

Rethinking gender, rethinking migration. Mutual interdependence

Recent months have witnessed a profound increase in the use of the word ‘refugee’ in the public discourse. We have heard of refugees linked to ‘crisis’, ‘(in)tolerance’, ‘assimilation’, ‘migration’, ‘identity’, as well as ‘terrorism’, ‘Islamization’, ‘the decline of the Western values’, and so on. The recent influx of refugees to Europe can be analyzed not only by means of humanitarian values, willingness to help or acts of compassion and empathy. It soon appeared that this abrupt process opened floor to discussions about the potential shape of nowadays Europe, as well as strategies of how to deal with the demographic collapse and the necessity to accommodate citizens from alien cultures as future employees on the local labor market.

First and foremost, what might be of utmost importance for a sociologist, is that the influx of refugees has made all: journalists, scientists, politicians and citizens, reinforce the search for answers to the questions about what is the projected shape of Europe and what it means to be a European. What has to be taken into account is that the ongoing crisis is a symptom of structural changes taking place all over Europe and, at the same time, has to be seen in relation to the dominating system of values. As stated by Rupp: “The values of individualism developed in the post-Enlightenment West are at the core of the contemporary refugee protection system. While enormously powerful, this tradition assigns priority to the individual as distinguished from the community” (2016: 76).

Therefore, the change Europeans need has to be based on “examining how best to address the needs of communities that are uprooted, as well as the needs of communities into which displaced persons are received, rather than only focusing on individuals who cross a border and seek refugee status” (Rupp 2016: 76). This works as a proof that migration is a multifaceted issue that has to do not only with economic determinants, but also cultural factors such as family life, religion, tradition, culture and gender.

The Syrian conflict started in 2011 not only resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians in the Middle East. It also gave rise to the current refugee crisis in several other countries. At the end of 2014, more than 3.5 million Syrians lived outside their homeland (Ostrand 2015: 255). It is worth noticing that refugees leave Syria predominantly for other Middle East countries. “More than 20 million

citizens from Arab countries live abroad. The biggest rates of migration (with 5% to 20% citizens relocating) are to be seen in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. Several diasporas (i.e. Moroccan and Tunisian) have doubled within the last 15 years” (Pędziwiatr 2011: 2).

Forecasting the migration patterns from Africa to Europe, Pędziwiatr points out that “the future will be decided on whether the already originated democratization project ends up successfully and economic growth can be witnessed. Only provided democratization comes along with economic development changes, migration trends would evolve. Its initial results might not come up until at least a few years” (Pędziwiatr 2011: 2). In 2016 we know it would eventually take even longer, as the modernization processes in Africa do not serve as a sufficient argument for thousands of people to stay in their countries of origin. On the contrary, they risk their lives sitting on rustbucket boats, hoping to reach the promised land and fulfill dreams about stability and welfare.

Assimilation and acculturation

The debate on accommodating refugees in Europe has to tackle the political threats of extremism and populism that picture outlanders as the source of all evil. Moreover, this discussion involves key terms in the understanding of social processes such as ‘assimilation’ and ‘acculturation’. Their significance is on the rise due to the increase in migration levels of people entering cultures they themselves are not familiar with. Taking that into consideration, it might be worth to recall the definition coined by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits: “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (1936: 149).

This general way of understanding acculturation needs to be further developed in order to fully address its multifacetedness. By this token, acculturation is often seen through the lens of language, i.e. second-language acquisition by migrants in their target countries (Schumann 1978). The limitations that result from poor knowledge of the language vastly inhibit acculturation opportunities. Apart from language, acculturation processes are analyzed in the context of health and hygiene (Lara *et al.* 2005), stress, psychosomatic disorders, fear and anxiety (Berry 2006), as well as sexuality and gender (see e.g. Ford, Norris 1993).

Two acculturation models deserve particular attention in the context of migration. Berry (1997) distinguished four models of acculturation: (1) assimilation (an immigrant adapts to host culture but is not keen on cultivating home culture values), (2) integration (an immigrant both adapts to host culture and is keen on cultivating home culture values [*biculturalism*]), (3) separation (an immigrant does not adapt to host culture but is keen on cultivating home culture values [*ethnic enclaves*]), and (4) marginalization (an immigrant neither adapts to host culture

nor is keen on cultivating home culture values). However, as stated by Mucha: “various migrant groups prefer different acculturation options, and these migrant groups are rarely homogenous in their disposition to acculturation. The follow-up theoretical and empirical research proved that it was necessary to analyse not only the migrants’ perspective, but the one of the host society as well. New models stressed the idea that the receiving country population usually has different approaches to migrants’ acculturation, depending on their characteristics, and that both immigrants and host society’s groups strategies can change from generation to generation” (2016: 7–8).

