

Integration and Cooperation in the Context of Social Capital of Ethnically Diverse Local Communities in a Migration Situation¹

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The aim of the article is to analyse the level, forms and manifestations of cooperation and integration between the members of two ethnically diverse local communities in which there are intense international migrations. Based on individual in-depth interviews, expert interviews and observations, an attempt was made to determine to what extent international labour migrations and ethnic and cultural diversity affect the level of integration in cooperation between the actual and declarative dimensions. The aim of the article is also to determine what is the nature of the local bond, in particular the neighbourhood bond. It has been demonstrated that economic migration is an important factor influencing the level of integration and cooperation in local communities: it results in removing the migrant from his or her community of origin, thus weakening the same level of integration and cooperation between its members, but also provides an opportunity to make new, lasting and significant acquaintances, including between people from the same locality of different ethnic and cultural origin. Spatial mobility can also cause divisions between its subjects and the rest of the community. The impact of international migrations on social capital depends on the time the migrant spends outside the local community. It is not the length of stay abroad that matters, but above all the frequency of visits to the place of origin.

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Introduction

An important element constructing a local community in the social and psychological dimension is a social bond of a structural and conscious nature. It determines the internal organisation of a group, the unification of its members around certain values, and also determines its identity by virtue of the type of social relations that are constitutive for it.

Local ties can be recognised as a specific kind of social capital. They are *less binding than family and friendship relations, i.e. the strong ties that are typical of bonding capital, but that are not the same as the weak ties that are created with spatially distant people who constitute the capital called bridging* (Lewicka, 2012, s. 238). Therefore, ties with neighbours, which are the basis of a strong local community, are a social capital mediating between binding and bridging resources. According to the researcher, the “indirect capital” has both binding features (spatial proximity, possibility of obtaining support in important life issues) and bridging features (lack of clear bonds) (Lewicka 2012, p. 332). As the research by J. Glanville and P. Paxton has demonstrated, in relations with “acquaintance strangers” such as neighbours or shopkeepers from the surrounding shops, trust is built, which then translates into the so-called generalised trust (also towards strangers) (Glanville & Paxton, 2007). Therefore, it is important to refer to the micro level –local communities– in the research on social capital.

Taking into account the above findings, the main objective of the study was to analyse the level, forms and manifestations of cooperation and integration between the members of two ethnically diverse local communities located in Poland in the Opolskie and Podlaskie voivodships, in which there are intense international migrations from the perspective of the social capital category. Based on empirical research, an attempt was made to determine to what extent international labour migrations and ethnic and cultural diversity affect the level of integration and cooperation between members of two local communities, both in factual and declarative terms. The aim of the research described in this paper was also to determine what the nature of a local bond, in particular a neighbourhood bond, is, whether it is of an intra- or inter-ethnic nature, how residents of different ethnic and cultural origins perceive themselves, and whether and how mutual relations and the quality of bonds are affected by experiences of international economic migrations. The conducted analyses were also aimed at determining the level of cooperation between residents and identifying factors that hinder them and cause conflicts in the examined local communities, as well as indicating the nature and specificity of social divisions. The paper will discuss some of the consequences of migration for local communities in the context of their impact on social capital.

When beginning the empirical studies that became the basis for this article, it was assumed that economic migrations are an important factor influencing the level of

integration and cooperation in local communities. At the same time, it was assumed that the character of this impact is not unambiguous and depends on the previous social capital base denoted in a given local community: in communities characterised by a significant level of this resource, migration may be an additional factor increasing it, e.g. through common experiences or the importation of positive models, while in poor communities, it causes its further erosion and influences the deepening of various divisions and conflicts. It has also been assumed that international labour migrations result in removing the migrants from their communities of origin, thus weakening the level of integration and cooperation between its members, but at the same time provide an opportunity to make new, lasting and significant acquaintances, including those from the same locality.

Theoretical background

In the state-of-the-art, there are two opposing theoretical orientations describing relations between social capital and ethnic diversity i.e. the contact hypothesis and the conflict hypothesis. They constitute the starting point for further considerations on the role of social capital in ethnically diverse local communities, including the research discussed in this article. Supporters of the contact hypothesis assume that frequent contact with representatives of different groups may contribute to the formulation of more positive opinions of foreign groups and weaken prejudices and stereotypes (Nelson 2009: 309). Diversity thus promotes inter-ethnic tolerance and social solidarity. By frequent contact with people who are different from each other, individuals are able to overcome their initial prejudices, which will result in increased tolerance and trust (Hewstone 2009; Stolle & Harell 2013). Ethnic diversity therefore helps to reduce ethnocentric attitudes and contributes to increasing social trust and solidarity (Putnam 2008:141–142)³. However, in order for an inter-group contact to be successful and to have the positive effects mentioned above, it must meet four fundamental conditions, i.e.: participants in the interaction must be on equal footing, they must share common objectives which result in inter-group cooperation, and their activities must be supported by recognised authorities (Allport 1954). At the same time, it is important to underline the importance of actually establishing the contacts and interactions between different groups, because where different ethnic groups live side by side without significant social interactions, stereotypes and prejudices can be exacerbated rather than improved (Pettigrew 1998).

