Wioleta Danilewicz
University of Bialystok, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology

THE DYNAMICS OF MIGRANT COMMUNICATION IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION. PART 2

Abstract. One of the aspects of modern migration is transnationality. Such a community is characterized by physical mobility and economic, cultural, and social transfers; by the functioning of migrants "here and there", multilateral contacts – both family and more often professional contacts – as well as others. The ways of communicating with the country have changed. These changes are due to, *inter alia*, the progress of telecommunications and communication, the development of new media. Never before in the history of the development of international movements have there been so many opportunities for maintaining contact between spatially disconnected persons. Therefore, the purpose of addressing the problem of migrant communication in the last few decades is to show their change, their dynamics, and the role that they play in maintaining family ties and across borders.

Keywords: migration, globalization, transnationality, communication.

Introduction

The outline of the history of international migrations presented in the first part of the paper showed, first of all, the existence of a centuries-old migration tradition in Poland. Displacement has always been and still is linked to the needs of internal and external global economy. The latest movements of Polish citizens which successive generations are experiencing are an expression of these links. In comparison with the past, the direction of movements and the structure of migrants have changed radically. More and more often, these are young educated people without their own families. They are less and less likely to leave for the USA, which is due, *inter alia*, to globalization processes.

According to statistics from the General Census of Population and Housing held in 2002, 786 thousand inhabitants of Poland were abroad

in May 2002, including 626 thousand staying there for over 12 months. The estimates of the data collected during the next General Census in 2011 show that around 2060 thousand residents had stayed temporarily outside of Poland. In 2011 there were more than 1,750 thousand people (in 2010 – about 1,685 thousand) in Europe, with the vast majority of the expatriates from Poland – about 1,670 thousand – staying in EU Member States.

It is estimated that at the end of 2015 around 2,397 thousand inhabitants of our country resided outside Poland, i.e. 77 thousand (3.3%) more than in 2014. In 2015 there were about 2,098 thousand people in Europe, with the vast majority – about 1,983 thousand – living in EU Member States. This number increased by 82 thousand compared to the number in 2014. Of the EU countries, the largest number of people were still living in the UK (720 thousand), Germany (655 thousand), the Netherlands (112 thousand), Ireland (111 thousand) and Italy (94 thousand).

The data show that the migration outflow from Poland is still considerable. Displacement of Polish citizens results from many factors. The outthrusting reasons are the unsatisfactory economic situation, migration tradition, migration network, travel options, and others, and the attracting ones are Poland's accession to the EU, wages higher than in the country, better social protection, etc. Educational migration is also evident, although the examples given in the paper concern economic migrants. The ways of communicating with the country have also changed. These changes are due to, *inter alia*, the progress of telecommunications and communication, the development of new media. Never before in the history of the development of international movements have there been so many opportunities for maintaining contact between spatially disconnected persons. Therefore, the purpose of addressing the problem of migrant communication in the last few decades is to show their change, their dynamics and the role that they play in maintaining family ties across borders.

Communication in the Age of Media Development

The epistolary experiences of separated families are very rich. This type of contact – as predominant – lasted until almost the end of the 1980s. The frequency of sending letters decreased as the number of "telephone receivers" increased. During the 1970s, when many Polish citizens migrated to the United States, telephone calls became an increasingly common way of communicating with families. However, they required efforts from both

sides – the migrants and the recipients – members of their families. This is evidenced by the statement of a person whose parent was in the US in the past:

> (…) I remember from my mother's stories … that during the first migration to the States in the 1970s we went to the post office to call the United States; it was very, very difficult to get through back then – we had to make an appointment for a specific time and only via the post office … I remember this conversation because in the family there was a great deal of excitement that we would talk to somebody from America … I remember as well that I recorded tapes – songs and poems that someone would later take to America – other people who were going to America (W1, 2015 – translation mine).

In the quoted statement the already adult daughter of a migrant is pleased with the opportunity to talk to her father. It also indicates the difficulty of the lack of telephone landlines in the place of residence. The author of the paper learned about similar experiences conducting research from 2008 to 2010[1], describing them as follows:

> In the mid-90s, when I conducted research among families separated due to moving to a foreign country for the first time, the content of sent letters, greeting cards or postcards was made available to me. Some migrants systematically corresponded with individuals from their immediate family, or sent one letter addressed to all household members. At that time, in the 1990s, contacts were also maintained through phone calls, considering though that not every household was equipped with a telephone line. Many families agreed with the migrant for a specific time for him to make a phone call. However, some, especially young people, participated in it reluctantly. First of all, the date of the interview was imposed (due to the availability of the "home with the phone" and the time zone difference between Europe and America). Also the time to talk was limited since it was split among all the family members. And, at the same time, these conversations had no individual, intimate character for the reasons already mentioned and even more explicitly – talks were held "in public", i.e. with the company of other people waiting for a conversation. In addition, from words already heard from the first person, other people collected information about the migrant. Thus, the subsequent conversations were only a repetition of the first. Nevertheless, such conversations took place (Danilewicz, 2010, p. – translation mine).

