Newcomers in Polish local communities:
local and global migration

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Abstract

The following article deals with the problem of interrelations between spatial and social structures in the context of two different cases of migration – economically motivated immigration of Asians to the trade centre in Wólka Kosowska and urban to rural migration in the Holy Cross voivodeship.

Migration, by its very nature, implies the appearance of strangers on an established group's territory. Hence, the local and spatial dimensions are crucial to the understanding of the processes of inclusion and exclusion of migrants and vice versa – newcomers' arrival gives an opportunity to examine the process of interrupting, changing and restabilising of the local spatial order. This case of migration seems to be suitable for an analysis of the relative significance of structure and agency in shaping the interactions within local communities and tracing the influence of the current global trends in economy and lifestyle in various local conditions.

Those issues are looked into on the basis of a qualitative study (IDIs and participant observations) of two cases. The first category is internal migration – Poles moving from urban to rural areas. This type of migration is motivated by lifestyle and world-view of the newcomers, oriented on the cooperation with the local dwellers and enchanted by the peasants' cultural heritage. The second one is international migration from a very remote country and culture – Chinese immigrants working and living around ethnic economic institutions, not tending to integrate with the local inhabitants of Wólka Kosowska but interacting with natives within the trade centre's environment.

The comparison of the two cases proves that, while newcomers can negotiate the structure of their common spaces with the established community, it seems that in Polish social environment they do so to a very limited extent. The places where the newcomers live and/or work tend to reflect a relative lack of relationship with the locals – either through the structure of settlement or the aesthetic arrangements. Moreover, it appears that the degree to which space is negotiable varies according to the migrants' settlement concentration and in some cases to the fields of activity.

1. Newcomers in space – between structure and agency
1.1. Space as a social problem

Since Henri Lefebvre's publication (1974), space remains a subject of intensive interest of social scientists. The most fervent discussions concern the possibility of analysing the different ways in which social action structures space and vice versa (Löw 2008). It can be argued that this relationship is reciprocal. Social relations and human interactions have a determinant influence on the way people construct and organise the space around them, be it on the global or the local scale (Giddens 1984). But at the same time, the material aspects of their surroundings limit to some extent the actors' possibilities. Moreover, one could argue that space also influences human behaviour through its less material aspects, be they 'atmospheres' (Löw 2008), or 'ghosts' defined as the perceived presence in places of physically absent persons (Bell 1997).

The dual nature of space is emphasised: as a subject of human agency and as a type of social structure. It seems to no longer be a matter of discussion that the influence is exerted in both directions: human agency on the social/societal spaces and spatial structures on human agency. However, as Martina Löw (2008: 39) points out,

spatial structure remains only one of many social structures in which human agency is embedded: 'The spatial cannot be differentiated from the societal since it is a specific form of the societal. Spatial structures, like temporal structures, are forms of societal structures. […] Interaction between different societal structures forms societal structure'. Various elements of the complex social structure influence each other and spatial relations within societies and communities are influenced by a variety of factors.

A particularly telling aspect of space is – in this respect – its division by ways of boundaries, physical or symbolical. Through such separation into distinct spaces social divisions are made incarnate. Spatial and social boundaries not only separate places and people; they also imply the possibility of crossing. This in turn means that it is possible that there is a whole range of transitional states situated 'betwixt and between' to quote Victor Turner's (1969) definition of liminality. If people can exist in a liminal state, so can places. Here again, the social is intimately linked to the spatial.

1.2. Newcomers in local spaces

Human activities are always conducted in space (even when it is a virtual one). Individuals always find themselves in some kind of space structured before their arrival – this is typically the case of newcomers arriving in a new locality. As Norbert Elias (1965) has shown, the spatial exclusion of newcomers is linked to their exclusion from already established networks and hierarchies. However, the interactions they engage in upon arrival are a complex encounter between elements already present and the ones they bring with them. These interactions are embedded in social relations – if immigrants arrive as a group or have been accidentally appearing in the place before – but they cannot be structured before a newcomer's arrival and without his/her participation (as space can be). They are always influenced by a migrant's attitudes and behaviour. In other words, it 'is people themselves who make places, but not always in the circumstances of their own choosing' (Massey 1995: 134) – in the case of migrants those pre-existing circumstances are, at least at first, particularly present, which does not make them entirely independent from their own action.

The spatial metaphor behind the concept of liminality particularly fits this intertwining of social relations and space. The crossing of boundaries, the move in space away from home and into a new location puts newcomers in an intermediary state with reference to social relations: they no longer belong to their locations and groups of origin, but they are not part of the community they arrive in. In this sense, following Abdelmalek Sayad, their state can be described as 'double absence' (Sayad 1999). However, while the idea of liminality was elaborated above all to describe a temporary state occurring in a transitional phase (Turner 1969), not all newcomers eventually escape this intermediary position. As illustrated further, their uncertain status can become inscribed durably in space and entrenched in relations entertained by the inhabitants. Thus, movement in space impacts a person's social positioning, which in turn structures the space around them.