The supporters of the conflict hypothesis (Sherif et al. 1954), in turn, say that ethnic diversity results in inter-group competition for limited resources, which in turn

³ R. Putnam's findings are particularly relevant to this article, because it was his theory of social capital that formed the basis for the operationalization of this concept for the purposes of the research discussed in this text.

promotes mistrust towards people from outside the group. Ethnically diverse communities are characterised by distrust, low levels of social cohesion and disputes over the fair provision of public goods (Alesina & La Ferrara 2000, Costa & Kahn 2003), Phillips 2005). According to R. Putnam, in ethnically diverse communities, social capital is weaker: their members make fewer contacts, show less trust towards strangers, set up associations less often, participate in public life less actively; they isolate themselves from others. This phenomenon is not the result of the influx of new waves of immigrants, as this regularity applies to all members of the community, including those who have been settled for generations. In ethnically diverse communities, their members do not only have less trust in “others” and “strangers”, but also have less trust in members of their own group (Putnam 2008). In the short term, ethnic diversity poses a challenge to social solidarity between residents and can act as a brake on creating and developing social capital. In ethnically diverse local communities, trust (even in representatives of their own race, as well as officials, for example) is lower, altruism and cooperation within the community is less frequent, inhabitants also have fewer friends and believe less in the possibility of their own influence on the local authorities. It is important, however, that all these behaviours are not ethnically motivated: the inhabitants of the communities under investigation are generally defined by a lower level of social capital (Putnam 2007). In ethnically diverse neighbourhoods people who generally have frequent contact with their neighbours are much more trustworthy than people who have limited interpersonal relationships, regardless of which ethnic group they belong to (Sturgis et al. 2014). In the medium and long term, however, ethnic diversity can lead to significant cultural, developmental and economic benefits, as well as new forms of social solidarity and identity, which will mitigate the previous negative diversity effects (Putnam 2008:138).

Putnam’s research of the relationship between ethnicity and social capital has been criticized by, among others, Richard Florida (2004). He accuses the American political scientist of mistaking causes for effects and viewing every social problem through the lens of social capital deficit. Florida observes that migrants work hard to establish their boundaries of life in a new country, which means that they have far less time to engage in civic activities in the receiving country. Likewise, activity in the social area is further limited by an insufficient level of language proficiency and prominent cultural differences. Migrants much more often are, or feel excluded from the traditional institutions and organizations of political and civic activity (Florida 2010:280). Ethnic fragmentation of societies has a negative impact on the involvement of individuals in social life, as in such a situation, people are more likely to interact within their own ethnic group (Alesina & La Ferrara 2000). At the same time, it should be emphasized that the amount of social capital in the neighbourhood was negatively affected not by ethnic diversity itself, but by the economic status of the neighbourhood correlated with such diversity (households in ethnically heterogeneous communities were poorer) (Letki 2008). Furthermore, the importance of quality and types of contacts

undertaken is underlined: the negative link between ethnicity and social capital may have resulted from the fact that the levels of contacts between groups were insufficient or not of sufficient quality to inspire trust and other positive intra-group attitudes (Hewstone 2009). In addition, it should be noted that Putnam's research results have been confirmed mainly on the American soil, while in Europe they are proven true to a limited extent (Van Der Meer & Tolsma 2014, Gijsberts, van der Meer & Dagevos 2012).

To summarise, the contact hypothesis therefore assumes that ethnic diversity contributes to intergroup divisions eroding, but at the same time fosters the formation/development of bridging social capital (Laurence 2011). In contrast, according to the conflict hypothesis, ethnic diversity leads to the strengthening of intra-group solidarity (at the expense of inter-group solidarity), which may result in developing bonding capital. Living in an ethnically mixed neighbourhood favourably influences the degree of tolerance between individuals, but at the same time lowers trust in neighbours and attachment to the community, which translates into a decrease in motivation to take action for the benefit of their local community. The effects of ethnic diversity will also depend on its scale, i.e. whether it is studied at the local (e.g. neighbourhood) or wider level (e.g. the entire metropolis). Ethnic diversity at the regional or metropolitan level can create a feeling of threat to the population (due to competition for limited resources, e.g. jobs, access to social services) and thus lead to prejudice and conflict. At the same time, the ethnic diversity of the immediate environment is conducive to increasing mutual tolerance and reducing prejudices (Oliver 2013). This assumption, referring to local communities, has been tested, deepened and developed in the research discussed later in the article.

Research methods

The aim of the research discussed in the article was to describe and analyse the impact of foreign economic migrations on local social capital in culturally diverse communities. Cooperation and integration are considered the main elements (apart from trust and social networks⁴) of social capital, which is the basic category of analysis. It refers to features of society's organization such as trust, norms and relationships that can increase the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions (Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti 1995: 258).

R. Putnam distinguishes two types of social capital: bonding and bridging. The first type, also called integrative, is exclusive to people from outside the community. It is a resource that strengthens small groups as opposed to other communities, and thus gives rise to intergroup antagonisms: it is a "sociological superglue". Bridging

⁴ Including migration networks in particular

capital, in turn, is inclusive in nature and creates bonds between different groups and their members: it is a “social super lubricant” (Putnam, 2008, 14). Figure 1 presents a detailed method of operationalising the concept of social capital for the purposes of the research discussed in the article, which focuses mainly on analysing one of its dimensions, i.e. integration and cooperation.

Figure 1

Operationalization of the social capital concept

TRUST	COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION	MEMBERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS	LOCAL CIVIC ACTIVITY	LINKAGES, NETWORKS	NORMS AND VALUES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generalised trust • individualised trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cooperation scale • willingness to cooperate • attitude towards cooperation • nature of divisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • membership scale • activity • internal diversity in the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation in local elections • electoral preferences • interest in politics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social network size • diversity of networks • participation in cultural events • open-mindedness • the use of networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generalised norms and values • honesty

Source: own work

In the research described in this paper, cooperation was defined as voluntary activity, both formalised and non-formalised, for the benefit of the local community as a whole and its individual members, aimed at achieving common goals. A cooperation thus understood was considered at three levels, i.e. the scale of cooperation between residents, their willingness and attitude towards cooperation was analysed.

When studying cooperation between residents, both its declarative level (willingness to cooperate) and its real scale were taken into account. The respondents were also asked what factors are responsible for the fact that some people are willing to cooperate and some remain passive and to what extent the cooperation behaviour (or lack thereof) is influenced by the ethno-cultural diversity of localities and migration processes.

