GERMAN TRANSMIGRANTS IN POZNAŃ
– A SPECIFIC SUBJECT FOR ETHNOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Transnationalism is closely associated with globalisation processes, the progress of civilisation and advances in technology. It is a characteristic kind of migration, where migrants move back and forth between the country of origin and current state of residence, functioning in the social, political and cultural contexts of both, creating a "transnational social space". The confrontation of previous behaviours, habits and values with new experiences results in specific changes caused by a state of "being between", affecting lifestyle, opinions about oneself and others, the stereotypical perception of "others", and attitudes towards such matters as work, friendship, family life, etc. The transformations occurring during the process of adaptation tend not to apply to deeply rooted values and do not lead to assimilation, which in the past was a frequent consequence of migration. These issues constitute the subject of a study the present author has been conducting since 2008, and which the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MNiSW) began funding in 2009 as part of the grant "Transnationalism in the Polish-German Context. Germans in Poznań and Poles in Berlin". The majority of Germans living in Poznań represent a *transmigrant* community. This paper presents a profile of the group and identifies the main problems the author encountered while researching it.

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Transnacjonalizm ściśle wiąże się z procesami globalizacyjnymi, z postępem cywilizacyjnym i technologicznym. Jest to specyficzny rodzaj migracji, w których migranci balansują pomiędzy krajem pochodzenia a państwem obecnego zamieszkania, funkcjonując w obydwu kontekstach społecznych, politycznych, kulturowych itd., tworząc „ponadnarodowe przestrzenie społeczne". Następująca w wyniku „bycia pomiędzy" konfrontacja dotychczasowych zachowań, przyzwyczajeń, wartości z nowymi doświadczeniami, wywołuje określone zmiany m.in. w stylach życia, w sferze wyobrażeń o sobie i innych, w stereotypowym postrzeganiu „obcych", w podejściu do takich kwestii jak: praca, przyjaźń życie rodzinne, itd. Przeobrażania pojawiające się w procesie adaptacji nie dotyczą najczęściej wartości rdzennych i nie prowadzą do asymilacji, co niegdyś było częstym skutkiem migracji. Kwestie te są przedmiotem badań autorki, prowadzonych od 2008 r., a od 2009 r. finansowanych przez MNiSW w ramach grantu pt. „Transnacjonalizm w kontekście polsko-niemieckim. Niemcy w Poznaniu i Polacy w Berlinie". Niemcy mieszkający w Poznaniu reprezentują w większości środowisko *transmigrantów*. Artykuł przedstawia charakterystykę tej grupy oraz wskazuje na podstawowe problemy, z jakim spotyka się autorka, prowadząc nad nią prace badawcze.

K e y w o r d s: transnationalism, transmigrants, migrations, Germans, Wielkopolska, businessmen, stereotype, identity, lifestyles.

In this paper, I present a number of reflections that arose during a study carried out in 2008–2010 on German transmigrants in Poznań. My observations refer to both the specificity of this community and the way the research was conducted among its members.

Transnationalism is a phenomenon closely associated with the process of globalisation, and especially one of its aspects – migrations – which have intensified in recent years. As Ulf Hannerz writes (2007, p. 96), globalisation is a network of relations formed by the people involved in it, despite their spatial separation from one another. These relations extend far beyond national boundaries. According to Ludger Pries (2008, p. 49), what distinguishes 19th- and 20th-century migrations from those occurring today are the "new possibilities for bridging geographically distant areas".[1] Thanks to satellite telecommunication and increasingly accessible modes of transport, people separated by thousands of kilometres can now maintain permanent daily contact. As Ulf Hannerz notes (2007, p. 96), developments in the media and technology allow "their thoughts to roam freely, irrespective of spatial distance".

Transnationalism is a specific kind of migration, in which the living and social spaces of transmigrants include a range of different geographic areas (Pries 1999, Faist 2000). Steffen Mau (2007, p. 43) stresses the fact that transmigration is not the traditional process of resettlement from one country to another, together with all its social consequences, but rather the creation of trans-border social relations and realms of activity as the result of living between different countries. Transnationalism can be therefore understood as a process in which migrants through their everyday practices, as well as social, economic and political relations, build new domains for living across nation-state borders (Basch et al. 1997). According to Linda Basch (1997, pp. 269–270), "deterritorialised states" are formed when some of their citizens live somewhere in the world in another nation state as transmigrants but: "still not live outside the state [...] because the members of their diasporas conduct economic, political, social, and cultural transactions that are essential for the maintenance of the home state's survival". Transmigrants therefore exist "between" the country of origin and current state of residence. The "between" is where their lifestyles, identities and opinions about themselves and others are being shaped.