Two specific cases are dealt with here, but the point of interest is in each case the same: what social relations/interactions between migrants and natives look like. Anthropological methodology was chosen for this research, so the objects of the observations and investigations are not the great macro-structures and systems, but particular individuals in relation to other particular individuals – neighbours, employers, employees, clients and service staff. The research is deliberately situated on the micro level and tries to adopt the point of view of the individuals studied. This influences the theoretical approach taken – although the authors are aware that the influence other kinds of social structures have on the spatial structure are intermediated by the activities of certain individuals and groups, in the first step of the analysis this element is omitted and the perspective is the one of a migrant appearing in a new locality. He/she finds the space arranged according to rules that are not his/her own, by the social structures he/she is not a part of.

Therefore, two questions arise:

(1) Is the role of spatial structures primal in the case of migrants? Or, to paraphrase Doreen Massey (1995), what is the relative weight of the circumstances beyond the actors' choice?

(2) Does the migrants' appearance alone change the structure of the local community? And if not, can they eventually negotiate a new structure of the local space?

1.3. Global context

It is considered here that the micro-level phenomena under study cannot be entirely separated from their more global context, in the sense that global processes are composed of a myriad of local phenomena, which are both the reflections and the results of more general trends. In the cases analysed here – Asians in a trade centre near Warsaw and urban to rural migrants in the Holy Cross voivodeship – the trends in question consist of a form of inversion. One can observe a shift in the global economic order – while in previous centuries European political powers and European capital was expanding to Asia and maintaining trading posts in China and other parts of the region (in this sense China has long been a peripheral, or a semi-peripheral, country, as Immanuel Wallerstein (1976) qualified it, recently the inhabitants of those formerly dependent and economically peripheral areas have been investing, establishing their trading posts and – consequently – migrating towards what is known as 'the West'. One can observe, as D. Massey (1995: 33) puts it, 'the arrival of the margins at the centre'. In this pattern, Poland's place is ambiguous – it has never directly participated in colonisation and has often appeared rather as part of the periphery, but, in particular recently, it belongs to the widely understood 'West'. Simultaneously, as it is argued further, a reverse process is taking place on a more local scale, as rural exodus progressively gives way to migration from urban to rural areas – a process that can be observed since the beginning of the 21st century not only in developed countries of Western Europe and North America.

Hence, the two cases chosen here exemplify those complex relations between centre and periphery. On the one hand, Poland, a country whose position regarding this dichotomy is in itself ambiguous, has recently seen the beginning of migration flows from China – a formerly peripheral country in the colonial order, but also a rising economic power. On the other hand, on the national level, city dwellers are beginning to migrate towards and settle in rural communities. While those examples

might seem very remote from each other, the authors attempt to show that not only do they both illustrate the link between global and local phenomena, but they also present a number of common points pertaining to the position and role of newcomers in local spaces.

Those abovementioned assumptions are reflected in the structure of the following chapters. Two groups of newcomers appearing in Polish local communities are described.

1.4. Two groups of newcomers in Poland

1.4.1. Asian workers in a trading centre

Wólka Kosowska trade centre is set along a major exit route from Warsaw (Fig.1), in the neighbourhood of a village (Fig. 2). It is intended to be a hub, distributing goods – mainly clothes and accessories – throughout Poland and the neighbouring countries. The products, acquired abroad, are moderately priced and sold wholesale. The centre is composed of several distinct shopping malls, which are in turn **composed** of a set of buildings with shops and storage facilities. The distinctive characteristic of the centre is its foreign ownership and the high amount of foreigners it employs. In the context of the relatively limited immigration flows to Poland, this is a unique phenomenon. While the centre has attracted some scholarly attention (e.g. Bieniecki, Pawlak, 2008; Roguska, Cybulska, 2008; Wysieńska 2012; Klorek, Szulecka, 2013), many aspects of its functioning remain understudied, particularly in reference to the Chinese population it attracts. Hence, the analysis is based on the existing literature, press accounts and the authors' own exploratory observations. It partially concerns the centre as a whole, but the focus of this study is on the Asian populations, and when it comes to studying the internal organisation and functioning of the buildings, the analysis is centred on those belonging to the Chinese-owned firm GD (the name itself indicating the investors' origins, since the initials stand for the owners' home-town of Guang Dong).