The level of local community integration was studied by analysing the size and diversity of social networks created by its inhabitants, as well as the nature of divisions. The indicators of integration include establishing close relations with neighbours, providing mutual help and a declaratory willingness to bring it, having friends and acquaintances from the same place, undertaking joint projects for the benefit of the local community. The methodological proposal from F. Fukuyama, which is the measurement of social capital through the study of the scale of its “lack”, i.e. various types of social dysfunctions, was also applied. As the researcher points out, *it can be assumed that since social capital reflects the existence of cooperative norms, deviant*

social attitudes ipso facto indicate the lack of such capital (Fukuyama 2003: 175). In the study discussed here, questions were asked about the scale and nature of local conflicts and divisions.

For the purposes of empirical research, S. Eisenstad's (1953) definition of migration was clarified. It was recognized that the displacement must be inter-state and its purpose should be profitable, i.e. the motive deciding about the decision to leave should be the desire to improve the economic situation of the potential migrant and their family by starting work abroad. Therefore, both the factor conditioning the initiation of mobility and its final effect were important. It was not specified whether taking up a job should be legal, but it was important to receive payment for the activities performed. In addition, it was assumed that foreign stay should last at least three months. It was considered that this is the shortest time necessary for acclimatization, entry into an environment of a different nature and at the same time sufficiently long for the outgoing person to distance him or herself from the place of origin.

The selection of localities in which empirical research was conducted was purposeful.

After analysing the state of the art and the CSO data, Leśnica in Opolskie voivodship and Siemiatycze in Podlaskie voivodship were selected for empirical research. The ethnic and cultural diversity of the inhabitants of the Opole region concerned their nationality and was determined on the basis of the results of the 2002 National Census⁵. In the case of Podlasie, confessional diversity was taken into account and estimated based on the analysis of the literature on the subject and statistics of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches⁶. The degree of spatial mobility was determined on the basis of unpublished CSO⁷ data on the scale of foreign temporary migrations over 3 months. Due to the large inaccuracy of the above data, telephone conversations with the employees of the Municipal Offices were additionally carried out regarding the declared and estimated actual number of migrants.

According to estimates, about 30% of the population of Siemiatycze are members of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church (Goss 2004). At the same time, Siemiatycze is

⁵ The perception of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Opole region's population only in national categories is a great simplification, but it was necessary due to the nature of NSP data, which are the only comprehensive statistical studies of this issue at the municipal level.

⁶ Podlasie is described as a social and cultural bouquet (Sadowski, 2007, 106), because next to Poles (historical, national and territorial majority), there are, among others, national minorities (e.g. Belarusians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Russians, Jews), ethnic minorities (Tatars, Roma), minority religious denominations (Orthodox, Muslims), regional communities, urban and rural communities with a clearly distinct sense of identity. Featured categories are not culturally homogeneous, are not mutually exclusive and are not internally integrated. As A. Sadowski states, they form a dynamic, variable and often interrelated conglomerate of cultural diversity of inhabitants. In addition, religious affiliation does not generally coincide with ethnic-national. Inhabitants of the Roman Catholic denomination are Poles, Lithuanians, Roma, rarely Belarusians and Ukrainians, and the Orthodox denominations – Poles, Belarussians, Ukrainians, Russians (Sadowski, 2016, 80).

⁷ Central Statistical Office (Polish: Główny Urząd Statystyczny)

a symbol of the Polish “migrating town”⁸. On the other hand, a significant percentage (36%) of the Lesniczans are persons declaring their non-Polish national identity (Urząd Statystyczny w Opolu 2003: 81)⁹. In the municipality, German was introduced as an auxiliary language and additional German-language names of the village. The directions of migration from Leśnica are connected with the ethnic and cultural background of the inhabitants: people of autochthonous origin migrate most often to Germany, non-autochthonous to Great Britain, Ireland and the Netherlands¹⁰.

The study cited in this paper was performed using the techniques of scenario-based individual in-depth interviews with experts¹¹ and migrants¹² and non-participant observation¹³. 22 in-depth interviews with migrants¹⁴ and seven with experts were performed¹⁵. All experts lived in the places where the study was conducted and knew the specificity of local communities or who dealt with social problems while performing their professional duties, i.e. representatives of local authorities (mayor), non-governmental organizations and the Social Welfare Centre employees. Interviews with experts aimed at obtaining opinions on the impact of migration on local social capital from people who are not directly, personally involved in the migration process. Therefore, they mainly served to objectify the opinions obtained from emigrants. Initially, it was planned to conduct more conversations, but due to their size and repeatability of respondents’ answers, this was considered redundant and ineffective. The observations were made during local fairs, markets, at the bus station, during the Silesian feast and the celebration of local holidays – during interviews with newly met people, they were asked if they had any migration experience or if they knew such people, and in this way the database of respondents was built. The research timing was very important for the discussed studies. In the case of the Opole region, it was necessary to

⁸ To Belgium in particular.

⁹ The data concerning the ethnic diversity of the population in the commune perspective are made available for the Census of 2002. A foreigner is listed among communes in which the total share of persons declaring their national or ethnic origin in the first or second question other than the Polish national/ethnic origin was at least 10% (Gudaszewski, 2013, s. 4).

¹⁰ Information obtained from the local Municipal Office

¹¹ Interviews with respondents from Podlasie are coded as PX and from Opole, OX, where X is the respondent number.

¹² Interviews with experts from Podlasie are coded as EPX and EOX for the Opole region, where X is the respondent number.

¹³ Observations were not planned in the research project. The researcher decided to use the respondents’ invitations to participate in various local events and include her observations at work. However, they were not structured.

¹⁴ The sample was not representative. Among the respondents from the Podlasie region, 50% were Catholic and Orthodox, and from the Opole region, also 50% were of immigrant and indigenous origin. Respondents were of different age (between 23 and 55) and had different levels of education (the largest number of people had secondary education).

