding frame as the one used in the press analysis. In the second part of data analysis we used notes taken while watching the series. The notes have been taken in the form of bullet points reflecting the sequence of each character life trajectory (sequence of turning points).

The press debate over migration has its own dynamics. The number of articles on migration increased rapidly after 2004 being at its biggest in 2006—the year of the most numerous labour outflow from Poland, subsequently slowly diminishing to just a few articles in 2012. The debate in various years has its own ‘temperature’ and specific topics that dominate. For the years 2004–2005 journalists focused on speculations and expectations connected to the new opportunities as well as the first experiences of Polish migrants. In the years 2006–2007 authors turned their attention to various problems connected to migration: the psychological, social, economic and tried initially to draw up a balance of migratory benefits and losses. In the years 2008–2009 many articles were about the symptoms of the economic crisis and the awaited return migration; whereas for 2010–2012 one can observe the gradual disappearance of migratory topics in weekly magazines. Overall, the journalistic ‘grand narrative’ covers the whole process of migration beginning with the expectations, first experiences through the difficult times of adaptation and economic crisis to the final settling in the host country or return migration (Dzięglewski 2011: 160). The ‘temperature’ and tone of the debate change over time. In the first two years the tone of the articles

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<sup>5</sup> A detailed report from the research has been published in: Dzięglewski 2011, pp. 147–188.

is speculative but optimistic if not enthusiastic whereas the final years present a more dramatic and negative vision of migration.

There is a significant difference between the article which cover the issue of migration from the macro-structural perspective (sending country and host country) and the individual—micro perspective. In the first case migration is mainly seen as a dangerous, negative process, generating mainly troubles with few benefits. Among the many troubles experienced by the sending country as a result of migration one can chiefly identify:

- the increase of ‘migratory delinquency’ such as fake employment agencies sending people to illegal ‘work camps’, human trafficking and prostitution,
- the weakening of family ties leading to break-ups, Euro-orphans (children whose parents, either one or both, left for abroad and who are cared for by their grandparents, other family members or social security institutions),
- brain drain (the departure of medical staff),
- the extra burden for Polish institutions abroad (embassies) which have to deal with the rising number of homeless Polish migrants,
- demographic loss—depopulation.

Most of the topics are of a sensational nature and some of them have a huge potential for moral panic. The journalistic dramatized discourse is interrelated with academic discourse visible in the form of interviews with researchers (sociologists, psychologists, economists, etc.) and quotations from academic publications.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to the macro-structural perspective—the journalistic narratives on individual migrants allow the reader to be more emphatic and to provide him with a depiction of the experiences of migration as lived. Usually we know the migrant by name/surname, sex, family status, education level, the position he/she holds before and after migration. In 172 articles we identified 394 migrants. Their migratory individual experiences are depicted by journalists in the third person, sometimes their story is quoted literally or paraphrased. Among those whose education is known (65.6% of all the characters)—15.8% are Polish university graduates.

The representation of young migrants from the individual perspective is much more complex and ambivalent than the macro-structural one. They are represented as those who experience serious psycho-social difficulties in the host country but on the other hand—especially in the case of the educated and young—as those for whom migration represents the maximization of cultural capital and for whom multiple benefits come from living abroad.

Among the most frequently noted effects of migration for all migrating individuals when viewed in the context of family life and psychological well-being are:

- family issues (break-ups, Euro-orphans),
- psychological difficulties (stress, constant feeling of uncertainty, depression, homesickness, alienation, loneliness),
- difficulties with adaptation to the new environment,
- the feeling of economic and professional stability,

<sup>6</sup> In 172 articles experts were quoted 124 times. Academic publications were quoted 81 times. Source: [Dzięglewski 2011, p. 169](#).

- the ‘return-home-shock’,
- weakened ties with friends and acquaintances.

The first effect only refers to a limited degree to young graduates as most of them migrate when single or in an informal relationship. The other difficulties depend strongly on the level of language competences and individual predispositions. In journalistic narrative migrants often experience negative feelings like loneliness, homesickness or even depression. Such feelings are quite often mentioned in the case of the very young migrant (migrants’ children, teenagers) or in the case of an older age category (over 50 years old). The level of stress and the feeling of alienation quite often depend on language skills. Young and well-educated migrants with good or excellent language competences find it much easier to adjust to a new environment and make new transnational relationships, therefore they do not feel that alienated. However, migration in press articles is always connected to a weakening of the social ties with friends and one’s peer group in Poland. This is explained as the effect of indirect communication through Skype or the Internet and totally different everyday experiences. Young migrants are represented as very ‘flexible’, easily adjusting to the situation of a constant change of job and living space—changes which older migrants find inconvenient and awkward.

