

ROLAND ŁUKASIEWICZ

POLISH EMIGRATION IN SPAIN
– PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS OF ACCULTURATION¹

A b s t r a c t. The report presents the results of research conducted among Polish immigrants in Spain centered in the province of Malaga between Malaga–Gibraltar. Research carried out since 2006. The results show both the scale of migration and degree of integration with the local community. The report also shows the problem of homelessness Polish immigrants, and how to deal with it. A very important elements is formation, in immigrants environment, characteristics social enclaves forming not only compact but also hermetic group acquiring specific cultural elements the country of emigration and exile their own subculture formation.

Key words: migration, acculturation, homeless.

INTRODUCTION

People migrate looking for a better place to live. They have been migrating since ages and this process is never-ending in the scale of time and space. Nowadays, we migrate mainly from underdeveloped to highly developed countries, from these being in the state of war to those respecting human rights. Every change of place of living involves adaptation problems of migrants depending on the place and culture to which they migrate, as well as

ROLAND ŁUKASIEWICZ PhD sociology, Warsaw Academy of Management and A. Gieysztor Humanistic Academy in Pułtusk, Poland. Assistant professor and lecturer; address for correspondence: Wyższa Szkoła Menadżerska, ul. Kawęczyńska 36, 03-772 Warszawa; e-mail: roland.lukasiewicz@interia.eu

¹ In this article were partially used fragmental materials from publication *Pod dachem Hiszpanii. Streetworking w enklawach polskich bezdomnych*, opublikowanej w ramach “*Homo Homini*”. *Streetworking. Nowe wyzwania przed pracą socjalną*, in J. Jęczyński & B. Lonek-Kuleta (Eds.), vol. 1, Sandomierz 2012.

on individual migrant's capacities. To this day, in the enclaves of Polish solidarity immigrants in Germany we can find people, who don't speak German, and the level of their adaptation is limited to the ability of performing basic physical work. This article brings up the issue of acculturation process among Polish homeless labour immigrants in Spain. Homelessness resulting from economic crisis causes not only marginalization, but also adopting a characteristic lifestyle and behavior in the new aspects of everyday life². A lot had been written on the effects of social transformation in the Central Europe in the 2nd half of 20th century. These effects can be divided into immediate (the change of a political system), expected to happen in the later course of the process and achieved (economic processes) and those unexpected or being a consequence of complex actions of many elements, such as a change in the form of management, change of economical status, crisis etc. One of the effects of social, political and economic changes, as well as the world economic crisis is an increase of the number of the homeless. Poles are one of the biggest groups in the Western Europe struggling with the problem of homelessness. System transformation resulted in increasing the scope of social marginalization, caused by poverty or non-adaptation to the new economic reality. The process affected most of the European countries being a destination of labour emigration of Polish people after 2004. The pace of the economic changes and the need to face them are too fast. It makes them impossible to cope with by individuals and groups and also causes addictions, what brings exclusion and marginalization as a consequence. In the situation of quite specific triple marginalization, the process of acculturation looks interesting. Triple marginalization is a result of actions and situations migrants can be found in. The first level of marginalization is a leaving itself, as well as finding oneself in the social group culturally remote from their own. The next level is language marginalization (Very small group of migrants is acquainted with the language and culture of their target place of living). We can even risk a statement that a majority doesn't know them and the process of learning goes on very slowly and depends on many factors. Who learn fastest are people directed into complete blend in to the society of native inhabitants, they also have some fundamentals of the foreign language and knowledge on a given place. These persons generally sever relations with the group culturally appropriate for them, they reject their own

² Research referring to the issue of homelessness had been conducted also in Great Britain, however the following article concerns only situation in Spain.

language, often forget or minimize their own cultural habits. In the case of the majority of migrants they all focus in informal enclaves, on the one hand supporting each other, but on the other – full of animosities, antagonisms and mutual dislike. Third level of marginalization affects mostly people, who as a result of lack of work, problems with finding oneself in a new place, becoming addicted, got excluded from any contact with the native inhabitants or these contacts are distorted (as are distorted and socially different contacts with the homeless and addicted). There's no way then to speak of acculturation in a positive meaning. However, a certain degree of it occurs. Acculturation is the whole of phenomena being the outcome of direct or indirect contact between two cultural groups, that lead to changes in cultural patterns of one or another group or can influence both.