¹⁵ Interviews with migrants – 12 in Leśnica, 10 in Siemiatycze; interviews with experts: 4 in Siemiatycze, 3 in Leśnica. All interviews were conducted by the author of the article, who does not live in any of the surveyed cities and had no previous contacts with respondents.

conduct talks on weekends. In Podlasie, in turn, it was only possible during the Christmas season, because it is a time when migrants come home to meet their families. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, neither experts nor respondents-emigrants were asked about their mutual relations or level of acquaintance. They were also not asked to recommend other respondents for interviews.

In the article, in relation to the Silesian native population, i.e. in simple terms, to persons whose origins lie in the German state territory within the 1937 borders and who, thanks to their birthplace, have German origins, understood as the right to confirm German citizenship (regardless of its actual realisation), such terms as: autochthons, autochthonous population, persons of German origin (Silesian, Opole), native population, persons with dual citizenship were used after R. Jończy. The remaining part of the inhabitants of the Opolskie Voivodeship, in turn, was described as Polish, non-autochthonous and foreigners. Most of these descriptors were used in the work in full knowledge that the individual groups are not the same, although the differences in their numbers are minimal (Jończy 2010: 38). The heterogeneity of inferences between religion and nationality in the conditions of the cultural borderland in Podlasie was also accepted. These categories were also used by the respondents, who themselves determined which group they belong to.

Diversity and integration of the local community

The role of ethnic differentiation

Respondents from Siemiatycze often stressed that they live in a small town, where it is close to everywhere, everyone knows each other, knows a lot about their problems and everyday life, regardless of their origin and religion. They consider the location of an Orthodox church and a Catholic¹⁶ church right next to each other as symbolic, reflecting the character of the village. The local cemetery is also multi-religious and multi-national.

On the other hand, the ethnic diversity of the inhabitants of Leśnica is already visible at the level of spatial distribution of the population. The town consists of two settlements, one urban and one rural, one inhabited mainly by immigrants (the so-called “blocks”) and the other one (the “village”) is indigenous. *And the village (part of it), these are the inhabitants since forever, and they know each other! One another, or if anyone young joins, they get to know them. And those of you here in the city, I guess they live in a circle like this, right? Because there are blocks there, there are blocks in*

¹⁶ In Siemiatycze, there are two Catholic churches and two Orthodox churches. Church buildings are very close to each other and in similar surroundings. For example, the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is located in the central part of the town on a hill. On the other side of the street, also on a hill, there is an Orthodox church of Saint Apostles Peter and Paul.

that direction, we have no reason to go there (O11). Spatial separation can also be an important factor in fostering social isolation of the inhabitants. A very important element causing the lack of integration between the two groups of inhabitants is the historical past. The immigrant population feels hurt by the fact that in the past they could not migrate freely to Germany, which caused their standard of living to be lower than that of the native inhabitants. These, in turn, still have the times when their “Germanness” was not accepted by the state authorities in their memory. For example, one of the female respondents recalled: *There used to be very big divisions. It was connected with the fact that not everyone felt Polish here. And because, historically, it was like this and not different, and it was not always accepted by the state, and some things were done in spite of it. And there has never been such a direct connection or integration between the two nations* (O10). The divisions are therefore inscribed in the region’s history, which is why they are so difficult to overcome today. Moreover, the possibility of the indigenous people to migrate was one of the aspects that deepened the antagonisms between the two groups.

According to the respondents from indigenous peoples, strong ties of a small-town or even rural character are typical for Leśnica. The respondents emphasize that the inhabitants know each other well, know about their problems and maintain close relations, they say that they are *used to being together* (O5). The respondents from the Opole region, who came from an indigenous group, declared a much higher level of attachment to the local community than those from the immigrant group. These attitudes are an important indicator of the bonding social capital for the autochthonic population. Different declarations concerning the degree of integration of the local community were made by people of immigrant origin. In their opinion, people in the town rather do not know each other, are not integrated and do not maintain closer contacts even with their neighbours. For example, one of the female respondents recalled: *–No one bonds here. People live their own lives. Everyone looks at their hands* (O1). According to the respondent, this is mainly due to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the population. In general, it can be stated that in comparison with Podlasie, local ties are weaker in the Opole region, which is adversely affected by the ethnic and cultural diversity of the region. Respondents from the immigrant population were much more likely to declare that they did not feel attached to their local community and that if they could, they would prefer to permanently live abroad. For example, one of the female respondents claimed: *I would never have come back here, ma’am, if it hadn’t been for my mother, and then telling her about her daughter, who also decided to return to Poland, she adds, well, she has just returned too, unfortunately* (O3). Such statements did not appear in the autochthonous group. However, among the autochthons surveyed, there were people who, despite the initial decision to migrate permanently, decided to return to Poland. They justified their decision primarily with family reasons (especially with the desire for their children to go to school in Poland) and with a sense of bond and

a specific sentiment towards their homeland. However, it should be noted that the immigrant population has much less long-term migration experience, so it cannot be ruled out that this group will also return to their country of origin due to a longing for their place of origin. On the other hand, the history of incoming inhabitants of the Opole region includes changes in their place of residence, so it can also be assumed that if this phenomenon occurs, it will be on a smaller scale than in the case of the autochthonous population. At the same time, it should be stressed that the autochthonous population feels much more attached to and proud of their place of origin. For example, these people often and with a lot of commitment talk about the successes of the local choir or women's club.