Transmigration – based on mobility and the constant maintenance of broad and intensive contacts with the country of origin – is a relatively new phenomenon. In Europe we can observe its intensification since the 1980s. Broader scientific studies on the subject began to appear in the 1990s. Today the issue of transmigration is becoming increasingly popular with researchers from such fields as sociology, psychology, ethnology, macroeconomics, etc.

As I mentioned before, this phenomenon is fundamentally different from the migrations that occurred in the 19th century or even at the end of the 20th century,

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[1] All quotations of German reference material were translated by the present author.

when the majority of people emigrated as a result of a choice to be "here" or "there". This often led to their assimilation into the society in which they settled. Present-day transmigrants do not have face such dilemmas. They can live both "here" and "there". As Tsypylma Darieva noticed (2007), transmigration is described through a new conceptual apparatus formed by such terms as: transnational communities, diaspora, hybridity, unbounded space of flows, and transnational social fields. This terminology also reflects new challenges facing the researchers who deal with migration phenomena, in areas such as research methodology. The mobility of people requires that typical stationary field studies be expanded to multiple sites. As far as methodology is concerned, migration ethnology is moving towards, as George Marcus put it, "multi-sited ethnography" (as quoted in Sabine Hess 2007, p. 185). The areas of interest in this field of study are also changing, with a shift towards such research subject matter as networks of migrant relations, integration models associated with mobility, problems related to "losing one's homeland", cultural practices, new hybrid identities, and issues of loyalty to the homeland and the receiving country (Darieva 2007, Mau 2007).

GERMAN TRANSMIGRANTS IN POZNAŃ – STUDY AIMS AND HYPOTHESES, REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE GROUP

The subject of my study is German *transnationals* living in Poznań. The project is being financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MNiSW) as part of the "Transnationalism in the Polish-German Context. Poles in Berlin and Germans in Poznań" grant.[2] The study, planned for 2009–2012 (and launched already in 2008), is being conducted in Poland and Germany. Its aim is to establish a picture of the problem in two different political, social and cultural realities, revealing the similarities and differences. In this paper, which is based on preliminary results, I present the profile of the German community living in Poznań.

I have chosen Germans because of their long tradition of residence in Wielkopolska, and also due to the fact that since the beginnings of Polish statehood, they have been (and still are) a significant foreign group in the region, especially in Poznań. Already in the Middle Ages, trade routes took merchants from German lands to Wielkopolska. For centuries, Poznań's main trading partners were Nuremberg, Leipzig and Hamburg (Grycz 1964). Western settlers came to live not only in Poznań but also in villages in Wielkopolska. Among these people were German peasants who since the Middle Ages settled in large villages (see Schmidt 1904, Kossmann 1978, Zientara 1988), then so-called *Olęders* (Rusiński 1959, Dralle 1991, Maas 1938, Baranowski, 1915) and Bamberg colonists (Bär 1882, Paradowska 1998, Szczepaniak-Kroll 2002, 2004, 2005), who with time blended into the cultural landscape of Poznań. Migration waves also took settlers to Poznań and other Wielkopolska towns at the time of the Prussian partition and

were an important component of the population policy of Prussia. For many years, the primary role of German settlers was to fulfil economic objectives. In the last quarter of the 19th century, following the unification of Germany, they became one of the tools of Germanisation.

Most Germans left Wielkopolska after World War I when Poland regained its independence. By that time they had developed a strong sense of German national identity. The rest, with few exceptions, left for the West after World War II. During the long socialist period, Germans were reluctant to visit Poland, whether as tourists, for business, or for reasons related to their past – the idea of "sucking mutual hostility with one's mother's milk" was as deeply rooted in them as in Poles. The efforts of the authorities of the Polish People's Republic and German Democratic Republic also failed to overcome this mutual aversion, even though the two countries shared the same totalitarian system of government and aspired to strengthen relations between them. Whereas for Poles economic issues (material concerns) turned out to be more important than prejudices, and over the years many of them visited Germany (especially East Germany), mainly to work or trade there, Germans did not feel a need to visit Poland.