In the case of the aforementioned marginalized community, there can be observed acquisition of some behaviours from the cultural circle in the place of living, in order to survive. Depersonalization and emotional dullness imply objectification of relations between migrants and native inhabitants. Their homelessness has elements immanent and particularly important in the process of acculturation, which are complex isolation, loneliness, lack of faith that fortune could change etc. Additionally, an element complicating the situation is the fact that they don't want to change their fate. They function in the sphere of social non-existence, being neither here nor there. Paradoxically, such a situation often suits them, what I am going to talk about in the further part of the text.

1. POLISH MIGRATION TO SPAIN

Polish migration to Spain doesn't have a long history. The widest scale of migration took place in 2004 and was a labour migration. Despite, migration of Polish people to Iberian Peninsula is dated on 16th century. First migrants were mostly travelers, diplomats and clergymen. The biggest scale of migration had place after the partitions. 20th century is a beginning of a "settled migration"³. 2nd World War was a time when thousands of refugees had been detained and put in the internment camps or prisons in Spain. 2nd half of 20th century recorded growth of cultural contacts leading to gra-

³ E. S o b c z a k & M. S t a n e k, *Historia obecności polskiej w Hiszpanii*; Retrieved from: www.naszdom.org (accessed 12.04.2012).

dual increase in the number of Poles, who decided to stay in Spain. In the history of Polish migration, we can separate a few moments of increase in the scale of migration. Such an increase was recorded in the eighties of 20th century during martial law in Poland. Spain, as well as Germany, used to be in most cases only a transit country on the way to North or South America. However, in certain cases people decided to stay in Spain⁴ At the moment, Polish migration consists in going for seasonal work, such as harvesting; however quite a considerable group of seasonal migrants settle in Spain, but part of them become socially powerless. Unemployment and housing problems result in the change of the place of living (circulatory migration)⁵. It determines next adaptation and acculturation processes or on the contrary – lack of need to build any closer relations with native inhabitants, this attitude is expressed by quite a considerable group of migrants. Immigrants also point that it is rather them who give part of our culture to Spaniards (and other nations) than get it from them. Reality and research indicate that this is a process of mutual language, behavior and ways of living exchange.

Since 2004 the scale of general emigration had significantly increased. It can be observed on the example of data concerning migration of fixed population of Poland. In 2005 left about 17 per cent more Poles than it did in 2004 (22.200 people)⁶. The scale of emigration is of course approximate, there is no wide register of migrations. The most is known on emigration of Polish people to Ireland and Great Britain. It is connected with the expanded monitoring of inflow of people kept by these countries, but we have to state that it concerns only registered employees. Experience shows the wide scale of emigrants working in the so-called black market, also in Spain. We know a little on employment of Poles in Spain. It reveals the need to intensify monitoring of this market not only because the scale of migration to Spain is wide and there still is a lot of people inside who are unable to cope with the new social and economic realities and make up a group of unemployed and homeless, but also of circulatory processes of migration. It is important in one more area – considering world economic crisis and not registered at

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ R. Ł u k a s i e w i c z, *Współczesna emigracja polska – profil i wprowadzenie do problematyki asymilacji*, in D. Ł a ł a k (Ed.), *Dom i Ojczyzna – dylematy wielokulturowości*, Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski 2008, pp. 302-314.