Typical for narratives on young migrants is their declaration of economic—if not professional—stability. Most cases of migrant careers abroad as presented in magazines refer to Polish graduates and students. The careers of highly skilled professionals (mainly medical staff) and other professionals (electricians, nurses) feature less often. Little attention is paid to the unemployed and homeless migrants. Such extensive interest in graduate migrants is understood in the context of transforming the higher education system in Poland, this being inadequate to the requirements of a market economy. From the macro-structural perspective massive migration is seen as a safety valve easing the problem of unemployment among graduates. In order to measure social mobility researchers usually compare an individual’s position at two points in time using standardized occupational classifications such as ISCO and the like. However, to apprehend the novelty in young migrant careers one has to take into account the migrants’ own subjective perception of their social and professional mobility, which is present in articles in the form of quotations. Whereas the career of highly skilled professionals (e.g. a surgeon) is usually presented as a shift from one position in Poland to the same position abroad, the career of graduates is depicted as a social degradation through the prism of standardized classifications but not through the migrant’s own perception.

The migrant perception as verbalized in articles reveals that paradoxically a tertiary level educated individual working as a barman, kitchen porter or receptionist is not perceived as social or professional downward mobility. Journalistic narratives negotiate the arguments in the discourse of brain waste, conceptualizing migration as a gap in the professional career of young migrants doomed to social marginalization abroad and back home in Poland (Iglicka 2010).

In journalistic narratives young migrants working in the ‘McJobs’ sector, in positions below their qualifications, are active actors undertaking extra post-graduate

courses, acquiring new qualifications which will enable them the proper upward mobility in the future. The reason why working below one's qualifications is not seen as social degradation in the eyes of young migrant characters lies in the good income enjoyed (a few times greater than the income in Poland) allowing for a 'decent life'. In journalistic narratives salaries are the proverbial 'golden mean' which resolves all the disadvantages migrants might experience. Only in the case of highly skilled professionals are higher salaries less important in the migrant characters' perception when compared to the revolutionary improvement in working conditions and work culture.

The category of young graduates and students is seen as the main beneficiaries of migration in terms of cultural capital. The most often depicted effect of migration connected to cultural capital providing argumentation for a brain gain rather than brain waste are:

- language competences,
- university degree/research experience,
- individual development (knowledge, hobbies),
- the knowledge of cultural patterns (norms, customs),
- the ethos of work (quality, dedication, honesty, professional development, determination),
- the ethos of study (multidimensional development of interests, easy access to lecturers, fair competition, knowledge as a value, honesty, dedication).

The specific trait in press narration on young migrants is a presentation of the whole process of migration as a specific 'school of life', a period of time in which they can 'find themselves' in real life, learn to be independent and responsible. The process is described as a gradual development of self-confidence and self-agency.

The issue of migrants' identity is crucial in our analysis. The tone and 'temperature' of these representations depends on the journalist's perspective. From the macro-structural perspective negative ones are dominant among narratives on ethnic and co-ethnic relations. Articles on reluctance or open conflict amongst Polish immigrants and the members of the host society prevail over articles on mutual friendship and co-operation. Articles based on the myth of the 'Polish conman' (fake employment agencies, gangs, [Garapich 2012](#)) predominate over those describing mutual co-operation among Polish migrants; however, these articles are quite numerous. From the macro-structural perspective authors depict a lot of the cultural consequences of migration to Poland, mainly:

- the growth of cultural capital,
- shifts in the sphere of socially accepted norms and values,
- formation of transnational identities (European, cosmopolitan),
- the increase in ethnic/national identifications.

In articles based on presentations of individual migrants there are not many direct declarations on the values important for migrants and their identifications. However, these aspects are described in the migrants' behaviour and quotations. A detailed analysis of the text leads one to the conclusion that according to press narratives

migration sustains the identification with a specific ethnic group. The indexes of this phenomenon are:

- the feeling of ‘being proud’ to be Polish expressed by migrants,
- a declared need to sustain national identity,
- attentiveness to ethnic institutions such as the Polish religious parish, the Catholic rituals of Easter and Christmas Eve,
- Polish language, customs, literature,
- strong ties with countrymen, frequent contacts,
- participation in ethnic events.