Figure 1. The location of Wólka Kosowska and Warsaw

It is important to note that the centre in Wólka Kosowska is one of a series of such places across Poland. The phenomenon is particularly interesting in relation to suburbanisation or semi-urbanisation. While the appearance of such centres clearly represents an influence of a nearby city on rural areas, their links with the city are rather weak – many employees live on location and rarely visit the city, and the trade targets small entrepreneurs from the region rather than urban populations. The rural area is impacted by the centre's activities, but does not necessarily become directly connected to the city nor does it always adopt urban characteristics or lifestyles. The concept of urban sprawl (Gillham 2002) seems more fitting to describe this phenomenon as it can be linked to single-use zoning, of which the exclusively economic function of the centres provides a clear example.

Figure 2. The location of the trade centre in Wólka Kosowska

1.4.2.   Urban to rural migrants

Since 2000, Poland has been facing a reversal of urbanisation trends that were predominant throughout the 20th century – the number of people moving from towns to rural areas is higher than the number of individuals moving from rural areas to towns (Frenkel 2010). Although during the recent economic downturn population movements lost some of their intensity, the existing trends in internal migration have not been reversed (Fig. 3). Consequently, the share of rural inhabitants in the overall population of the country is rising. The flow from towns to villages can be attributed mostly to two types of sociologically recognised phenomena: suburbanisation and movement of new settlers.
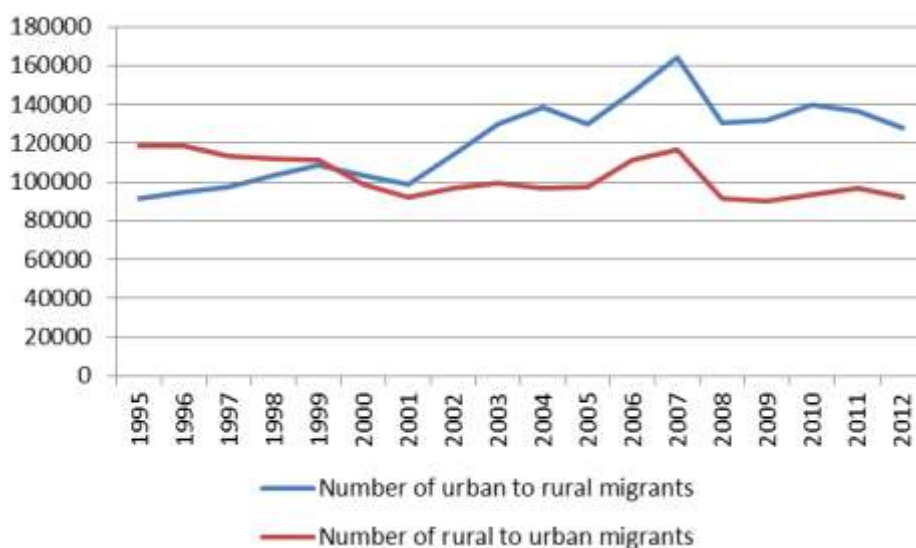

Figure 3. Registered urban to rural and rural to urban migration per year, Poland

1995–2012

Source: Local Data Bank, Central Statistical Office of Poland

Suburbanisation is the process of movement of selected groups of people from cemtres of metropolises to their suburbia, where they bring urban architecture, urban patterns of land use, and – last but not least – urban lifestyle (Kajdanek 2014). It is mostly suburbanisation and the negatively associated urban sprawl – increasingly dispersed distribution of houses and industrial facilities, connected with low density of public infrastructure and services (Kajdanek 2012: 18) – that contributes to the

growth of rural population and decreasing number of urban inhabitants in contemporary Poland (Fig. 3).

Although suburbanisation brings the largest contribution to the process of moving from urban to rural areas in Poland, the interviewed families represent another category of migrants from urban to rural areas – the so-called new settlers. Unlike suburbanites – who remain inhabitants of a metropolis, changing only the district of residence for a more peripheral and less crowded one – new settlers try to dissociate from the urban social and spatial environment entirely and opt for the values of ecology and communal life instead. The interviewed migrants to rural areas of the Holy Cross voivodeship are not the classical example of new settlers as they are not affiliated with any social movement and do not follow communitarian ideas to the extent the groups described by Justyna Laskowska-Otwinowska (2008) or Olga Kwiatkowska (2005) do. However, herein described individuals form a network of social relations, try to earn a living in rural, non-metropolitan places of residence and are – as most of new settlers – fascinated by the traditional folk culture.

Although seeking rural lifestyle, they do not follow a number of activities typical for the traditional rural communities, i.e. agriculture, thus unintentionally contributing to semi-urbanisation – the process of economic, technological, architectonic and social changes which are making the lifestyle of rural population more and more similar to the urban way of life. It was first recognised and analysed in Poland during the intensive industrialisation period (Golachowski 1969), but since the transition to the market economy it does not cease, which leads some sociologists to redefine the concepts of 'countryside', 'rusticity' or 'rural areas' (Halamska 2011: 56; Gorlach 2004; Kajdanek 2014).