The situation has changed considerably over recent years with Poland's joining the European Union in 2004 and the Schengen Area in 2007, which resulted in the opening of borders.[3] Wielkopolska then received an influx of German transmigrants, at first mainly from business circles. Their appearance was associated primarily with the increasing number of branches of German companies and global concerns employing Germans that were being established in the region. Those coming to Poznań, a university centre, included more foreign exchange students and lecturers on research visits, as well. The city also began drawing those seeking their roots in Poland (people who were descended from either Polish or German ancestors), as well as artists and writers interested in Poland. The convenient location of Poznań played an important role for the latter group – the city is situated near the border, with good connections with the rest of the country.

RESEARCH ISSUES

The increasingly visible phenomenon of transmigration involving these groups of migrants attracted my interest. The study focused on three problems:
- the adaptive strategies of German transnationals, and the lifestyles they led during the period of living between Poland and Germany;
- the confrontation of their images of and stereotypes about Poland with reality;
- the impact of participating in two different cultures.

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[3] Although German companies began entering the Polish market in the 1980s, the phenomenon was not as dynamic as it was 20 years later.

Similar issues were the subject of interest of Birgit Glorius (2007, pp. 137–140), who focused on the transnationalism model among Polish migrants in Leipzig. The German researcher describes the model using the terms: "Transmobilität", "Transkulturalität", "Transidentität" ("transmobility", "transculturality" and "transidentity").

For the study, it was necessary to define the concepts of stereotype and identity. Following Robert Cyrus (2004, p. 208), I assumed that "national stereotypes are ideas that a certain nationality or ethnic community is distinctly equipped with certain personality traits. Stereotypes are resistant to change; they are rooted in the community and work automatically". These fixed ideas are "activated" in certain situations by stimuli that acquire importance in the face of other possible interpretations.

As far as the concept of identity is concerned, I have assumed Hanna Malewska-Peyre's definition (2000, p. 129), according to which it is "a relatively stable structure of feelings, values and representations, experiences and projects related to the self. It is relatively stable because new experiences and adaptations to the environment modify it". Irena Szlachcicowa (2003, p. 12) also made a valid point, writing that identity means continuously being someone, somebody else than others, and that it locates an individual in space and time, indicating his or her "roots", and referring to social identifications, to the sense of "being identical with someone or something".

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework for my field study was the interpretive paradigm, also known as the alternative or symbolic-interpretive paradigm. Another premise was the need to recognize the processual nature of social reality, i.e. by taking the view that phenomena do not occur by themselves, but are gradually shaped by their participants during a process of mutual interaction.

The structured interview method (see: Konecki 2000, Charmaz 2009) was used during the study.[4] Similar to an in-depth interview, it resembles a casual conversation. At the same time, each of the conversations should provide answers to the same key questions. I assumed that the interviews would resemble a natural conversation, without following an established procedure. I prepared an interview guide, however, to help me organise the questions to which I wanted to obtain a response. I also tried to adjust the discussion style to the personal qualities of the interviewee by asking questions of varying degrees of detail, in different orders, allowing the respondents to make extensive digressions.

[4] Kathy Charmaz (2009, pp. 24–25) writes that this methodology allows researchers who gather rich data to formulate strong grounded theories. Researchers may collect several data types and use various data collection techniques. Using this method, researchers try to first see the world through the eyes of their subjects – from the inside. They then follow the leads that emerge. As Kathy Charmaz (2009, p. 25) wrote, grounded theory is a source of "flexible guidelines rather that rigid prescriptions".

While conducting the study, I also tried to gather official government data about the number of Germans living in Wielkopolska. This aim, however, was not fully achieved. According to European Union regulations, EU citizens are not obliged to legalise their residence if they are staying in Poland for less than three months. Only after that period are they required to register at the Provincial Governor's Office. Whereas students fulfilled this duty – they are bound to do so by their institution of higher education – the majority of businessmen neglected to do so, not least because when travelling between Poland and Germany they did not exceed the required period of time. Besides, it is a well-known fact that registrations are not controlled. This is most likely why other Germans residing in Poznań also often fail to register their stay.[5]

Therefore, the data surely do not reflect the actual number of people of this nationality in Wielkopolska. According to the Department of Foreigners' Affairs at the Provincial Governor's Office in Poznań, in 2007, Germans filed 229 applications for registration, while the Office issued 194 residency permits. Similarly, in 2008, the Office received 194 applications and issued 170 permits. In 2009, Germans submitted 165 applications, while the Office issued 139 residency permits (data from March 2010, by the Department of Foreigners' Affairs at the Provincial Governor's Office in Poznań).[6]

WHO ARE THE GERMAN TRANSMIGRANTS LIVING IN POZNAŃ?