In the journalistic commentaries to the life trajectories of young migrating individuals one can easily trace the tendency to underline the ‘new’, ‘modern’ system of values and norms which is contrasted to the ‘old’ and ‘traditional’. The new post-materialist values are: individual and professional development, interesting and active life, multiculturalism, freedom understood as the ability to control one’s own destiny or lack of family obligations. Some journalistic narratives of the new lifestyle abroad suggest that young well-educated Poles with excellent language skills easily find a way to integrate with the multicultural environment of those young Europeans whose lifestyle they want to emulate. That kind of narrative is, however, more a journalists’ commentary than a ‘real story’ of migrants. Detailed analysis of the articles’ content reveals that most of the migrant characters are attracted to traditional values such as: family, the Catholic faith, religion, Polish culture and community.

The most important question from the perspective of the brain waste *versus* brain gain debate is the question of return migration, which journalists seek to explore. Among the migrant characters presented one can trace four attitudes towards returning to the home country:

- the intention to stay away from Poland, the feeling of anger towards the home country,
- ‘intentional unpredictability’ (Garapich, Osipovič 2007),
- the intention to return to Poland at an unspecified time,
- the intention to reach a set goal (e.g. the accumulation of savings for a mortgage) and to return back home.

A crucial question on the return migrants’ re-adaptation back home became *terra incognita* in the magazines’ articles. The rare incidence of narratives on return migrants suggests that they experience a kind of ‘return shock’ caused by the immeasurable worsening of their economic situation, difficulties to return to the Polish labour market and—what is even worse—socio-psychological barriers to re-adapt to the behavioural patterns and norms. The *Homecomer* paradox (Schütz 1943) is present at the level of the everyday culture of being, when patterns of tolerance, openness, optimism, activity and friendliness in human relations internalized abroad are seen as odd in the native society.

The TV series were broadcast in 2006 (‘Wyjechani’) and 2008–2009 (‘Londyńczycy’) during two varied periods in the dynamics of press debate as identified by us. Analysing the main topics and ‘temperature’ in the TV series one can see the strong

interrelation between the press and operas. In ‘Wyjechani’ (2006) one can see the same topics as in the press articles for the years 2006–2007: psychological, social and economic difficulties connected with migration. The same tendency can be traced in the analysis of ‘Londyńcy’. The series, which was broadcast at the time of the press debate over the symptoms of the economic crisis (2008) and the awaited return migration, echoes the same issues (the successful return of Paweł and Maria; the treatment of bankruptcy of Darek’s business).

The very nature of docu-soap and soap opera narratives is concentration on individuals and relationships. Through an individual life trajectory one can see broader macro-scale processes. However, these two genres differ a lot. Whereas a TV soap opera focuses on fictional characters and its objective is mainly entertainment, a docu-soap presents real migrants and its objectives are mainly information. Series are directed towards diverse recipients. The distinction between the ‘real’ and ‘fictional’ is being blurred when we consider the fact that the narratives in a docu-soap quite often emulate the structure of soap opera (which is the case of ‘Wyjechani’). On the other hand, the narratives in a soap opera can precisely cover the script of the real story. Taking this into consideration we decided to treat both series as a source of narratives on migrants and migration, which become a part of the social consciousness.

What is surprising in our analysis is the fact that the representations of migrants in TV series are in line with the main socio-demographic trends of post-accession migration, such as:

- the significant share of young people (20–35 years old) among migrants,
- the significant number of graduate migrants,
- the quite sizable number of migrants from small towns and villages,
- the major destinations being the UK and Ireland (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2009).

In ‘Wyjechani’ and ‘Londyńcy’ one can trace the same motifs as in the press debate but they are presented from a different perspective. A soap opera centred on family relations, romance and love affairs, in the case of ‘Londyńcy’—reflects the public debate on family break-ups and migrants’ careers. This motif is often discussed in the narratives of migrants from ‘Wyjechani’ as well, which might not be surprising taking into account the very family-centred nature of Polish culture. The difference between the press debate and the TV series is, however, crucial. Whereas magazine articles show family break-ups as an effect of migration, in many TV narratives break-up is a cause not an effect of migration, a kind of strategy to begin a new life. The intriguing motif of family ties and romance is present in the couples and their children’s life trajectories (Ewa and Marcin from ‘Londyńcy’, Joanna from ‘Wyjechani’). Young graduates usually migrate when single or with their partners with whom they are in non-formalized relationships. In some cases the migration itself is treated as a specific test of the strength of these emotional ties. Living in another socio-cultural environment, away from the pressure of one’s closest family and friends, results in a challenge for the couples. In ‘Londyńcy’ the young couples who left for abroad together split up after just a few months (Asia and Wojtek, Andrzej and Kinga). Whereas the narrative of the life trajectory of migrants in their 30s, 40s and

older to some extent echoes the debate on the devastating effects of migration for the family and Euro-orphans. ‘Londyńcy’ challenge it showing a transnational model of parenthood (Ewa, Marcin and their son—Stasiek) and migration as a life strategy after family break up in Poland (Kasia running away from her psychopath husband). The narratives of young single migrants are often centred on their individual and professional career.