⁶ Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej; *Polska 2006. Raport o rynku pracy oraz zabezpieczeniu społecznym*, Warszawa 2006, p. 5.

the moment process of mixed forms time migrations. In addition, the occurrence of the aforementioned circulation distorts the picture of its scale and directions. Migrations to Spain are the result of signing in 2002 Polish-Spanish agreement on seasonal workers. It means, as it was mentioned above, that likewise in the case of Germany, the access to legal employment of Poles in this country was considerably easier. In 2004 Poles got 13 824 work permits (including 9 500 on the basis of the bilateral agreement on employment from 2002). In 2005 this number increased by 12 000 people⁷. In 2006 about 30 000 people undertook a job (including seasonal) in Spain. According to the data of Spanish Statistical Office the status of a resident had been granted to 34 000 of Polish citizens. Crisis significantly lowered this scale, because quite a numerous group of emigrants changed the country of labour into e.g. Great Britain. They contributed a group of re-emigrants or by changing the country of labour they escaped the scale of measurement placing themselves in the group of unemployed and homeless. Today we can still go to Spain for organized agricultural work. It is however often connected with the risk of uncertain, short-term and unprofitable departure. In such a case migration in this direction is minimal. All the more, that Spain now is in a serious economic crisis.

2. ACCULTURATION

Acculturation (cultural diffusion, transculturation) is a process to be accomplished as a result of a long-lasting direct or indirect coexistence of a few different cultural systems. What is characteristic for this process is domination of one culture and gradual, stronger and stronger influence on the rest. It leads to permanent changes inside the “weaker” culture. In extreme cases it can lead to entire dying out of this culture. Acculturation is also a process of evolving of societies caused by migration and lack of limits in settling outside own country. Nowadays, we can rather notice 2 processes of heterogenization of cultures and resulting from this – formation of a new cultural blend. It is a long-lasting process and its effects will be seen not

⁷ R. Ł u k a s i e w i c z, *Pod dachem Hiszpanii. Streetworking w enklawach polskich bezdomnych*, in J. J ę c z e ń & B. L e l o n e k - K u l e t a (Eds.), *Streetworking Nowe wyzwania przed pracą socjalną*, Vol. 1, Sandomierz 2012. See also: Data from Spanish Ministry of Labour.

before tens of years. We can however observe faster proceeding processes of exchanging certain behaviours, which are implemented interchangeably in the meeting cultures. These are elements such as language or some of its words/expressions, forms of behavior in specific cases (in research conducted in Spain, in the enclaves of Polish homeless people we could have observed the exchange of ways and ideas of living together with Spanish homeless people; language, mostly vulgar, was also the object of exchange). Generally speaking – acculturation means adaptation of an individual, group or community into the conditions among representatives of different culture. Such transformation can be partial – consisting in keeping some own, ethnic cultural elements and ethnic identity, or complete – that is decline of signs of cultural identification among members of a given group or in individuals.

In the research conducted among the group of Polish emigrants we can speak of partial acculturation (cultural diffusion), there is no complete acculturation (assimilation). It would demand getting rid of any elements of own culture, what is absolutely impossible, even when it comes to children of migrants (in the context of the importance of cultural identity it is not a positive process). Moreover, the idea of assimilation is recognized as staying in contradiction to the rules of a democratic country. Discussion on this matter is still live⁸. As far as some activities can be formally forbidden, such bans are impossible to be put as regards direct social relations, because the society forms its relations in a way that suits them. Children of migrants that are born in the new community, often receive elements of culture of their parents and that is how they keep cultural identity towards the culture they come upon, stereotypes and antagonisms are also often passed. As an example can serve a community of Scandinavian minorities (Sweden, Norway), which will always remain a minority regardless of how long they are staying in a given place. What is noticeable in this community is a very strong influence (extortion) of acquiring Scandinavian culture at the expense of getting rid of one's own, but national and cultural individuality would be anyway revealed in social relations.