Relationships between residents

The indigenous inhabitants of Leśnica know each other well and maintain relatively close contacts with each other, which is a significant indicator of local social capital. On the other hand, among the respondents coming from an inflow group, there were frequent declarations that they did not even know their closest neighbours. For example, one of the respondents, when asked how he evaluates his relations with his neighbours, stated that in principle, he cannot make such an assessment because he first stayed abroad and now he is completely engrossed in new work. On the other hand, in response to the question whether people integrate in her locality, another respondent said: *You know what, I don't know. It's hard for me to say. I fell out after I went abroad, I don't know* (O3). It can therefore be concluded that not only are these people relatively poorly rooted in the local community, but migration also eradicates them from it. On the other hand, respondents from the Opole region's indigenous population declared that they knew their neighbours and most often assessed their relations with them as good or very good. It should be noted, however, that the nature of neighbourly relations in Leśnica is slightly different from the ones in Siemiatycze and behaviour which in the Opole region is assessed as very positive, in the Podlasie region would be considered correct at most. For example, the autochthons from Leśnica who claimed that their relations with their neighbours were very good, very rarely declared that they visited each other at home, which was characteristic for Podlasie. A statement of one of the respondents is typical for the Opole region; when asked how he evaluates his relations with neighbours, he stated: *–Well, very well. I don't have any problems. We bump into each other in the street, we'll talk. We don't see each other at home, we don't have such close contacts that we visit each other there with whole families, we don't* (O11).

Having a group of friends with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds is an important indicator of bridging social capital. In fact, all respondents from Siemiatycze declared that their friends included both Catholic and Orthodox believers: *I have a lot of friends here who are Orthodox, and I stopped looking at them from the point of*

view that they are Orthodox the moment I finished primary school, because I always envied them that they had longer holidays than I did, right? Yeah, but that's all. Luckily, no one here is likely to judge someone in this respect (P1). Respondents also declared that religion is not a criterion by which they choose their friends. However, among the population of Leśnica, we can observe the closure of friendship groups to people from different ethnic and cultural communities.

International migration has a positive impact on the mutual perception of Siemiatycze residents of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The situation of departure leads to their equalisation and status similarity, they cease to be Orthodox and Catholic or Poles, Belarusians or Ukrainians, and become migrants from Poland, who leave and work together, while their ethnic and cultural origins disappear into the background. As one of the respondents pointed out, *money doesn't have national or religious colours. It's already more professionally related. Someone gathers a team here, some bricklayers, plasterers and just goes there* (PE1). An important factor is that migrants go to a "third country" with which, unlike in the Opole region, none of the groups is directly connected. Therefore, it can be stated that in Podlasie in the discussed context, migrations have a positive impact on bridging social capital. Asked whether the ethnic diversity of the localities affects the departures abroad, Siemiatycze's mayor answered: *this is not the case here, because if there were trips, for example to Ukraine or Belarus, perhaps it would also be of significance. But here we're equal to the Belgians, equal to the English, right? And when we go, everyone goes as a Polish citizen* (PE3). As a result, in Siemiatycze, as a consequence of economic migration, the ethnic and cultural divisions between the Orthodox and Catholic populations are weakened. It is also important that migrants from different ethnic backgrounds are perceived in the same way by the host community, which can have a positive impact on the cohesion of the group and its connecting links. In case of the Podlasie residents, staying abroad fosters contacts between persons of various confessions, which, in consequence, contributes to the accumulation of multiculturalism in its axio-normative understanding. For the Siemiatycze residents, people of different ethnic backgrounds are perceived abroad as "their own". These behaviours continue after the return to Poland. It should be stressed that the respondents from the Podlasie region very often declare that they had (and partly still have) more close friends abroad. It is on them, and not on the people with whom they currently have contact in Siemiatycze, that they can count on in difficult life situations and with them, despite the distance between them, they maintain the closest relations. Respondents declared that even after returning to Poland they try to maintain good relations with friends who stayed abroad, e.g. through frequent e-mail or telephone contacts, visits or parcels handed over to each other. For example, one of the respondents recalls: *–And in the end, I worked for a friend from Siemiatycze who has a company there. The last almost two years were for him. I think it's the best years I've ever worked. Because we're friends even now. The best! To this day we keep in touch and meet*

all the time when he comes here. Whether he's on vacation or coming for Christmas, we always meet. There's friendship between us. He had the healthiest, so to speak, approach to us as employees. And to this day it's okay, and we've been in Poland for over 4 years. Now we have built a house and I've been shipping a lot of material from Belgium through him. I called him, he gave us the material, I don't know, for about 3.5 thousand Euros. And all the time, no problems, if I need anything, he's always... Anyway, on average we call and talk once a fortnight. He's always asking if we need anything. We've been sending him something too. He always likes to eat local food, and we have some way of getting to some things. We know what he likes (P5). This may be due to the cumulative nature of common migration experiences, the understanding of which excludes those who have not worked abroad. Besides, in a situation of migration, the circle of compatriots with whom an individual meets is quite limited, which is conducive to closer ties. Closer relationships with other migrants may also result from living together during the stay abroad. An important role is also played by memories concerning common, positive migration experiences, living in a *colourful world*, and not in *bumpkin Poland* (PE1). At the same time, the respondents stressed that a trip abroad had a negative impact on their relations with friends and acquaintances who stayed in the country. They declared that they felt uprooted from the local community, they had fewer and fewer common topics to talk to people with no migration experience and at the same time they were less and less interested in what was happening in their hometown. Departures abroad had a negative impact on the strength of ties and relations between migrants and persons who remained in the country. As a result of their departure, emigrants gradually lose contact with the community of origin and the existing circle of acquaintances, and they also do not make acquaintances with the people who join this circle. One of the respondents, mentioning her return to the country, states: *When I came back, it's just, when my sister told me about someone, I told her: God, I don't know half the people. This is seven years, however, taken from life* (P3). Therefore, as far as Siemiatycze is concerned, in this aspect, it is not possible to indicate a clear direction of the relationship between migration and local social capital. Migrations abroad for economic reasons break the migrant out of their local communities and weaken ties with his or her existing friends, but at the same time provide an opportunity to make new, lasting and meaningful acquaintances.