Narratives on migrants’ careers in TV series differ a little from those in the magazine. One can recognize four types of career trajectories:

- U-shaped upward mobility,
- Highly skilled professional,
- American Dream career,
- socio-economic degradation.

The first two types are similar to press narratives, the first one being typical for young graduates. What’s new is the ‘American Dream’ career and socio-economic degradation which did not attract so much attention in the press articles. The American Dream career is a dominant convention in ‘Londyńcy’ (Rostek 2011) as it requires characters who are at the bottom rung of the social ladder. Such characters, thanks to their dedication, hard work, consequence and determination move upwards in the social structure reaching the highest positions. The ideal of meritocracy is present in the career of Paweł—a financial advisor, Andrzej—a businessman and Asia—a make-up artist. One can trace them in some narratives in ‘Wyjechani’ (Marcin—a lawyer in Ireland). Paweł—one of the main characters in ‘Londyńcy’—left Poland before 2004 with no language nor money, just after leaving secondary school. For years he worked illegally as a kitchen porter and saved money for his studies, he graduated from a British university, began his professional job in the financial sector and finally as a very young person became a deputy head of one of the biggest financial institutions in the City.

Andrzej—a Polish university graduate, from a small town, Żory—begins his career as a general operative on a construction site and a barman, set up his own catering company and becomes finally a prospective businessman and municipal councillor. Both characters strongly believe in their own capacities, they know that their future depends on they themselves. They have a strong feeling of self-agency.

Such optimistic narrative is not overshadowed by the story of Marcin—the school teacher who cannot accept his new status abroad as a manual worker or ‘Doktor’—a tertiary educated homeless migrant. A little more attention on the social degradation pattern of careers can be observed in the story of the homeless Roman from ‘Wyjechani’.

What is typical in the representations of young Polish migrants and what counts as a ‘new mobility’ is not just a good job, which allows them a ‘decent life’ but the opportunity to accumulate cultural capital. The main forms of accumulated capital abroad are: language, professional competences, skills, knowledge about foreign behavioural cultural patterns, and the development of personal hobbies and passions. This process is especially typical for young migrants who enjoy professional courses, invest their time in education, and have used to different work and leisure patterns.

Migrants welcome the opportunity to realize their hobbies and dreams, which were not realisable in Poland, such as: travel around the world, setting up one's own radio station, working as a make-up artist (Magda, Arek from 'Wyjechani', Asia from 'Londyńczycy').

While the attitudes of migrant characters in 'Wyjechani' towards their new country are ambivalent, those in 'Londyńczycy' easily learn the British way of life. This tendency can be traced in a conversational informality, smart casual dress and some elements of local celebrations like stag parties. In general, relationships between Polish migrants are presented in a much more positive way than those in the magazine articles. In both series Polish migrants are presented as those who make an effort to socialize and integrate with the locals. Especially, the characters from 'Londyńczycy' can be characterized as ones with strong or very strong relationships with members of the local community.

The positive representation of co-ethnic relations is more prevalent in 'Londyńczycy'. Polish migrants in general try to help one another in various life situations. There are cases of exploitation on the part of co-ethnics but they are incidental (more numerous in 'Wyjechani').

In the representation of the value system the two series differ significantly. Characters from 'Wyjechani' are much more traditional, whereas the characters from 'Londyńczycy'—more post-materialist. Many characters from 'Wyjechani' talk about their faith and engagement in the local parish; they declare such values as home (understood as a family and the homeland), the Catholic faith, children, patriotism and Polish traditions. For 'Londyńczycy' although the family seems to be quite important—what they value most is their individual development, self-actualization which can be traced in the careers of Paweł, Andrzej and Asia. They are much more supportive of post-material values such as equal human rights, tolerance, the right of the individual for self-actualization.

Although most of the characters identify themselves as Polish, their identity strongly depends on the length of their stay and the intention to settle down abroad or to come back to Poland. The identity of migrants who decided to settle down in a host country where they spent more than five years (Piotr, Magda, Roksana, Błażej from 'Wyjechani', Asia and Andrzej from 'Londyńczycy') can be seen as a hybrid. They quite easily switch on and off cultural codes and exist simultaneously in two worlds. The situation of those who want to come back to their home country is paradoxically similar to Schütz' *Homecomer* figure. They do not feel 'at home' when visiting Poland but don't feel 'at home' living abroad either.