The German business community in Poznań is comprised mostly of men aged 30 to 50. The younger ones are predominantly single, while the majority of the older ones maintain a stable family situation, with an established marriage and independent children. Robert King Merton (1996) rightly described the business transmigrant group as "a new type of leader nomads". These people come to Poznań for a specific reason, e.g. to open a local branch of a German company, restructure or modernise it, develop a new branch of production, promote certain products, train employees, monitor performance, etc. These are mostly well-educated and professional experts: managers, specialists in marketing, advertising, international law, etc. The duration of their stay ranged from roughly five to fifteen years (for more on German businessmen see: Szczepaniak-Kroll 2009, pp. 91–112).

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[5] According to the law, EU residents may move freely between their own country and Poland, as well as apply for work without any permit (http://mswia.gov.pl http://www.mpips.gov.pl).

[6] Based already on the number of branches of German companies in Wielkopolska, which usually hire German managers previously employed at the original company, one may assume that it is not a small group. Many of these Germans are members of the DWK – Deutsch-Polnisches Wirtschftskreis, a thriving Poznań organisation that aims at, e.g. promoting cooperation between Polish and German companies. The organisation, however, keeps in its register only names of companies and not of individuals. This is why the DWK cannot even provide estimated data.

Most students come to Poznań as part of the Erasmus Programme and stay in Poland for three to twelve months. In contrast to those from business circles, this group is predominantly female. These are usually young people who study for a course in their major or co-operate on a project with a Polish team. Most of them chose Poland with a specific purpose in mind: to find a job associated with our country once they graduate. They were often motivated by a fascination with the East, located close by, but thought of as remote. Some students come from border towns. Poland is therefore vaguely familiar to them, and an exchange provides an opportunity to obtain better insight into the country and learn its language. Several people were descended from German or Polish families who had once emigrated to Germany. Poland was a frequent topic of conversation in these circles, and now young people want to confront these accounts with reality. There were also some students who openly admitted that they simply wanted to study abroad and ended up in Poznań by chance.

The third German community in Poznań consists of people who came to Poland in search of their Polish or German roots and to learn the language of their ancestors. This group also includes artists seeking inspiration for their work. The group consists mainly of pensioners who claim to have finally found time to get a taste of life in a country other than Germany, and at the same time learn something interesting about Polish culture.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT POLAND

The respondents from the business circles had, in general, a limited knowledge of Poland. They frequently relied on stereotypes, but more or less distanced themselves from the conventional images. One exception was people sent here because of their Polish origin. Most respondents did not try to expand or verify their knowledge of Poland, usually saying that they lacked sufficient free time and had to decide about leaving on short notice.

The students followed a different strategy to prepare for their stay in Poland. Many of them tried to establish close contact with Poles even before leaving Germany, searching for them among friends or university colleagues. This was their primary source of information about Poland, especially in terms of how to deal with everyday life immediately upon arrival. Some Germans began learning Polish. Most respondents, however, obtained all their information from the Internet. Some subjects were better informed, either because they maintained contact with relatives living in Poland, had already visited the country on holiday, or came from towns situated near the border. As in the case of the businessmen, among the transmigrant students there were people who came to Poland without even a rudimentary knowledge of the country.

The group of freelance professionals in search of their roots demonstrated the best knowledge of Poland. These people obtained information about Poland from

the Internet, books, magazines and Polish friends. It was often this information that prompted them to consider Poland as a place worth visiting. Those Germans who had already been in Poland for a short time wanted to confront superficial observations with reality during a longer stay and conduct a more thorough examination. Stereotypes, even the negative ones, frequently constituted one of the reasons to see what life really looks like over the Eastern border.

SPECIFICS OF THE STUDY

At the beginning of the study, it was already apparent that each of the three groups required a somewhat different research strategy.