The situation in the Opole region, in turn, is different. Respondents stemming from the autochthonous population declared that throughout their stay abroad (even when they believed that their trip was definitive), they tried to maintain close relations with their friends who stayed in the country. In addition, they also tried to be interested in what was happening in their hometown. The temporary and fluctuating character of migration was an important factor contributing to maintaining ties: on average, people working abroad tried to visit Poland twice a month, which was also possible due to the relatively short distance between Leśnica and Germany, where

most of the respondents worked. On the other hand, respondents coming from migrant populations declared that they maintained relations with people who stayed in the country much less frequently. Migrations of this group are much more often of a long-term and definitive character, they are first of all a chance to start a new, better life, hence probably less willingness to maintain a relationship with people or places they do not associate with in a very positive way (e.g. with unemployment or low income). Moreover, in general, the population of immigrant origin declares much less attachment to their place of residence, which may be related to earlier displacements, especially among the representatives of the older generation, but this hypothesis needs to be verified separately.

Both migrants from Podlasie and Opole regions declared that during their stay abroad they noticed that the local population cooperated with each other to a greater extent than they observed in their place of origin. The respondents from Podlasie especially emphasized this fact. According to some respondents, the obligation to take special care of the local community and high social activity falls in particular on two groups, i.e. people who did not decide to go abroad and who returned from it. In some cases, there is also a kind of "import" of patterns, good practices observed as a consequence of foreign trips, which has a positive impact on the local social capital. This applies both to specific solutions and to the idea of acting for the benefit of the local community. At the same time, we should pay attention to the negative impact of migration, similar to Podlasie, which deprives the village of (relatively) young, active people who would undertake additional duties, which in turn has a negative impact on the social capital resources: *there are tiny towns and cities which say, we are not able to, we don't get it in terms of organisation, there are three hundred people here, half of them grandparents, the rest are somewhere in the West* (OE3).

The native inhabitants of Opole, even though they travel abroad, feel themselves an important part of the local community – Leśnica is their home, to which they return permanently even after many years or at least visit with sentiment. In turn, the incoming population is still not "at home", it does not feel any closer connection to the place of residence, thus probably definitive migrations more frequent in this group and the involvement in local life decisively lower. In the case of this group, it can be said that migration is already inscribed in its history, that it remains a community without planted roots.

Cooperation in the local community

Cooperation scale and circumstances

The population of the town and commune activates mainly in the face of difficult or conflict situations. As the mayor of the town observes, it is characteristic for the residents that *only when something touches me directly, when I'm not doing well, then*

I start to become interested. Usually, those who don't want something shout more (OE3). It should be noted, however, that in the case of the Opole region, the scale of cooperation between the inhabitants is much greater than in Podlasie, although in the latter region, much stronger inter-neighbourly ties can be observed. The Leśniczans are much more effective in pursuing their own interests than the Siemiatyczans. In case of a situation that they consider difficult or requiring rapid intervention, they can organize themselves and e.g. go see the mayor to ask for intervention or collect signatures. In this respect, the inhabitants of Siemiatycze are completely passive. The only person among the respondents who was able to recall this kind of initiative (concerning connecting houses to the water supply system, i.e. private matters) was the mayor. According to the respondents, their town is far too small for this kind of action. In Podlasie, cooperation between the inhabitants takes different forms. First of all, it is mainly informal in nature and concerns everyday life activities and inter-neighbourly relations. Respondents from Siemiatycze were more likely than respondents from the Opole region to declare that they help their neighbours in small matters, such as dropping children off to school or shopping. Residents of Leśnica maintain good relations with their neighbours, although they are more restrained. Therefore, the quality of inter-neighbourly relations does not translate directly into the existence or lack of organised forms of activity.

The Siemiatyczans are interested in the life and problems of their neighbours, *not necessarily out of curiosity, sometimes they want to help each other (PE2)*. According to the respondents themselves, this is mainly due to the small-town or even rural character of their local community. *This gives a sense of stability, support from one family to another (PE2)*. Living in a small town, where everyone knows each other, also has its negative sides: *here the whole town knows each other and knows everything. Who slept with who and what and everything. All the gossip (P2)*. Residents also support each other in difficult life situations: *really, as far as Podlasie is concerned, neighbourly kindness is very strong. And it's in all sorts of things, especially if misfortune touches, people really help. And this, it is a great plus and satisfaction, as you can see, that you can always count on your neighbours (PE3)*.

Therefore, the inhabitants try to act primarily on a micro-scale, engage in issues important for their small community. In some cases, there is also a kind of "import" of patterns, good practices, observed as a consequence of the trips abroad, which has a positive impact on the local social capital. This applies both to specific solutions and to the idea of acting for the benefit of the local community. At the same time, attention should be paid to the negative impact of migration, similar to Podlasie, which deprives the town of (relatively) young, active people who would take on additional duties, which in turn has a negative impact on the social capital resources: *there are tiny towns and villages that say, well, we can't, we don't get it organizationally, there are three hundred of us here, half of them grandparents, the rest somewhere in the West (OE3)*.

Willingness and attitudes towards cooperation

Both the inhabitants of Opole and Podlasie regions declare their willingness to cooperate within their own local community, but the real value of these declarations is different. In case of the Opole region, the evaluation of the size of cooperation between local community members depended on the ethnic and cultural background of the respondents. Representatives of indigenous peoples mentioned many more examples of activities that took place in their localities, and more often declared their participation in such initiatives. In the case of persons coming from the immigrant population, this activity was much less active and most often was connected with involvement in the issues of schools attended by their children. The autochthonous population representatives are much more interested and involved in the life of the community, while the immigrant population is more focused on matters directly affecting them.

