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Review

of the doctoral thesis entitled **‘Social Remittances into Family Life. The Case of Polish Migrant Families over Time’**, prepared and written by Marta Buler, MA, under the supervision of Prof. Izabela Grabowska and Dr Paulina Pustulka.

The thesis under review is a daring attempt to synthesise several key approaches in migration studies, sociology of time and family studies with the aim of tapping into the diachronic view of social remittances among families with experience of migration. The breadth of theoretical references attests to the Author’s erudition. The dissertation is methodologically innovative, the way Marta Buler selects and compares her empirical data is ingenious. Despite disagreeing with some of the interpretations of the historical and contemporary accounts of how families experience migration and what comes out of it for these families and their social milieu, I find this work a notable and valuable contribution to migration studies, research on migrant families in particular.

Below I will briefly present my reading of the content of the thesis, and will later turn to the discussion of its merits and shortcomings, and well as formulate some polemic remarks.

The main research question that Marta Buler poses is ‘how does the impact of migration on families change overtime’ (p. 3)? It is broken down into 5 more specific research questions referring to social remittances, role of family, relation between remitting and doing family, the intervening factors, as well as family life cycle (p. 6). The dissertation’s structure well reflects the particular aspects of this complex question. The thesis is divided into three parts: theoretical, methodological and empirical. Part I consists of four chapters, out of which one is devoted to the studies of time and temporality, one – to family studies, and two – to migration studies; family is thus viewed through a chropotopic lens of spatial mobility that unfolds overtime. The key issues borrowed by the Author from time studies is the projective-retrospective character of what people think and do as well as the Rosa’s notion of social acceleration/deceleration. Discussing the spatiality of migration, the Author presents migration from Poland that has been shaped by the intersecting processes of (a) global capitalism development with its demand for cheap and expendable labour force (cf. Nail, ‘The Figure of the Migrant’, 2015), (b) political upheavals such as partitions and wars as well as (c) technological and cultural changes. Chapter 3 is primarily a summary of state-of-the-art in the studies devoted to migrants’ motivations and life trajectories, with particular emphasis on the typologies of migrants, e.g. by Eade and co-authors, Engbersen and co-authors or Dziegłowski. Special attention is devoted to the notions of transnationalism, transnational field and social remittances, particularly to the research on

socially remitting by Polish migrants undertaken by Grabowska and co-authors. An important theoretical insight – that the Author suggests will be helpful in her empirical analysis – is presented in Figure 3.3 (p. 51). The focus here is on resistance to social change that comes with spatial mobility, and particularly with remittances, which Marta Buler treats as a black box that has to be unpacked (pp. 50-52). In chapter 4 the focus is on family, and here again, apart from presenting state-of-the-art in migrant family research with particular focus on Poland, the Author identifies her contribution in placing migrant family in diachronic perspective (p. 57) and combining Family Life Cycle (FLC) approach with research on migration and return migration dynamics. She also proposes to treat family more broadly as a kinship group, and emphasises the significance of social control in the practices of ‘doing family’.

Part II contains chapter 5 devoted to the presentation of methodological approach, research material and procedure. The Author uses Adaptive Theory Approach that allows for a two-way interaction between empirical findings and theoretical conceptualizations; she explains that, while opting for mixed-method approach, she has selected to apply only qualitative data triangulation (p. 91). The chapter contains a detailed description of the materials used ((1) historic personal documents and related data on migration from the beginning of the XX century; (2) interviews stemming from large-scale qualitative research on return migration and social remittances carried out in two waves between 2012 and 2015 by the research team led by Grabowska, in which the Author did not participate; and (3) own research that involved fieldwork and in-depth semi-structured interviews with selected research participants from the larger project carried out in 2018) as well as the justification for their selection. The chapter contains a number of well-designed infographics (esp. pp. 87, 99, 100, 110), which make the comprehension of this rather complex research design easier.