Compared to Barry’s model of acculturation, Navas, Garcia, Sánchez, Rojas, Pumares and Fernández extend the perspective on acculturation in their Relative Acculturation Extended Model. In the model, they emphasize the multidimensional nature of acculturation process and ask for “joint consideration of the acculturation strategies of the immigrant group and of the native population” (2005: 26). The Relative Acculturation Extended Model allows to create a link between acculturation and other social processes and situations, eg. the physical activity and sport. This was traced by Kossakowski, Herzberg and Żadkowska in the analysis of assimilation processes of Polish citizens in Norway (see Kossakowski, Herzberg, Żadkowska 2016).

Gender and migration

There is no doubt acculturation is a complex and diverse process. In many instances it presents itself as difficult for migrants who have to deal with juxtaposing contradictory cultural values and norms. Acculturation processes influence various patterns of everyday life, including values relations and gender roles. Gender is hence strongly linked to the modes of assimilation, and as such can be considered an intriguing factor in studying lives of immigrants and refugees.

Only recently (in the last few decades) has this interest in gender been a vital part of migration studies. Boyd and Grieco explain this specific surge of interest: “Since the 1960s, international migration theory has indeed become more gender sensitive, moving from the predominant view of female migrants as simply the wives and children of male migrants to incorporating explanations of the unique experiences of women migrants themselves. However, in an effort to correct the ‘invisibility’ of women in migration theory, there is a chance that researchers will begin to over-emphasize the migration experience of women, paying less attention to that of men” (2003: 3).

Understanding gender in migration makes it possible to grasp the non-self-evident conditions of migration processes and depict its characteristics, i.e. reasons and consequences of migration, migration time differences or constructing gender roles in migration processes. The lack of gender perspective has been noticed by researchers (see e.g. Hondagneu-Sotelo, Cranford 2006) and subsequent-

ly a considered problem in migration studies. “Global estimates by sex confirm that for more than 40 years since 1960, female migrants reached almost the same numbers as male migrants. By 1960, female migrants accounted for nearly 47 out of every 100 migrants living outside their countries of birth. Since then, the share of female emigrants among all international migrants has been rising steadily, to reach 48 percent in 1990 and nearly 49 percent in 2000. By 2000, female migrants constituted nearly 51 percent of all migrants in the developed world and about 46 percent of all migrants in the developing countries” (Piper 2005: 3).

Considering the topic of this edition of “*Miscellanea Anthropologica et Sociologica*”, it is worth to note that the migration crisis has the face of a man (which might be most often captured by mainstream media), a child¹ (just to mention the story of the drowned migrant baby on the Turkish shore in September 2015), and women too. The female side of being a refugee is reinforced by the women’s need to look after (their) children, and serious problems they face trying to reach their new home. These include physical assault, exploitation, and sexual harassment². To add insults to the injuries, “[p]regnant women are more prone to dehydration and women were more likely to be placed at the most vulnerable position on the boat to the EU. (...) Sexual violence or the provision of sexual services was often the border toll paid by many women to negotiate their crossing” (Gerard, Pickering 2013: 354).

The perspective of taking part in a dangerous and precarious travel discourages women (who are often mothers) from risking their lives and the lives of their families. The more tense the social situation in home countries, the bigger the probability women would eventually end up trying to leave. “[T]he increasing numbers of female migrants risking the journey across the Mediterranean to reach Europe could be attributed to the worsening conditions in Syria, and for Syrian refugees in Turkey, as well as a realization that the Syrian conflict is not likely to end soon, which means that these women are taking the choice of last resort” (Freedman 2016: 7). The patriarchal structure of the Middle East Muslim societies is another factor for a deprived social position of females. It is no wonder women play the role of one of several wives a man is allowed to live with.

Tradition, religion and sexual norms all play an essential role in understanding the factors of efficient acculturation. Meston and Ahrold draw a comparison between Euro-American, Asian and Hispanic populations in the USA. As a conclusion, they present the differences between patterns of sexual behavior, stating a more (Asian) or less (Hispanic) conservative attitude towards sexuality within

¹ Rachel Kronick and Cécile Rousseau comment on Canadian law regulations considering migrant children: “[T]hey [children – ed. RK, KS] are constituted as other than Other, or as non-subjects within the legislation. Again and again, children are rendered voice-less, invisible or as merely collateral. Further, the boundary between child as victim and child as threat becomes porous: children’s innocence reifies their parents’ culpability creating a hierarchy of threat” (2015: 566).