There is a lack of willingness to cooperate between the autochthonous population and those of migrant origin. This is due both to the historical events mentioned above and to the stereotypical perception of both groups. Both communities are convinced of their mutually negative image. At the same time, negative perceptions and stereotypes still function and are strongly rooted in the consciousness of the inhabitants. For example, one of the respondents, a representative of a local NGO, when asked about the most important sources of conflict in the village, stated that *conflicts are something that people normally have between each other. Maybe it's alcohol and no work. But this is only the case with the people who moved here, because there are no such things among the people here, the Leśnica locals* (OE2). According to the autochthonous respondents, the representatives of their group are certainly willing to help each other. As one of the respondents says, *the old natives here, they certainly help each other. And those there in those blocks¹⁷, how they live, I don't know. You know, I don't know the situation* (OE2). The lack of knowledge about the habits of the other group of people living in the same way also proves the great mutual isolation of the inhabitants, a clear categorisation of the world as "us" and "them". The positive perception of the attitudes of the members of one's own group and at the same time, distancing oneself from the other, different group is also important and at the same time quite typical. When asked if people in her village have knowledge about the problems of other residents, the answer of one of the respondents is typical: *those who are indigenous here, they know more or less, and unfortunately, we do not know these problems from the young people who have moved here. We don't really know* (OE2).

Local conflicts and divisions

The nature of divisions and conflicts in the local community

In the case of the Opole region's population, the division between "us" and "them" is very clear, between the "indigenous" and "incoming" people, those who have dual citizenship and those who do not. The mayor of Leśnica considers the most important problems of the town to be the still existing division *between those of our own and those not our own. You can see it, you can hear it. It's either one side talking about it or the other side. That "you can't do it with them" or "they don't want to."* Yes, you can see it (OE3). Another female respondent, in turn, states directly: *I mean, as far as Silesia is concerned, I think that if they argue, I think that there are still some kind of historical past conflicts and this concerns Germans and Poles* (O3).

At the same time, it was considered "politically correct" not to focus on divisions. The following statement is symptomatic in this context: *if they love each other, let them live, so that they can live peacefully and not disturb others. We are taught here all the time, from after the war, how these people came there from the east. And that's how we learned to live with them* (OE2). Although theoretically the inhabitants live together, in reality the division into "us" and "them" still functions, the mutual relations are based on a slow "getting used to each other" rather than on a conscious acceptance of one's individuality.

In contrast to Podlasie, in the Opole region the conflicts seem to be inscribed in the everyday life of the inhabitants, although it should be noted that their intensity is not high. There seem to be two main reasons for this, i.e. ethnic diversity and its historical background, and international migrations for economic reasons. Especially older indigenous respondents were very reluctant to recall the period of the People's Republic of Poland when belonging to a national minority made them second-class citizens. The fact that they could not use German freely (e.g. during church services) was also very difficult for them. At the same time, the source of conflicts were the privileges related to the possibility of going to Germany and taking up legal employment there, which were enjoyed by persons having two nationalities. This situation was difficult for both the immigrants and the autochthonous population. The representatives of the first of these groups felt disadvantaged because they were unable to earn their living abroad legally, and thus their standard of living was significantly lower than that of persons with two nationalities. The autochthonous population, in turn, was aware of the envy resulting from their more favourable economic situation. There were also some voices saying that the immigrant inhabitants are jealous because *some people are working abroad, but some are not willing to work* (O5). Nowadays, the fact that some of the inhabitants of the Opole region earn their living outside Poland is the reason for inter-neighbourly conflicts resulting from jealousy: *these sparks appear between the Polish Pole and the Silesian Pole, the German Pole, or whatever you call him. You do better because you have the opportunity, because you can go somewhere else* (OE3).

Causes of conflicts

Migration plays an important role among the indicated sources of the few conflicts in Siemiatycze: *Oh, Belgium?!! Of course!!! That someone stays abroad, he has more money, he is rich (P2), because he left, oh yes, he has money, oh yes, that means he needs to be hated, or he needs to be thrown a curve (P7)*. According to the respondents, the fact that some of them went abroad and in this way, thanks to the money earned there, significantly raised their own family's standard of living, was a source of jealousy and conflict. Respondents, however, emphasize that the trips abroad are much less a cause of neighbourly disputes than in the 1990s. This is probably due to the much greater accessibility and universality of migrations for economic reasons.

Differences in financial status resulting from migrations abroad for economic reasons are an important reason for conflicts in the examined local community of the Opole Voivodeship. This problem has been pointed out by representatives of both immigrant and autochthonous populations. In the opinion of respondents of immigrant descent, trips abroad were an easy way for autochthons to improve their material status. Respondents in this group have a deep sense of injustice that they could not benefit from this, in their opinion, simple way of getting rich. They also note that thanks to their wealth, the autochthons feel 'superior' and 'more important' even though they do not deserve it at all. When asked about the main reason for conflicts in the locality, one of the respondents' states: *Jealousy of money. Yeah, because that's life! Everyone's looking at their backyard. He has it, and I'd like to have it too, and he just got there, because he has German citizenship, because he went abroad, he once made a fortune, and now he shows how much better and richer he is (O1)*. Analysing the above statements, it can be stated that in the discussed context economic migrations have a negative impact on local social capital. It should be noted, however, that while in the case of the Opole region they deepen ethnic and cultural divisions, they do not negatively affect the quality of inter-ethnic bonds in the Podlasie region.

As in the case of Podlasie, in the Opole region, the reason for conflicts, especially petty ones between neighbours, is jealousy, *because a Silesian is envious when a neighbour has something, I need to have it too (OE3)*. It turns out, however, that even this stereotypical "Silesian envy" can be used for a legitimate purpose: *how to force those towns that don't have a plan to have such a plan? It's a lot of work now to prepare something like this. Because of the Silesian envy! They have it, and you don't! Try it! They got it. They did this, this, and that too. This, this and this, we have raised money for this and this and that. You can have it or something like that but write this plan. And then the towns and villages mobilised (OE3)*.