Part III is made out of three chapters: chapter 6 is focused on historical migrations, while chapters 7 and 8 are the interpretations of contemporary migration experiences of Polish families. In all three chapters the Author attempts to uncover the mechanisms of socially remitting and the intervening factors that influence remittances overtime. In chapter 6 the migrant families described in the classical sociological work on Polish migration (Thomas and Znaniecki; Krzywicki; Chalasiński; Duda-Dziewierz) are subject of re-analysis. The Author seeks to find whether family-related values and solidarities were affected by migration, how migrants were remitting and what other non-material effects migration experience brought. In chapter 7 the focus is on 4 case studies derived from own research in 2018. These are stories of Eliza, Tadek, Mariana and Jan (and their families), three of whom were also participants in both waves of interviewing in the large-scale research project in 2012–2015. Here, too, visual representations of family connections and mobility are innovative: the Author uses ‘genograms’ that are designed to demonstrate not only family tree but also affective relations between family members, they also visualize information on migration experience. The ‘lifelines’ of migrants (pp. 168, 179, 187), too, are an excellent presentation tool that allows to compare the dimensions of space, professional and family experience by placing them on three parallel timelines of the same temporal scale. The findings from this analysis is that FLC plays an important role in the experience of migration itself as well as in the way it affects non-material aspects of life. The social control is also found to be of importance in ‘decelerating’ after return, i.e. of ‘forgetting’ or setting aside the values and aspirations that were bought ‘back home’ by return migrants. In chapter 8 the focus is shifted onto ‘doing family’, and especially gender

roles practiced by migrants during and after migration. Paying attention to various celebrations as well as to the relations between spouses, between parents and (adult) children, Marta Buler also comes to the conclusion that social innovation resulting from migration is rather limited in the domain of family life.

Apart from these main structural elements, the thesis contains an introduction, discussion and conclusions, summary, bibliography, lists of figures and tables as well as appendices and annexes; these additional parts are covering 85 out of 315 pages of the thesis, and constitute a valuable material in its own right from methodological and empirical point of view. The thesis is designed elegantly and contains a lot of helpful illustrative material (figures, tables, genograms, content guides etc.). As far as I can judge as a non-native speaker, it is well written (minor infelicities, mistakes and typos that I managed to notice are enumerated at the end of the review).

After presenting the summary of the dissertation content as I have read it, I will now move to assessment of its contribution to sociology of migration.

The Author has convincingly demonstrated that she is well-versed in state-of-the-art literature in migration studies, esp. with regard to return migrations, and clearly indicates the gaps in the literature that the dissertation aims to fill (e.g. pp. 42, 53, 57, 59). I find the own contribution well-grounded and well explained. However, I had an impression that the part containing theoretical conceptualization is too long: it counts 72 out of 256 pages of the text (excluding bibliography and annexes), i.e. almost 1/3 of its length. The information about the others' research is too detailed, which does not always allow to clearly see the relations between these theories. Although Marta Buler makes some comments and analytical remarks on these relations, her valuable observations simply drown in excessive detail. The detailed presentation of several theories of migration at times becomes a 'red herring' for a reader – it distracts attention from what exactly is conceptually important and will be useful/used in the thesis (this especially refers to chapter 3, containing the presentation of elaborate typologies, e.g. pp. 40-42). I realize that dissertations should demonstrate the extent of the Author's familiarization with the relevant theoretical literature, but the passages containing exhausting lists of references such as the first paragraph on p. 54 and some fragments on pp. 63-64 are difficult to read and digest. (Also in the conclusions: the last paragraph on p. 239 becomes simply illegible because of excessive references included in one sentence; the simple reference to the theoretical chapters at the end of this sentence would suffice as a proof that the Author knows her literature). If the dissertation is to be prepared for publication as a book, from my point of view it would be beneficial to shorten and edit this part in order to make it a more readable piece: the presentation of state-of-the-art could be more synthetic and the position of the Author could be better accentuated in the narrative.

One of the central notions in the analytical approach proposed by the Author is that of social capital (e.g. pp. 45-46). While I find the definition by Coleman (quoted on p. 46) neither most common nor very helpful, I am also not fully convinced that Putnam's conceptualization of social capital is the best fit for the subject matter of this thesis (e.g. p. 76, 78, 79). Rooted in communitarian tradition of political philosophy, Putnam's notion of social capital is very well adjusted to analyse communities that transcend family – but these are not the subject matter of this dissertation. While – similarly to the article to which the Author refers as – in 'Bowling Alone' Putnam works with the empirical research on individuals' behaviour and beliefs (such

as their engagement in political advocacy organizations, registering to vote, working on a community project, donating to charity or volunteering – alongside having trust in other people, institutions or the feeling of political efficacy), his main concern is for communities such as neighbourhoods, and in his perspective social capital is a ‘collective asset’¹. For Putnam, communities’ ‘state of possession’ in social capital is a gauge for the prospects of democracy and civil society in America. His notion of social capital grows from the field of political sociology: in his earlier work (‘Making Democracy Work’) it has been used to account for why modern northern and central Italy fairs better than southern Italy (as far as democratic institutions’ strength as well as economic development is concerned). Trust is an important component of Putnam’s notion of social capital, but even more important is civic engagement, as the Author herself notes on p. 46.