In the TV series 'Wyjechani', produced in 2006, there are no scenario for *Homecomers*, however a lot of migrant characters declare their willingness to come back home yet expecting difficulties. The series 'Londyńczycy' includes a happy end story of migrant return in the narrative of Paweł and Maria. They return to Poland with an incredible amount of economic, social and cultural capital which they invest in their own business. Such a 'success story' fills the gap in magazine articles on return migration and is an example of narrative which meets social expectations.

### Conclusions

We may look at migration as a phenomena which might be analyzed from the perspective of an individual life-world (Schütz) or a macro-structural process with its mechanisms which bares significant consequences for whole societies. Migration might be analyzed as well from the perspective of cultural sociology (Jeffrey Alexander) as a domain of many spheres—civic, media, science, etc. Structural macro-analysis of post-accession migration from Poland leads one to the conclusion that what is new in recent streams of outflow is the specific place of young and well-educated people in this process. Analysis reveals that the migration of young graduates was a safety valve in a situation of the ‘over-production’ of university degree holders with an inappropriate educational profile (humanistic), who were not absorbed by the labour market. According to the ‘crowding out’ hypothesis the process should lead to an enhanced modernization of the country but due to the ineffective and underdeveloped tertiary education system—migration did not solve the problem of unemployed graduates. The rising number of migrating graduates did not soften the situation of university leavers in Poland, whose share in the category of unemployed has risen still. At the same time the novelty of international mobility should be sought in the patterns of migration, especially in the case of young graduates who represent the generation of Poles born after 1989 and growing up in a democratic country with a growing economy. What is new is migration seen as a part of a life strategy to realize the values important for this new generation: personal development, spectacular career, an interesting life and a unique identity.

The analysis of migration as a domain of the media leads one to the conclusion that media narratives are mainly focused on the negative aspects of migration on a national and regional scale, being more ambivalent in their depiction of individual migrants’ life stories. However, the dominant tone of the press debate is negative—representing migration as a dangerous process leading to the devastation of family life, depopulation, a gap in the labour market and brain drain. The TV series’ narratives are more focused on individuals presenting more positively a picture of migrants’ careers as U-shape or of the American Dream type of upward mobility. The very nature of the TV series as focused on an individual’s perspective allows the recipient to follow the narrative on migration presented as a specific opportunity, a chance for one to better one’s own life. What is striking is the fact that the chance for a better life abroad is not restricted to economic status but relates to self-actualisation and lifestyle. On the other hand, the readers of weekly magazines will expect them to provide the opinion and explanation of the effects of migration—especially in the case of young graduates—from the perspective of the whole country. Even if individual migrants’ trajectories are being presented in the press articles in the form of *human interest* stories they are more often ‘negative’ than the ones in the TV series. In both—the press articles and TV series, migration presented from the individual perspective is a ‘costly’ process. To achieve the success defined in the migrants’ own words, they have to pay a price (e.g. separation from their loved ones, a feeling of alienation etc.) However, it is more likely that for the migrants presented in the TV series the overall

balance of benefits and losses would be positive whereas for the migrants presented in the press articles—negative, as it reflects the general ‘grand narrative’ of press debate on migration.

In an explanation of the difference in the media narratives emphasizing chiefly the negative aspects of post-accession migration with regard to its macro-structural effects and the positive in relation to the micro individual dimension, one has to relate to the concept of migratory ‘added value’ and its allocation. What we mean by migratory added value are a migrant’s economic capital, new competences, skills, know-how, cultural patterns of behaviour which would not be acquired without the experience of migration. All these outcomes of the migratory process, however conceptualised—as *social remittances* (Levitt 2011), *social, cultural and economic capital* (Bourdieu 1986) or *human capital*—might be allocated in the host country, transferred back to the home country or anywhere else. From the individual, migrant’s perspective the accumulation of cultural capital in the form of language skills will always be seen as beneficial. From the macro perspective—once such a form of capital has not been transferred to the home country—it will be seen as loss. Thus, we pose the hypothesis—which need to be verified by prospective researchers—that the media narratives on young graduates do not see migration as positive as there is no sign of a migrants’ social and cultural transfers to the home country which would benefit the whole of Polish society. At the same time the whole of society experiences a host of losses such as the brain drain process, depopulation or gaps in the labour market.

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