In the case of the businessmen, the biggest problem proved to be establishing contact with the respondents. Their high position in the business hierarchy made it impossible to approach them straight from the street. To gain access to them, it was necessary to go through a long process of earning trust and working through a system of personal relationships, recommendations and acquaintances. Meeting with a so-called "gatekeeper" greatly facilitated completing the task. As Hammersley and Attkinson (2000, p. 73) write, some communities have their own distinct boundaries, which may be guarded by the selected representatives of the group, called "gatekeepers". Obtaining their consent for conducting a study may "open many doors". The researcher's contact with a particular community usually begins with a meeting with the "gatekeeper". This was also the case with my study. The role of the "gatekeeper" was occupied by the chairwoman of an organization that brought together German businessmen staying in Poznań. This acquaintance allowed me to participate in monthly social gatherings of transmigrants.

I experienced considerable difficulties with arranging personal meetings and interviews. The respondents found it difficult to take time out of their busy schedules. This prompted me to interview the subjects at almost every available opportunity, especially during the aforementioned informal meetings, sometimes also employing the conversation analysis method (for a detailed description of the method, see Dorota Rancew-Sikora, 2007). The "snowball" technique, where existing informants recruit new respondents, proved to be ineffective, even though it is commonly used for obtaining subjects in other groups. The businessmen feared that the potential interviewees they would choose could understand the recommendation of their superior as a formal request and feel pressured to grant an interview against their will.

Finding respondents among students and the older group required much less effort. Contact was established through a school attended by Germans learning the Polish language, with meetings arranged before and during their studies. This group also had its own "gatekeeper" – the school principal. She passed on a letter inviting the course participants to take part in the study. The response rate was high. Several people signalled a willingness to share their thoughts even before the researcher contacted them.

The "snowball" technique proved to be effective with the members of the third group. As previously mentioned, one of their motivations for coming to Poznań was to get to know Poles. They were therefore particularly keen to share their impressions. If they were able, they gladly recommended another respondent. For them the interview was a great opportunity to make acquaintance with yet another Pole, moreover, one interested in migration experiences. Many respondents displayed gestures of friendship, and some even expressed a willingness to stay in contact. The respondents tried to match Poles in their various gestures of hospitality.

The structured interview method proved to be effective in obtaining information. The informants from the business circles who managed to find time to grant an interview, however, were somewhat surprised by the conversational form. They expected a short questionnaire to which they could quickly respond rather than a dialogue requiring careful consideration and deep reflection. Therefore, fearing that respondents who were "forced" to devote more than about fifteen minutes to an interview would refuse to meet, I tried not to inform them about its course in advance. The Germans I surveyed in other circumstances, such as at the above-mentioned informal business meetings, often were not even aware that they were being interviewed.

The appointed private conversations with the businessmen took place in their offices. It is worth stressing that in each case, it was the subjects who chose the place, not taking into account other possibilities due to time limitations. I suppose that choosing the office as the meeting place also served the purpose of indicating prestige. In some cases, the office significantly influenced the course of the interview. The interviewees posed as authorities, experts who had discovered a way to achieve the desired results abroad and to successfully co-operate with Poles. However, such a stance presented another difficulty: receiving honest answers. The respondents feared questions that intruded on their privacy, which were inconvenient for them because of their high position. I had the impression that the German businessmen feared that being completely open with the interviewer might tarnish the corporate image. They were also careful about sharing their observations and reflections because these could sometimes appear to be unpleasant for a Polish researcher. However, the office enhanced the confidence of some subjects, allowing them to talk freely, mainly about their encountering and dealing with problems in Polish-German intercultural communication.

Meetings on neutral ground, e.g. at a social gathering of people from the business circles, also had its advantages and disadvantages. It certainly facilitated obtaining honest answers, especially if the atmosphere was relaxed, encouraging others to join the discussion and prompting a lively debate. The interlocutors stimulated the discussion, started new threads, and encouraged others to join.

It was often difficult, however, to control such conversations. Moreover, in some situations observers to the interview negatively influenced the respondents, at times even discouraging them from giving an interview or at least from expressing certain

opinions. They did not necessarily try to directly prevent the interviewees from expressing their opinions openly, but rather sent non-verbal signals: head shaking, "snorting", etc. Such situations, however, were relatively rare. Regardless of the attitudes of the respondents from this group, it was very important to assure them that the survey was anonymous and that its results would be used solely for research purposes.

At the same time, it should be highlighted that these people often proved to be extremely valuable informants. Although the businessmen reached higher ranks in Poland than they would have in Germany, their arrival to the country was not solely economically motivated. Equally important was "the adventure of a lifetime" they were looking for over the Eastern border, which in Germany is still often regarded as a line separating the West from the East. Having spent some time with the respondents, one could notice that in deciding to send them abroad, their employers had taken into consideration not only their professional competence (education, experience and skills), but also their personal qualities, such as sensitivity, empathy, the ability to cope with stress and adopt a task-oriented approach, and adaptive flexibility (for a detailed description of so-called intercultural competence see, e.g. Jürgen Bolten 2006, pp. 137–140).