In the dissertation under review, civic engagement is absolutely marginal in the analytical framework as well as empirical material presented (we learn little of the research participants’ practices of civic engagement, perhaps apart from Tadek’s successful cooperation with local authorities in the matters of sports club), while trust is considered mostly a feature of a group of kin and not of a wider (local) community. (And there are also examples of the lack of trust, e.g. in Eliza’s case, when she is being gossiped about.) Values and obligations are important in the analysis, yet Putnam rather spoke of obligations towards community and society, and not towards one’s family/family members. Importantly, in a different context but comparably, e.g. in Banfield’s notion of ‘amoral familism’ (‘The Moral Basis of Backwards Society’, 1958), family ties have been presented as an obstacle for the development of civil society, democracy and even healthy economy. Family is also latently juxtaposed to civil society in Nowak’s concept of ‘sociological vacuum’ from the 1970s. All of these connotations raise questions about the relations between family ties and broader society, which the Author does not directly address.

The Author argues she has chosen Putnam’s notion because it demonstrates ‘flexible character’ of social capital (p. 46, the formulation, which I do not quite understand) as well as its cumulative and self-reinforcing character. Yet, the examples provided (people willing to find work or accommodation for one another) point more at the reciprocal obligations typical of moral economy (e.g. Carrier, ‘Moral Economy: What’s in the name?’, 2018), which work in the networks of relations and are less typical/possible of a more ‘generalized’ community. While I can try to guess the reasons why the Author has not adopted Massey’s or Portes’ interpretations of migrant social capital (perhaps these approaches are too focused on social capital’s pragmatic features and do not sufficiently account for affective dimension of relations?), I wonder if other conceptualizations of social capital might have been a better fit than the one by Putnam. One possibility would be Granovetter’s notion of strong and weak ties that has been insightfully applied in migration studies, e.g. by Ryan (‘Looking for Weak Ties: Using a Mixed Methods Approach to Capture Elusive Connections’, 2016). Another possibility is Bourdieu’s notion of social capital that well accounts to enabling and limiting capacities of relations as well as links them to individual’s positioning in society. Bourdieu’s framework has also been successfully applied in migration studies, e.g. by Erel (‘Migrating Cultural Capital:

¹ Cf. Garip’s suggestion to distinguish ‘relational’ goods/assets from ‘collective’ ones (‘Social Capital and Migration: How do Similar Resources Lead to Divergent Outcomes’, 2008).

Bourdieu in Migration Studies', 2010), Erel and Ryan ('Migrant Capitals: Proposing a Multi-Level Spatio-Temporal Analytical Framework', 2019), or Nowicka ('Positioning strategies of Polish entrepreneurs in Germany: Transnationalizing Bourdieu's notion of capital', 2013). Having said that, I do not suggest that Putnam's notion is a wrong choice, rather, I would like to see the reasoning behind choosing his notion presented in a more convincing manner.

Methodological approach presented in chapter 5 is comprehensive. The chapter contains the detailed description of the research approach as well as procedure and research techniques used. I find the methodological approach that combines the re-analysis of historical and contemporary data with own research and mixes scales of individual biography with that of diachronically understood society innovative (esp. p. 101; 108, use of genograms) and worthy of applying in migration research. Also, the proposal to follow research participants overtime is commendable. There are only some minor points that I would comment on. First the relation between Adaptive Theory Approach and grounded theory, and more broadly, symbolic interactionism, is not mentioned and/or explained. The notion of e.g. 'sensitizing concept' as the one that 'gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances' is known from Blumer's work ('What Is Wrong with Social Theory?', 1954, p. 7), and in this work it is opposed to 'defining concept'. I wonder what is the relation between Layder's terms 'orienting' and 'sensitizing' concept and those of Blumer, does Layder borrow from and re-work Blumer's conceptualization, or these conceptualizations are independent (and what is their relation to 'core concepts' that the Author herself introduces, p. 90). In this chapter as well as throughout the dissertation the Author demonstrates a talent for arranging information in tables and diagrams that serve as useful analytical tools for readers. In particular, I find Table 5.1 very useful in providing an overview of the empirical material used in the study, the methods used to analyze and interpret it as well as the parts of the dissertation where these analyses are to be found. This table is excellent, however, the text on p. 95 repeats the table's content, and – from my point of view – the text is redundant.