It is worth mentioning that the concept of “integration” doesn't have a universal meaning as compared to other related concepts such as “assimilation”, “acculturation”, “adaptation”, “incorporation”, “participation” or “so-

⁸ R. B r u b a k e r, *The Return of Assimilation? Changing Perspectives on Immigration and its Sequels in France, Germany and the United States*, “Ethnic and Racial Studies” 24(2001), No 4, pp. 531-545.

cial cohesion". As far as intercultural relations are concerned, we cannot speak of a concept that would sufficiently describe adjustment of immigrants to life in a host country. There exists a kind of "conceptual ambivalence" consisting in applying different terms to one phenomenon or one term to different phenomena⁹. The term "acculturation" is the widest of all related terms. It is applied for changes accomplished on the individual or a group level. These are behavior, culture and constant, direct contact of representatives of different cultures. Essential in the case of research being discussed is the issue of two-sidedness of the process of acculturation and its cultural identification, or psychological and often group character¹⁰.

Acculturation is a phenomenon well-known since ancient times. Paying attention to changes taking place in communities under the influence of contact with other cultures resulted in both – interest and anxiety. It is essential to interpret acculturation as phenomenon working in two directions. This situation of two cultures staying in contact can cause changes both in the receiving culture (*mainstream*) and non-dominant culture, moving together with migrating people¹¹. *Sine qua non* conditions of acculturation are continuity and directness of contact between representatives of different cultures, and we deal with them speaking of:

- Short-term migrations (the so-called touristic migrations)
- Borderland territory
- Intercultural migrations (migration, repatriation, exile)
- Colonization¹²

Research in the field of excluded migrants in Spain have been undertaken.

3. EMIGRANTS AND THE PROCESS OF ACCULTURATION

As it was mentioned before, the processes of acculturation taking place in contemporary migration processes are determined by factors of economic

⁹ A. Grzymała-Kazłowska, *Integracja – próba rekonstrukcji pojęcia*, in A. Dąbkowska-Korzus (Ed.), *Problemy integracji imigrantów Koncepcje, badania, polityki*, Warszawa: UW 2008, pp. 29-49.

¹⁰ R. Redfield, R. Linton & M. Herskovits, *Memorandum on the Study of Acculturation*, "American Anthropologist" 38(1936), No 1, pp. 149-152.

¹¹ B. Arcimowicz, *Akulturacyja w teorii i praktyce: oczami psychologa*, "Podteksty – Czasopismo Kulturalno-Naukowe" 22(2010), No 4, <http://podteksty.amu.edu.pl>

¹² Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, *Memorandum on the Study*,

crisis. That is why we indicate the specific nature of transferring elements of different cultures in the process of circulatory migrations, what have place in the case of Polish emigrants searching for a new place to live. By the time the process of circulatory migration occurs, there has to appear one of the factors destabilizing their position in the actual place of living. In the environment of emigrants such factors are: job loss, homelessness and social exclusion.

In the environment of homeless migrants there is a characteristic and selective process of acculturation covering the following elements: language, living behavior, the way of exploiting environmental and cultural elements of a given place. We can say that migrants choose from the environment everything that suits them in the present life. It is particularly typical in described and examined environment of social exclusion. In the “regular” environment there are visible elements not necessarily suiting them, but crucial considering the proceeding process of integration. Homeless and unemployed migrants had learned basic words (often without even being aware of its meaning) that enable them to get help from the inhabitants. People, who had a job earlier have richer vocabulary, but often limited to the technical level they use at work. They rapidly loose even this resource. Not knowing language definitely eliminates them not only from the labour market, but also from the social relations. Language exchange takes place also within the area of exclusion of two socio-cultural environments - Spanish and Polish. Combined environments can be found in the enclaves of homeless people – the so-called *squats*. It is in fact only place where excluded communities stay together. Many nations learn the language here, e.g. Spaniards (as regards to Polish words these are mostly pejorative words), Poles, Germans, Czechs and other nations. There are no Romanies or Ukrainians there as they often establish own enclaves. The exchange of life experiences between homeless people from different countries includes also aforementioned ways of organizing their living. Poles usually live (in the warmer regions of Spain) at the beach, in tents, seldom in towns. The skills of organizing their place of living is passed on to the homeless Spaniards, but rather on the basis of mutual “spying” than direct exchange of information. Polish people then copy ways of gaining food, begging and spending time. They adopted e.g. the organization of time with the particular admiration and celebration of siesta.