² Amnesty International, *Female refugees face physical assault, exploitation and sexual harassment on their journey through Europe*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/01/female-refugees-face-physical-assault-exploitation-and-sexual-harassment-on-their-journey-through-europe/> (accessed: 11.11.2016).

cultures. And what is interesting is that Asian women are more prone to adapt to the new cultural standards of the governing of sexuality (Meston, Ahrold 2010). This body of research shows gender might be the key factor in distinguishing how social actors undergo the acculturation process. It is a nuanced field within which issues such as ‘transnational family life’, ‘mail-order bride’ or ‘marriage migration’ come into play (Palriwala, Uberoi 2008). At the same time, it should not be neglected that the global transformation that takes place in late modernity, including the increased need for mobility, has contributed to the rise of new types of relationships – Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim and Ulrich Beck named them the ‘world families’ (2016).

From Poland to Norway. And even further

The diversity that marks the significance of gender as an analytical category has become a relevant point of interest within migration studies. It is clearly visible this has had an impact on several research lines in social sciences. In this edition of “*Miscellanea Anthropologica et Sociologica*” we are bringing the sociological perspective on the intersections between gender and migration. In the eight papers that are included in this edition, the attention is drawn to multiple aspects of migration, with both direct and indirect links to gender.

A few papers characterize the situation of Polish migrants in Norway³. The rise of research interest in this field is a consequence of a set of international projects that dealt directly with this issue. One of such papers, authored by Oleksandr Ryn-dyk, provides an example of the shifting fatherhood roles of Polish men migrating to Norway. Ryn-dyk emphasized the consequences of migration patterns for individual life trajectories in relations to family life. Using the concepts of ‘work-life balance’ and ‘reconquering manhood’, the author develops ideas for re-evaluating family life, and provides insightful reflections on how moving from Poland to Norway changes not only the economic situation of individuals, but also, how it influences fatherhood patterns.

Gunhild Odden analyses different categories of ‘being a mother’, using qualitative in-depth interviews with Polish mothers. The paper is an intriguing piece of research in which Odden confronts the Polish and the Norwegian maternity styles, and – in consequence – reflects upon the new experiences of mothers. Furthermore, the author describes the influence of structural and financial background in the process of evolving maternity styles.

Both papers (Ryn-dyk and Odden) are an important contribution to the contemporary debate on ‘national’ parenting styles. Magdalena Gajewska, Brita Gejstrad, Svein Nødland, Gunn Vedøy, and Magdalena Żadkowska offer an institu-

³ Polish citizens make up the biggest ethnic minority in this Scandinavian country. There are currently approximately 100,000 migrants of Polish origin in Norway, i.e. 14% of all migrants living in the country.

tional insight into The Child Welfare Service of Norway called 'Barnevernet'. The authors point that Barnevernet has become an institution that Polish migrants feel anxious about. They fear they might lose custody of their children in case of any irregularities noticed by Norwegian law-makers. Using the existing data, such as press articles and internet forums, the authors picture the conflicting perspectives of Barnevernet and the emotional landscape of raising children in Norway.

In the paper written by Paula Pustułka and Magdalena Ślusarczyk the attention is drawn to the issue of work-life balance and its significance in the lives of Polish migrants in Norway. The authors stress the importance of the role of state and the Norwegian health care system in promoting sustainable lifestyles. Simultaneously, they address the benefits of living in Norway, a country with a high quality of life and efficient social services.

The remaining four papers touch upon issues spread geographically across the world. Using ethnographic data, Hewa Madihage Priyanga Sanjeevanie gives a detailed description of practices of women migrating to Sri Lanka. Although the author does not propose conclusive remarks on the consequences of migration, the attention is focused on the downsides: the left-behind children, failed marriages and problems migrant workers have on the labour market.

Barbara Jelonek introduces the Japanese cultural context of gender and migration, characterizing regional marriage trends. With the use of statistical data, Jelonek illustrates the changes that took place in Japan considering the emancipation of women and the decreasing birth rate. Nonetheless, it is still to be seen that Japanese women relatively frequently quit their jobs and play traditional roles set for women.

In the paper by Solvita Pošeiko the main focus is on the images of women in the semiotic landscapes of nine cities from Baltic States. The author decodes the advertising content related to physical appearance and women's 'duties'. The analysis can be seen as a proof that objectifying women's bodies is ubiquitous and may as well be a universal tendency, not limited to the liberal countries of Western Europe.

Marzena Anna Adamiak sheds light on the issue of identity after the postmodern turn, and as a result goes in search of new analytical categories to develop feminist social theory. The author makes use of the category of nomad identity, elaborating on the figure introduced by Rosi Braidotti. This theoretical framework works well to explain the context of migration and the relation with 'Other'. To realize the consequences of such a meeting means to reinforce the identity meanings for both social actors and groups.

We believe the topics covered in this edition of "Miscellanea Anthropologica et Sociologica" are a valuable contribution to the debate on the intersections between gender and migration. The ideas and research cases raised in the papers can undoubtedly serve as an inspiration for further reflection and research ideas.

Radosław Kossakowski
Krzysztof Stachura

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