Throughout the thesis, the interpretation of women empowerment and its relation to migration is somewhat schematic. It appears that providing care and providing material resources are strictly separated, the former being ascribed to private sphere and traditional gender roles (e.g. p. 159) while the latter to public sphere and emancipated womanhood. Such strict division is untenable e.g. from the livelihood² perspective or moral economy perspective: especially when material resources are low or uncertain, unpaid work becomes an important substitute or supplement for monetary income, and it simultaneously involves a complex web of mutual obligations, dependencies and power relations. Similarly, involvement in labor market as opposed to doing unpaid care work at home is not always an economically rational choice in the circumstances when salaries are low, or jobs involve long commuting. It is true that these structural circumstances may – and usually do – reinforce traditional gender roles, yet the decisions of families to delegate unpaid car work to women cannot be treated as solely 'cultural choices', their rooting is socio-economic conditions at the macro level has to be acknowledged as well.

² See, for instance, 'livelihood strategy approach' that White develops in her research on Polish migrant families, e.g.: 'Polish circular migration and marginality: A livelihood strategy approach', 2016.

In parts of the thesis, notably in chapter 6, the representation of women's migration is slightly skewed: it both exaggerates the immobility of women in earlier historic periods³ and too easily equates women's migration with the potential of challenging gender norms (e.g. p. 122, 127). This renders analysis slightly schematic, with some kind of West-centred, linear evolutionary picture of social development at the background and the presupposition that migrants want change. I think that history of migration process is very complex and evades many simple categorizations. As Praszalowicz has demonstrated, some migrations have been 'conservative', i.e. aimed at preserving a tradition or way of life that has been endangered in the 'home' society or community (Praszalowicz, 'Menonici w Europie i Amerykach: wielokrotne migracje konserwatywne', 2015). With respect to women's migrations, some Ravenstein's 'laws' indicate that women were even more mobile than men in certain circumstances (e.g. short distance migration) (these laws are discussed by Marta Buler on pp. 30-31, but not directly connected with the analysis in chapter 6). As Foner has demonstrated in her study ('In the New Land: A comparative Vie of Immigration', 2005), migration from Central and Eastern Europe to the U.S. at the turn of the XIX and XX centuries meant emancipation or confinement to domestic sphere, depending on whether women were married with children or not, and depending on what they did prior to migration. E.g. for many married Jewish women migration meant confinement to domestic sphere, a regress in emancipation in comparison to their intensive involvement in work outside home and presence in public sphere of local communities, e.g. as itinerant traders. On the contrary, many of young unmarried women who came to the U.S. with their peasant parents were drawn into factories, which gave them more involvement in the host society and independent income (which families sometimes tried to appropriate, but this is where young women were starting to negotiate their roles). Such examples could be many. Apart from age, moment of FLC (cf. p. 132) and ethnicity, also the region of origin, presence of co-ethnics in the host country as well as class background of women who migrated shaped their gender roles, social mobility and degree of involvement in host society.

In her book 'Społeczność wiejska' [Village community] Zawistowicz-Adamska who in late 1930s spent a year doing ethnographic research in Zaborów, a village in Southern Poland, brings evidence that young women from rather well-off village families treated migration as an investment that helped to be successful in performing traditional gender roles⁴ (this is quite contrary to the Author's suggestion on p. 122 that young peasant women would not want to return to their village, once they had tasted work outside the village). Zawistowicz-Adamska also indicates that, for poor families, migrations meant survival rather than investment, hard work in harsh conditions barely allowed them to make ends meet, and any form of investment,

³ A Polish historian Wyżga warns that female peasants' mobility can be underestimated due to the fact it is underrepresented in historical sources - they worked in domestic sector, as personal servants, and their coming and going left only sporadic traces in written documents ('Mobilność i migracje chłopów do miast polskich doby preindustrialnej. Z badań nad mikroregionem krakowskim' [Mobility and migrations of peasants in preindustrial era. From research on Krakow microregion], 2015).

⁴ '—Jak pieniądze so ze świata, to łatwiej się wydać, bo dziewczyna jest pokupniejsza — powiadają z przekonaniem.' (Zawistowicz-Adamska 1948, p. 18). Somewhat related to this issue, and particularly to the meaning of return: on p. 39 Marta Buler speaks of 'risk of return migration': does this formulation suggest that return is an unfavourable scenario for migrants? Does it mean that there is a normative model of migration trajectory that is taken for granted in this thesis and/or that objectively exists?

material or otherwise, as an outcome of migration was beyond their reach⁵. She differentiates not only between rich and poor in the village but also between destination countries, out of which the U.S. brings most possibilities of change (and this destination is also available only to the more affluent peasants), but also becomes a site for building strong local identities and developing a sense of belonging to local community (cf. p. 139, Chałasiński's view goes along similar lines), apart from gaining new organization skills⁶.