Making use of selected elements of culture is rather in the short run, however it is becoming more and more visible, especially in the enclaves of homeless living at the beach or in squats, that this lifestyle is their way of

life and homeless people don't treat it as temporary, but rather as permanent activity.

Taking advantage of elements of Spanish culture and mentality is a basic element of behavior Poles demonstrate. Omnipresent ease, the earlier mentioned *mañana* (a word that is best known by Polish emigrants and often overused, according to the homeless everything is *mañana*), lack of stress, intentional slowness, the idea of living from day to day, spontaneity, gaiety, excessive impulsiveness and gesticulation - such elements can be found in enclaves of Polish homeless people. Indeed, these features act as a magnet and are efficiently escalated in behavior. On the other hand, we can notice our Polish habit of greeting by shaking hands present in their relations. Polish migrants also overuse loud complimenting women passing by. Such compliments are never spiteful or harmful from Spaniards, but from Poles they are often unpleasant, all the more that they are often expressed in their native language.

Spanish people don't like to stay at home, they go out a lot and that is what Poles like very much. Their life at the street often takes completely different dimension then and contact with people from different ethnic groups becomes much easier, even if it is in fact in sign language and of self-interested ground. Homeless people in Spain resemble in their behaviour nomadic Romany nations or emigrants from the east (they are also often defined this way by Spaniards, who don't distinguish language nuances). At the same time they are irritated when call them Ukrainians, Romanians etc. In this whole phenomenon they have inner (cultural), deeply rooted high level of self-esteem. While comparing the homeless people of different nations, Pole will always consider himself the best. Isn't it ironic?

CONCLUSION

Processes of migration and acculturation presented here in short are not the image of a full phenomenon of transculturation. They only show specific, explored environment and constitute an indicator of certain social and cultural behaviours. The process of partial acculturation occurring during migration, including separation and lack of integration is not surprising for a discerning observer. Since these are the elements realized by instinct and determined by the need of place and circumstances emigrants arrived. In the community of homeless emigrants only this group is completely isolated and helpless, which

find themselves in shelters, devoid of any accultural element and disowned out of the community of native inhabitants. In the course of observations made we can confirm the fact that homeless go through the process of acculturation¹³. It was also well-aimed to assume that there is a process of grouping in enclaves. Research conducted didn't confirm explicitly the occurrence of stress and tension connected with adaptation processes. Research showed a certain level of stress and tension at the beginning of the way, but later on, they markedly decline and homeless emigrants don't have the sense of integration stress. Presenting Polish labour emigration in a negative light, as a group of marginalized and self-interested people, gives motive for considering processes taking place in the environment of migrants and ethnic groups during the economic crisis. According to one of the emigrants – there are no sentiments and the end justifies the means, there are people who cope with the problems they encounter their own way.

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¹³ P. B o s k i, *Kulturowe ramy zachowań społecznych. Podręcznik psychologii międzykulturowej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2009.

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EMIGRACJA POLSKA W HISZPANII – PROBLEMATYKA AKULTURACJI

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia wyniki badań, prowadzonych od 2006 roku w środowisku polskich emigrantów w Hiszpanii, którzy mieszkają w prowincji Malaga, na odcinku Malaga–Gibraltar. Zaprezentowane wyniki ukazują zarówno skalę migracji, jak i stopień zintegrowania emigrantów z lokalną społecznością. Artykuł omawia także problem bezdomności polskich emigrantów i sposoby radzenia sobie z nim. Charakterystycznym elementem kultury emigracyjnej jest powstawanie specyficznych enklaw społecznych, będących nie tylko zwartą, lecz także hermetyczną grupą, przyswajającą niektóre elementy kultury państwa emigracji i tworzącą własną podkulturę emigracyjną.

Słowa kluczowe: migracje, akulturacja, bezdomność.