The abovementioned difficulties were not conducive to maintaining family ties. They required reaching a phone, arranging the time – especially in the case of migration to the United States. They were also unfamiliar with building family intimacy because of the lack of it even during conversations.

In the next decade, technological progress changed the way of communication. It can be observed in this testimonial:

> (...) In contrast, in the 90s, when I was still a teenager, communication options changed – there was a phone at home and my dad just called and I remember that every Sunday at 9 pm, we were prepared, me, my mom and my brother, for the phone to ring and we knew it would be our dad ... it was very often this way ... The conversations often resembled the form of complaints – mother complained how hard it was, we complained to him about our problems and our father complained that it was so hard with work that he could not send us anything ... those were difficult conversations, yes ... and then nobody wanted to answer the phone when he called (W1, 2015 – translation mine).

The statement shows that family members sought to maintain family ties by improving ways to communicate. For this purpose, for example, tapes and later videotapes were used, which – in the memory of the subjects – were repeatedly played. They gave a greater sense of closeness than letters.

At the end of the 1990s not only the development but also the availability of new media significantly expanded the possibilities of family contacts. In comparison with the previous decades new ways of communicating appeared and, above all, were disseminated. Once again, the subjects' statements identify family experiences, this time in terms of communication. This example shows the use of new opportunities for communication, as well as the involvement of the migrant in maintaining family ties during separation:

> My husband calls us several times a day – it is as if he were constantly with us and is up to date with everything (Danilewicz 2010, p. 281 – translation mine).

> My husband keeps in touch with us; he calls us every evening. Conversely, during the day we often communicate through texting, so I always know what he is doing at the moment. My husband is always coming for holidays and vacation, and this year he invited me and our son to show this "wonderful Ireland" to us (Ibid, translation mine).

This husband already had a mobile phone. He used it despite the fairly high cost of international calls in the first decade of the new century.

Personal telephones provided extra comfort. Phone contacts no longer had restrictions. The quoted statement shows new ways of contact among spatially separated people. The widespread availability of the internet has given new possibilities for communication. Their advantage is primarily a fast (instant) time of information flow. Migrants and their families use these opportunities.

The e-mail era began, bringing new possibilities – clicking removed post stamps and mailboxes, just as the mobile phone eliminated the telephone booths from which phone calls had been made in Poland for decades. But perhaps, given the growing number of young Polish citizens migrating, these examples already are or will soon become obsolete. Due to the widespread availability of mobile technology, a wide range of diverse applications are already available to everyone. Applications such as Skype, WhatsApp, Viber and FaceTime allow for instant communication with anyone around the globe at any time. With wireless data transmission, the cost of such connections has also disappeared – at this point in most cases these instant messengers function free of charge. Moreover, communication does not have to be restricted to simple text messages. The caller at the other end of the world can see and hear their interlocutor clearly on the display of their smartphone. Nowadays, the world is really at hand.

Other Possibilities

The possibilities for direct contact have also changed. In the past such contacts were almost impossible due to political or financial factors. For evident reasons the possibilities of migrants or their families to travel to North America are more limited than those resulting from migration within the European continent. Although more and more people receive visas for entry into the US, which makes it possible for family members of migrants to have direct contact, the cases are, however, quite limited in number. Nevertheless, after Poland's accession to the European Union, the destinations of movement have changed. The distance from Great Britain, Germany, Belgium and other countries, is possible to cover within a few or dozens of hours by own means of transport or special passenger lines. First of all, however, along with the dynamic development of the so-called cheap airlines, the airways have become available to migrants and their families. At present, almost each large city in the European Union can be reached by plane within a few hours at the price of a first class railway ticket. Limitations in spatial communication have ceased to exist.

The constant and frequent contact gives to families the sense of belonging, bonding, security, and for the migrant the ability to remain permanently in the family's life despite physical disconnection. This is a very important element of building and maintaining a sense of family bond, belonging to it. The varied forms of communication do not exclude migrants from their family and native everyday life.

Conclusion

Globalization is a phenomenon that affects all spheres of modern life. It is a result of political, economic, cultural and social processes, and it is strengthening due to the development of information and communication technologies that have increased the speed and breadth of interpersonal interactions worldwide (Giddens, 2004, p. 74).

Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon, and there are many theories and concepts that try to explain it. With regard to the problem of communicating in the age of globalization, special attention should be paid to Thomas Faist's transnational social space concept, which is closely linked to the theory of globalization. It assumes that international migrations, especially the latest ones (short, repetitive), include "a combination of supported social and symbolic networks, their content, their positions in social networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that cover more than one country" (Górny, Kaczmarczyk, 2003, p. 65 – translation mine).

The migrants' contacts with their homeland are diverse. Some maintain contact only with the closest, not being interested in the everyday life of the country. Others participate, for example, in parliamentary elections or protest marches – regardless of whether they intend to stay abroad permanently or plan to return. For hundreds of years people have been building a space which exists above the geographical and administrative borders between which migrants have moved. Therefore, since the 1990s, i.e. since the so-called *"transnational turn"*, attempts to identify the migrants' union with their country of origin are more widespread than before (Vertovec 2009, p. 13). They have allowed us to perceive migrations in the context of relations between migrants and people, places and objects in social spaces in a different light. This dynamic development of the migratory analyzes results from the perception of the complexity of migration processes. The difference in this perspective lies in another way of capturing the life of migrants. As Steven Vertovec states, most migration studies tend to focus on how migrants adapt to the migration site or on the ways in which they are excluded (Vertovec, 2001, p. 574). "Transnationality goes beyond the bipolar optics. It puts the various forms and ways of bonding crossing the borders of countries in the core of its interest. For this reason relationships and actions taken by social actors involved in the migration process in everyday life have become the subject of research" (Apitzsch, Siouti 2007, p. 15 – translation mine; ref. S. Urbańska, p. 19).

The intensification of international mobility has contributed to the emergence of a new concept and its conceptualization – the transnational space. It is recognized that the transnational social space (e.g. Portes 1997, Faist 2000) has been formed and it consists of social and symbolic bonds. Daily experiences of migrants are referred to as a type of *transnationality from below*. On the other hand, global capital flows, media transfers, and political institutions are referred to as *transnationality from above* (Vertovec 2003, p. 3). Transmigrants are defined as "persons who, after leaving one country for another country live cross the borders of these countries by participating in social relationships that embed them simultaneously in more than one national state" (La Waldinger, 2008, p. 5 – translation mine).

The mosaic of the transnational space, according to Faist [2000], is composed of four elements, i.e. small groups, and in particular related systems; network links; transnational communities; and international organizations.

1. The first group refers primarily to families whose representatives work as contract workers (as work migrants) or workers delegated under contracts of international enterprises. Transnational families which maintain economic and emotional bonds despite their existence in different countries are a classic example of such relationships.

2. Network links involve relationships between people and institutions through exchanging information and services in pursuit of a common goal. Thus, these are links developed in legal, economic, and scientific areas. They also refer to networks of links on diverse social issues, such as human rights and environmental protection.

3. Transnational communities are communities with determined components and symbolic relationships, characterized by a high degree of intimacy, emotional depth, moral obligation, and sometimes even social cohesion. Examples of such transnational links are religious and ecclesial communities, diasporas.

4. There are transnational organizations, ranging from small groups, such as transnational families. They are also internal transnational organizations, non-governmental organizations, such as the Red Cross, Amnesty International, Greenpeace and those located in one place with the influence area extending beyond the border. Their aim is mass mobilization, without which they could not function.

The transnational community is characterized by physical mobility and economic, cultural and social transfers; by functioning of migrants "here and there", multilateral contacts – both family and more often professional contacts, as well as others. It is created by "citizens of the world" – more and more often migrant workers, but also artists, scientists, athletes, diplomats,

students. In the transnational space "migration networks function across national borders and involve individuals from two different countries. They do not get broken as soon as the migrant settles in a new place. On the contrary, they continue to function and produce social migration capital" (Praszałowicz, 2008, p. 54 – translation mine). They derive from the fact that in the age of globalization the social distances between sending and receiving countries are decreasing.

The transnational social space is also characterized by:
– social and symbolic links and their content,
– adaptation and acceptance of life in two worlds conducting activities for both countries at the same time (Portes, 1997),
– dynamics of the process, as it accumulates different capital and its effects,
– relations and family ties of a transnational character;
– constructing identities on experiences resulting from the functioning of migrants in more than one country.

Thus, the transnational analysis paradigm concerns those people who live in two states (*dual lives*) and maintain relationships with their country of origin. It draws attention to various forms and ways of linking that cross national borders. It should be recalled that the social connections of migrants cross between two or more countries. Their main feature is the expansion of the number of migrants between states while maintaining a collective material responsibility and unity (Bryceson, Vuorela, 2002). And it is possible by using a variety of ways to communicate.

N O T E

[1] The research was conducted in 2008/2009 among 167 families living in the northeastern region of Poland. Its purpose was to get to know the everyday life of families during the migration of spouses and parents, and to identify the factors that determine their longevity as a community.

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