Additionally, I think that in the re-analysis of the historic accounts of migration more information about the authors of the accounts could be valuable, especially when the empirical material is available only through these authors' accounts. This refers particularly to Krzywicki (cf. pp. 117-118) who was a socialist and, as truly public sociologist, openly sought emancipation of the subaltern groups, such as the unemployed, workers, migrants, women. He has initiated a famous diaries project before the second world war, and the call of migrants' diaries has resulted in a number of volumes that present a very heterogeneous picture of trajectories of emancipation or lack thereof (*nota bene* almost all of them were written by men). Undoubtedly, Krzywicki saw migrations as a window of opportunity for an unlikely change. His ideas about the emancipating influence of migration on women and other subaltern groups should be thus seen through the prism of his bias towards optimism in this matter, and the scenario he envisaged was wishful thinking in many respects.

Continuing with the issue of non-linear character of change related to gender roles and emancipation, I have a particular question: on p. 56 the statistics for women employment compare data from 1950s and in 2018, the Polish People's Republic (PRL) period is almost fully omitted. While the public policy towards women in socialist block has been dubbed 'pseudo-emancipation', since women were carrying a double burden of productive and reproductive labour, there are some statistics that employment among women between ages 40 and 44 has been up to 80-85% in the 1980s (Plomien, 'From Socialism to Capitalism: Women and their Changed Relationship with the Labor Market in Poland,' 2004; Polakowski, Szelewa (eds), 'Polityka społeczna PRL', 2015). I think it is important to account for these fluctuations to achieve a more nuanced picture of women's role in society overtime. This is especially important to understand the biographies and social roles of such women as Tania, Jan's mother: she is presented in the dissertation mainly as a person performing a traditional gender role, while at least for some time in her life she has been a single mother providing for 7 children (see footnote 56 on p. 215 that indicates that 'she was barely present' as a parent at home due to the workload she had), i.e. not only did she fulfil breadwinning functions but she also represented an atypical family arrangement (not 'husband and wife plus common children').

The analysis of diverse empirical material presented in chapter 6-8 is rich and engaging. It also allows to formulate important questions for further research. Marta Buler has successfully demonstrated the value of longitudinal research and of the returns to research

⁵ 'Spotkałam stare kobiety, które dziś jeszcze mają bruzdy na nogach – ślady po kopaniu buraków w rozmiętym jesiennym polu. Przez wszystkie sezony, czasem w ciągu lat trzydziestu, były przydzielane tylko do tej pracy. ... A że praca była na akord, zapracowywali się aż do ostatecznego ośpienia. Jakże więc mogli rozwijać w sobie przedsiębiorczość! Nie można też mówić w tych warunkach, że "świat" zobaczyli i szerszym spojrzeniem zdołali go ogarnąć. Nie wzbogacili własnego życia i na wieś rodzinną nic nowego nie wnieśli' (Zawistowicz-Adamska 1948, p. 18).

⁶ '... tęsknota za krajem sprzyja pielęgnowaniu rodzimych form kultury na dalekiej obczyźnie. [...] gdy zaczęli przysyłać zamówienia na haftowane gorsety i spódnice, zaborowianki nabrały szacunku dla własnego stroju i noszą go do dziś podczas świąt i uroczystości' (Zawistowicz-Adamska 1948, p. 19).

participants to record the changes in their belief and practices overtime. Potentially, the approach offered here could be enriched by ethnographic methods that allow to better grasp the context, i.e. provides better insight into practices.

The serendipitous potential of longitudinal qualitative research is perfectly exemplified by how the views of Tadek on British diversity and multiculturalism gradually shift from its appreciation (in 2012, 2013) to suspicion and disapproval (2018) (pp.183-6). The events that he has experienced first-hand (the presence of people of different ethnicities in his social environment) or almost first-hand (the terrorist attack in London) are presented differently across time. In the interviews of the 1st and 2nd waves he did not mention terrorist attack at all, and perceived that migrants change local communities in a good way, he also accentuated that he promoted tolerance to difference in his professional practice in Poland. In 2018, his views are changed considerably, and I completely agree with Marta Buler in seeing the reasons for this transformation not only in social control of his current place of residence (p. 185), but also in the influence of broader public discourse (a sort of conformity to the dominating climate of opinion). In this particular case, it was the European refugee crisis of 2015-16 (p. 186) and the coming of the refugee question ‘out of the shadows’ in Polish public discourse⁷ that most probably influenced Tadek’s opinions on multiculturalism. This finding is indeed intriguing for it indicates that the formative influence of direct experience is limited by the pressures of social control exercised not only by an immediate community of residence and professional activity but also by a broader community, such as nation. (Indirectly linked to this issue there is a more particular question on social control: I wonder if the Author has registered how exactly does it block opportunities as a measure of coercion? For instance, referring to chapter 7, was Eliza having less clients before marrying? Was her ‘big wedding’ a way of attracting potential clients, cf. p. 208?)