Summary

In relation to the ethnically diverse local communities discussed in the article, both the contact and conflict hypothesis are confirmed. Whether intergroup relations will be positive or negative depends, in this case, primarily on the historical and economic context in which both groups operate and on the possibility of making actual contacts. In addition, these factors are reinforced by the intensive migration processes taking place in both communities, which contribute to deepening the already existing inter-relationships. The impact of spatial mobility on social capital depends on the time the migrant spends outside the local community. It is not only the length of the stay abroad that matters, but also, the frequency of visits and type of activity undertaken during the stay in the place of origin. It is much more difficult to maintain ties, including local ones, when visits are rare and relatively short and mainly involve participation in family meetings and celebrations, as is the case with migrants from Podlasie and immigrants from the Opole Voivodeship. On the other hand, in the case of Opole autochthons, due to the high frequency of returns to the community of origin (usually every weekend), migrants have the opportunity to participate much more actively in the life of the local community, maintain relationships with friends and acquaintances, although it should be emphasized that such weekend visits are primarily used to maintain family ties, but to a much lesser extent to local ones. But this constant contact is very important especially when the migrant decides to return to the country permanently, because he/she does not have to “become” a member of his/her local community anew, because he/she has never ceased to be a member of his/her local community and despite the economic migration he/she has not experienced the phenomenon of “double absence” described by A. Sayad (2004). Migrants focus mainly on gainful employment during their stay abroad, which means that they do not have time to maintain relations with those who have remained in their place of origin and to take an interest in the events taking place there, and participate only to a very limited extent in public life in the host community. After a possible return to the country, it is difficult for them to overcome this passivity, especially since they do not find incentives from communities and local authorities to do so, and their activity focuses primarily on matters related to the family. This phenomenon, especially noticed in Podlasie, may contribute to the withdrawal of return migrants to the private sphere and the creation of a “social vacuum” in this community (Nowak, 1971).

Long-term migration from Podlasie has a negative impact on the quality of social bonds as it deprives migrants of links with their community of origin and leads to their slow eradication. Thus, in this case too, J. Coleman’s thesis that *social bonds are lost if they are not nurtured* is confirmed (Coleman: 1988). Foreign labour migrations break the migrant out of his or her local community and weaken ties with his or her existing friends, but at the same time provide an opportunity to make new,

lasting and meaningful acquaintances. It is also worth noting that with regard to the indigenous population of the Opole region, in many cases the strong attachment to the place of origin is expressed in frequent cases of return migration. Autochthons, on the other hand, are not only relatively poorly rooted in the local community, because they have not yet been able to fully experience the “benefits of immobility” (Fischer et al.: 1998), then the next trips will cause them to root out further.

In case of the Podlasie residents, staying abroad fosters contacts between persons of various national origins and confessions, which, in consequence, contributes to the accumulation of multiculturalism in its axio-normative understanding and bridging social capital. Residents of Podlaskie Voivodeship of different ethnic origin leave and then work together and are perceived in the same way by the host community, which has a positive impact on relations between migrants, because the situation of departure leads to their equality, status similarity. In the case of Podlasie we can talk about the creation of an “inter-ethnic migrant community” – people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, from the same neighbourhood, coming together and working abroad. Therefore, according to T. Pettigrew’s assumption (1998) discussed earlier, for the quality and forms of social capital in ethnically diverse communities, the possibility of undertaking actual inter-group relations is particularly important. Their lack, resulting, as in the case of Leśnica, already from the spatial division of the city, leads to the emergence or persistence of antagonisms and mutual prejudices.

The Podlasie residents’ migration will also contribute to their opening to various types of “alienation” and “otherness”, including those of a confessional nature. Therefore, as a result of economic migration, an inter-ethnic social capital is developing in Podlasie, which brings together groups of different ethnic and cultural origins. However, this situation also has its negative side, as a new kind of division can be observed, not between Catholics and Orthodox people, for example, but between those who have and do not have migration experience. As a result of migration, existing ties between friends and acquaintances are significantly weakened, but they are replaced by new ones anchored in spatial mobility, so we are dealing with a phenomenon of a kind of “transformation of the dividing lines”. In conclusion, it can be stated that as a result of migration for economic reasons in Podlasie, there is a potential opportunity to create a bridging capital, which is a binding agent between ethnically diverse members of the local community, but it remains unused due to, among others, the lack of support from other members of the local community, including representatives of the third sector and public authorities.

On the other hand, the indigenous population of the Opole region is characterized by a high level of bonding capital, strengthening the internal cohesion of the group, but at the same time causing its isolation. As far as the incoming population is concerned, the low level of trust, lack of extensive social networks and low social activity make it impossible to speak of having social capital. The high level of bonding capital in the indigenous population group is a factor that deepens the disintegration

of local communities in the Opole region. The autochthons are characterised by “social and civic self-sufficiency”, so integration with the co-habitants of immigrant origin is not beneficial or attractive to them.

Both in Podlasie and Opole regions, the economic departures are a significant cause of envy and conflicts in local communities. Foreign migration leads to the economic stratification of the inhabitants, the division into those who are relatively wealthy, because they have worked abroad and the rest, which are usually worse off. In the Opole region, the economic divisions caused by the trips additionally overlapped, emphasized and consolidated the diversity of local communities in terms of ethnic and cultural diversity, because for a long time the possibility of earning a legal income abroad was mainly reserved for the autochthons. The divisions between the autochthonous and immigrant population in the Opolskie voivodeship have a historical basis and result from regulations more favourable for people of German origin, especially regarding the access to the German labour market. An important role was also played in this context by regulations that hindered the possibility of the German minority organising itself in the People’s Republic of Poland when the authorities did not recognise this minority. Therefore, in relation to the discussed local communities, R. Putnam’s thesis (2008: 138) which assumed that ethnic diversity is a challenge for social capital mainly in the short term, and with the passage of time intergroup antagonisms will decrease is proven false. In the case of the Opole region, their strength was very high, and it was additionally strengthened by actual inter-group contacts and the diversity of political rights, which had a real impact on the economic status of both groups.

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