The interviews with the students were held on neutral ground, at the University of Poznań. The students frequently wanted to arrange meetings in a more attractive environment, e.g. a cafe, but unfortunately the limited financial resources available for the study made this impossible. The interviews with the selected members of the third group were conducted in their houses and places of study, or in group meetings. Conversations that were held in a quiet place, with no time constraints or external distractions, proved to be most effective.

In each test environment it was crucial to establish a friendly relationship with the respondent. The interview would often be preceded with a casual conversation on a general topic, such as the weather, traffic jams in the city, parking difficulties, the way the office was furnished, interests, etc.

The respondents were generally shy at first (as opposed to the businessmen), but once the ice was broken, they eagerly responded to questions. I noticed a significant difference in emphasis between the answers provided by the Poles I surveyed in Berlin and those of the Germans who live in Poznań. The Germans focused on general observations about Poles, indicating the most obvious differences in various areas, and were less keen on sharing their own experiences and thoughts. The Poles in Berlin opened up more quickly, and a few moments into the interview were already sharing their life experiences and often very personal impressions. The Germans gave short and carefully weighed answers. Not only did the Poles describe certain events, but they also were more likely to analyse and discuss them. The Germans were not inclined to do so.

The respondents frequently sought the approval of the interviewer and provoked discussion. Certain participants were so eager to share their opinions that after the interview they sent emails to complete their statements on issues they forgot to men-

tion during the meeting. In many cases, the informants felt a strong sense of responsibility for the opinions they expressed. One could repeatedly get the impression that not only did they express their own opinion, but they also "represented" other Germans.

At the end of the interview, the subjects, especially those who talked particularly freely, would become tense or anxious. The respondents displayed feelings of emptiness (mentioned in, e.g. Kvale, 2010), a conviction that they had given much information, basically without receiving anything in return. Providing assurance that the interview would make a substantial contribution to the study generally dispelled these doubts.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STUDY

I would not like to shift the focus of the paper from describing the specific character of my study on Germans in Poznań towards an analysis of data that is still being collected. I can only draw very general conclusions based on the study conducted to date.

Before coming to Poland, the majority of the respondents had only a stereotypical image of the country. Today they admit this with embarrassment because that image was mostly negative. Some respondents found moving to Poland stressful and feared culture shock. The informants encountered many problems, some of them previously unimaginable, e.g. the necessity to learn the Polish language and its basic codes, symbols, thought patterns, etc. The confrontation with Polish reality, however, did not resemble the culture shock that individuals experience as a result of a contact with unknown and incomprehensible situations (the definition of culture shock in Marx 2000, p. 25). It was rather a reaction to the stressful situation of moving to another country (environment) (as defined in: Murdoch 1999, p. 183).

The results of my study show that in most cases the Germans successfully coped with adversities. They often displayed considerable creativity in overcoming adaptation problems. Moreover, this brought them great satisfaction, bolstered their confidence and made them more open to otherness. Not only did the respondents challenge the German stereotypes about Poland, but they also made many observations on the cultural differences in everyday life, at work or university. They learned about a whole new range of behaviours, rituals and gestures not present in their own culture. Their stay had a purely task-based character in only a few cases; usually they were genuinely willing to establish contact with Poles. They did not, however, try to meet with other Germans living in the city, saying that they came here to enter into contact with Poles and not with their compatriots. Only the German businessmen maintained permanent relationships with fellow countrymen, mainly because of their being business partners.

All Poznań foreigners were very pleased about their stay in Poland, although they also made many negative remarks about Poland and Poles. Life in the new ethnic environment meant for them a loss of "cultural obviousness". According to Luiza

Słodownik (2006, p. 24), an "obvious" culture is one we have learned to know since early childhood, which later becomes well known and does not require analysis, thought, or observation from the outside. This "obviousness" becomes suspended during contact with foreignness, offering alternatives to values and behaviours characteristic of the national culture. The Germans certainly return to their homeland changed, enriched by the experience of cultural contact and reflections on their own identity.

Once further study has been conducted, these issues will be fully addressed in subsequent papers on German transmigrants in Poznań.

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