The case of Mariana is interesting, too, although it raises some further questions. She is claimed to have gained ‘some professional skills’ (p. 193) and it is said that ‘abroad she experienced improvements in her professional position’ (p. 194), she is also said to have ‘gained experience in professional field which [she] was able to put to use in Poland’ (pp.164-5). But judging from the quotations from Mariana and information provided in pen portrait she has experienced a downward professional mobility and worked below her qualifications, while abroad. On p. 193 Mariana is quoted saying ‘My position was way below what I am here now in Poland’. She migrated at the age of 28 and was then a qualified nurse at the time who was not able to get a decently paid job, and I assume she would not have been able to get her qualifications recognized fully (p. 147, at least there is no mentioning of the process of qualifications being recognized), so she became a care worker in elderly care home in a small town in the UK. She and her partner (later husband) used this opportunity to ‘have a high life’ (p. 191) for three years, which for them meant to be able to travel abroad for vacations (p. 193), or to go to fancy clubs/discos outside of their town of residence. The skills Mariana has gained during her stay are primarily English language skills and soft skills stemming from living in multicultural milieu or experiencing medieval town first-hand. As for her professional field,

⁷ Cf. Kubicki et al., ‘Wyjście z cienia: Polityka uchodźcza w sytuacji kryzysu’, 2017, suggest that prior to the crisis refugees and, broader, migration in Poland were not considered ‘a problem’, but the crisis triggered this perception: ‘Stepping of the issue out of the shadows and the ensuing interest of public opinion resulted in the construction of exile as a social problem...’.

she of course has been able to observed how the institution worked, but no formal development in her profession of a nurse is mentioned. (It is somewhat comparable with Eliza, who worked primarily as a nanny while being a migrant, and made her beautician course in Poland; the difference is that she gained some experience in beautician's business abroad after having acquired qualifications; nevertheless, her main formal qualifications were gained in Poland and her vision of the profession comes from a Polish 'guru' from Krakow, pp. 141,163). So, I take that Mariana consciously resigned from her professional development for the sake of possibility to earn descent money and have an interesting life as a young adult, before starting a family, which appeared to be a priority for her (p. 193). So, I suggest the Author might wish to be a bit more particular when distinguishing the acquisition of soft skills or universally useful skills from gaining professional skills in a stricter sense of the word. (Having written that, I realize that perhaps my interpretation is absolutely wrong and is simply an outcome my limited knowledge about this case; so, if the Author has more information regarding professional skills acquisition, she might wish to better expose it when preparing the manuscript for publication).

As I mentioned, I enjoyed the analysis and it made me think of the cases presented in a more ethnographic way. What appears to potentially be an additional factor that might affect mobility and family practices, social remittances as well as overall life trajectories is the socio-economic position of migrants' parents (or parents-in-law) and the assets they can potentially offer to their children (children-in-law). This is linked with the issue of inheriting social position. There are significant contrasts in this respect among major research participants, so for instance Tadek's parents cannot offer him much, while his wife Agnieszka's parents own a house, and 'their children live with them' (p. 145). So, when earning money abroad to buy a flat, Agnieszka and Tadek are making an investment, acquiring something extra and not simply meeting their basic needs. This is of course a wild guess, but marrying into Agnieszka's family, Tadek also acquires a support of her father, a local businessman, and her mother who works in administration, which could be a consequential factor in a small town, e.g. in securing the support of local administration to his sport club. The above might mean that the socio-economic position of his in-laws intervenes with what he is remitting from his migratory experience in his becoming 'an important leader in the local community' (p. 180). I wonder if the Author considers that the inclusion of parents' socio-economic position (as well as their FLC and health) in the picture would provide additional explanations for the patterns of social remittances overtime.

Marta Buler is a keen and skilful researcher, whose interpretations of research material are reflexive of the relation between researcher and research participant, their perception of the other's potential expectations etc. For instance, she notices that one of research participant's way of speaking on gender issues may be guided by his perception of what (female) researchers would like to hear (p. 221). At the same time, some research participants' words are taken at face value, such as e.g. Tania's words of her wish to protect their children's morality as a motivation (which concomitantly makes her fit the category of a Mother-Pole or even 'helicopter parent'). While I do not doubt that this is one of her important motivations, there could also be additional ones, such as having not much 'relational goods' (close relations) in own town after all the children have left, contribution to children's livelihood as an economic strategy as well as (perhaps) guilt feelings stemming from the memories of how she had to leave (much smaller) children alone when – as a single parent – she worked instead of being

with them. These are of course speculative interpretations, but it is worthwhile to probe different potential explanations of participants' words, especially when contextual information is available.

On a more critical or rather polemic note, I found that social inequalities, that can also be named class structure of the society, are at one at the same backgrounded and form a basis for moral evaluations of research participants' practices and beliefs. The attitudes and practices typical of the upper classes are treated as hegemonic, i.e. the ones that are legitimate and should be emulated by everyone (cf. p. 170: the opportunity to observe how upper classes raise their children 'widens her horizons' for Eliza). The possibility that 'valuation criteria should be pluralized' (as Lamont suggests in her research on class and respectability⁸), appears not to be considered a viable option.

One example of 'blame the victim' sort of attitude to lower classes comes from chapters 7 and 8 (esp. pp. 155, 161, 182, 229, 230). Zdzisław (65 y.o.) and Roman (66 y.o.) represent the 'parents' generation', both are currently married men with grown up children, both have migration experience. What differs them is their class position, although the information provided is not sufficient to establish to what extent it was inherited and to what extent – acquired in their respective life-courses. Roman most probably has technical education (i.e. *zawodówka*: 'he worked as a technician', p. 144) and so does Zdzisław ('he worked as a builder at state owed companies', p. 141), but while Roman has two children, Zdzisław has four, and the latter's wife has not participated in formal labor market, unlike Roman's wife who works in administration, and had support of her family during Roman's absence. Both men migrated, but the economic outcomes were rather different: Roman returned and managed to establish his own business, while Zdzisław lost the business he had prior to 1989, migrated and remained a circular migrant until his old age. Marta Buler suggests 'he possibly did not have skills to compete on the growing sales market' (p. 155), which is in itself a very questionable thing to suggest (how his skills in doing business were assessed by the researcher? is performance (success/failure) of a business sufficient indicator to speak of lack of skills of an entrepreneur? what about intervening variables? what about the context? how many businesses failed in the beginning of the 1990s? The attribution of failure to the lack of skills is a very neo-liberal thing to suggest⁹ and it reproduces the discourse about 'losers' and 'winners' of social transformation, that has quite convincingly been criticised¹⁰). Zdzisław is also an alcoholic. What appeared surprising to me is the discrepancy in treating these two men's and their family's emotions. When reading the thesis, I felt that Roman is more respectable than Zdzisław. Zdzisław is called a dysfunctional father and husband whose being away from family due to migration 'was beneficial for everybody' (p. 155). On p. 161 it is mentioned however that he suffered (he is also quoted saying he cried for his family), also his wife appears to have cared a lot for him (on p. 158 she is quoted saying that she left four children at home and went to stop him from 'going crazy'). And yet, on p. 155 the Author takes the words of Eliza and her mother Katarzyna at face value, and since they have not said directly 'Zdzisław's migration was traumatic for us',

⁸ Lamont 'From "having" to "being": self-worth and the current crisis of American society', 2019.

⁹ Cf. Lamont's (2019, 666) suggestion that under neoliberalist the 'scripts of the self that ... emphasize material success, social status, competitiveness and the **privatization of risk** (or self-reliance)' 'become widely dominant' [emphasis added – AH].

¹⁰ Buchowski, 'The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother'; Rakowski, 'Hunters, Gatherers, and Practitioners of Powerlessness. An Ethnography of the Degraded in Postsocialist Poland', 2016.

and since he was an alcoholic (similarly to one of his sons), the experience of migration in this family is considered non-traumatic, and even a blessing. The experience of Roman's family is quite different: they directly speak of Roman's migration as traumatic (p. 155) and devastating (p. 182) experience. The Author is empathetic with their emotions. Neither Roman nor his wife are called 'dysfunctional spouses', although it is mentioned that at least one of them possibly had extra-marital affair during Roman's migration. Perhaps in interpreting these facts I have adopted a biased or at least oversensitive approach due to my social anthropological background that – to an extent – privileges the vulnerable, but I found that lower class position of Zdzisław made him less dignified, and Roman – more dignified in the proposed interpretations, and that the main reason for this differentiation is their respective socio-economic position in society, and not their 'doing family' practices as such. My remark on social inequality and making respectability dependant on socio-economic success is clearly polemic, and I would like to encourage the Author refute it or debate with it.

Finally, having the prospect that this thesis will be prepared for publication in mind, I would like to mention some formal issues that might need clarification or correction that I have noticed.

Shortcomings of genograms: The colour of legends that explain genogram graphic and the colour of genogram themselves do not fully match (e.g. experience of migration is lilac in the former and pink in the latter). Genograms do not order children according to age, but also in one of them they do not make clear that seven Tatiana's children have two fathers, only one of these men – Leon – is present in the scheme (p.152). The information in genograms is not fully explained/used in the text and leaves some questions: e.g. Łucja, Jan's mother-in-law was born in 1960, she is 58, but it is written she is a pensioner and the word Syberia is added. What does this information refer to? Why a woman in pre-pension age is called a pensioner? I suggest that the details that are not used in the text could be omitted in genograms. This also refers to the markings of strained or broken relations (marked red): they draw reader's attention, but being 'unexploited' in the text they leave reader wondering and wanting more information.

Repetitions: p. 70 and 80-81: The difference between tables 4.3 and 4.4. are minor, I think table 4.4. would be sufficient as a more extensive comparison (plus Morgan 1993, 2013 should be included in the note on sources, p. 81).

Word choice: p. 2, footnote 1, last word: carefulness or caution?

p. 165, line 10 from top: should it be 'deported' instead of 'extradited'?

Unclear fragments:

p. 32, line 4 from top: should there be a word 'not'?

p. 56, line 9 from top: what exactly was meant by 'see below/ above'?

p. 142, line 3 from top: should it be Aneta's or Aneta?

p. 165, line 13 from bottom: Mariana's 1st migration in the UK is marked as 2006, should it be 2005 (cf. p. 147)?

p. 228: Krystyna is not mentioned in genogram of Jan (p. 152) – it is Katarzyna, his eldest sister, who is meant when Krystyna is mentioned on this page?

Typos and other minor mistakes:

-a recurrent typo: the word 'dissertation' is followed by an apostrophe and no space after it and the next word (e.g. dissertation's, p. 7, same on pp. 8, 20, 86, 90, 100);

p. 43, line 10 from bottom: should there be a closing quotation mark? The end of quotation seems to be in line 9;

p. 52, line 15 from top: should it be 'past and present' (and not 'past and presence')?

p. 91, line 1 from bottom: is the repetition of words 'three components' intentional?

p. 100 and elsewhere in the thesis: the reference in text is Buler & Grabowska 2017, while in bibliography it is Grabowska & Buler 2017, which order is correct?

p. 106, line 6 from top: it is not indicated which of Trevena's works is reference;

p. 120, line 7 from top: should be 'theoretical' (not 'theretical');

p. 137, line 1 from bottom: 'grandparents breaks' (grammar);

p. 176, line 9 from bottom: should it be 'with my husband'?

p. 178, line 5 from bottom: 'they could felt' (grammar);

p. 206, line 7 from bottom: 'it wouldn't fun' (grammar);

p. 216, line 16 from bottom: should be 'buy' not 'but';

p. 219, line 9 from top: should be 'Prus', not 'Prusa';

p. 227, line 13 from bottom, and p. 220, line 9 from top: probably should be 'who', not 'that' (grammar);

p. 228, line 4 from top: 'this boys' (grammar).

Having mentioned several formal issue above, I would like to emphasise there were few of them and reiterate that I found this dissertation very carefully prepared and well-designed: kudos to the Author for her skills and diligence, since it must have taken considerable effort and ingenuity to make the manuscript look and read so well.

To summarize, the thesis prepared by Marta Buler and submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in sociology grows out of the original research that is ingeniously designed, meticulously implemented and well presented in the text. The analytical framework used in the interpretations of the empirical material is imaginatively and self-dependently constructed from the 'building blocks' coming from migration studies, time studies and family studies. The critical comments and polemic issues presented in the review by no means undermine the considerable value of Marta Buler's contribution to the development of the sociology of migration. Therefore, I conclude that the manuscript presented for review fulfils the criteria for the PhD theses set by Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education ('Ustawa o tytule naukowym i stopniach naukowych' from 14 March 2003, article 13), and recommend that Marta Buler, MA, is allowed to pass to the next stage of PhD degree awarding procedure.

Warsaw, 28.02.2021

Anna Horolets