All the aforementioned phenomena, associated with urban to rural migration, refer to the problem of liminality. Not only families and individuals who decide to change their place of residence for a different one enter the liminal period of their life, but also their biographies are showing the liminal spheres of the Polish society – suburbia as the borderland between city and countryside, or semi-urbanisation as transition from the traditional rural community, where all spheres of life are centred

around farming, to modern local societies, where agriculture is only one of many ways of earning money.

1.4.3. Distant yet comparable

Those two cases cover two very different types of migration and could at first sight appear difficult to compare. It is postulated here that such a comparison can in fact be fruitful and illuminating. Firstly, as previously mentioned, they allow to consider two different levels of the linkage between global and local dynamics. Secondly, their comparison gives ground for interrogations as to what determines the nature of the relationship between newcomers and locals. In the classic work by Norbert Elias and John Scotson (1965), it is shown that a clear distinction between two groups can be upheld even though there are no differences as to ethnicity, religion, class or any other factors besides the duration of stay in the locality. Hence, it seemed interesting to base this work on a comparison between a case where the group of newcomers is clearly ethnically and culturally distinct from the locals, and a case where the differences are social, while the culture and nationality of the groups are the same. The question asked throughout this paper is whether the consequences of those differences on social relations are the same, and if they differ – in what way and why. The authors seek to find out whether parallels can be established and on what basis. This paper also tries to establish whether any of the abovementioned factors is more determining than the others.

In both cases this work describes the spatial conditions the newcomers are facing when arriving in the new places of work, study or life and explain the social structures and systemic factors that led to such construction of the immigration spaces. The authors then go on to investigate the way and degree to which such pre-constructed social spaces determine interactions between the newcomers and the natives in particular local communities. Finally, in each case, a description is given of the social relations and social structures that are formed as a result of those interactions and the possible reorganisation of space they entail.

1.5. Methods applied

The study, first intended as a distributed paper at the 2013 European Socio-logical Association conference in Turin, is based on a set of mixed methods, mostly including an analysis of existing literature and exploratory fieldwork.

Both cases under study have already attracted, more or less directly, a certain amount of scholarly attention. While those works give sometimes quite extensive descriptions of the locations or type of location analysed here, most of them do not concentrate specifically on the links between newcomers/locals relation and spatial organisation. The primary goal was thus to use the information present in existing literature as data for the analysis of a new problem.

This approach was supplemented with exploratory fieldwork, in order to both verify the abovementioned information and gain a better understanding of the locations under study. In both cases, this consisted of observation of the spatial organisation and visual documentation of the places in question. With respect to urban to rural migration in the Holy Cross voivodeship, this referred to two villages of the region. In the case of the foreign immigrants in Wólka Kosowska the observation covered the space of the trade centre (with a particular focus on the malls owned by the Chinese company GD) as well as its close surroundings and the nearby village of Wólka Kosowska.

Those observations were complemented, in the case of the Holy Cross voivodeship villages, with four in-depth interviews with 'newcomer' families. As for Wólka Kosowska, brief interviews were conducted during the observation, with employees both of Polish and foreign origin, as well as owners of common spaces, i.e. restaurants, with security guards, and with inhabitants of the village.

2. The weight of pre-established conditions

As mentioned previously, the spaces migrants arrive in constitute a pre-defined context limiting the scope of their action. The way a space is organised and used by its original inhabitants is an already-there condition and all of the newcomers' moves have to be, to some extent, made with reference to it. This context had first to be constructed – sometimes as a living space for the group already present,

and sometimes with the expectation of receiving newcomers. In both cases, upon the migrants' arrival, the rules have already been set and one should now look briefly at the process of their formation and the nature of the local space that this implies.

2.1. The making of a migrant economic institution

2.1.1. Ethnic groups and the organisation of the centre

The different parts of the Wólka Kosowska facility are commonly referred to as the Vietnamese, Turkish and Chinese centre, based on the origin of the investors and proprietaries of the malls. The stores are rented out to individual merchants roughly along the same ethnic divide, although other nationalities are present and the same part of the centre can house stores owned by people of different origin. A similar logic applies to employment – while recruiting members of one's own ethnic group is common, it is not exclusive and many stores employ both Poles and foreigners of different nationalities. The Polish employees are recruited mostly from neighbouring towns. Amongst the foreigners many live nearby, as there is a workers' hotel and a gated residence not far from the malls.

2.1.2. The impact of communal policy

Many aspects of the centre's organisation and the ethnic relations within it can be linked to the communal policy concerning the grounds in question and to the history of investment it provoked. In striking contrast to other places in Poland, the Lesznowola commune, where Wólka Kosowska is located, established, complete development plans for the area as early on as the 1990s (Klorek, Szulecka, 2013: 5). This move was aimed deliberately at attracting investors, and the authorities reached their goal: in 1994 the first building of the Wólka Kosowska centre was opened by GD Poland Investments Co. Ltd., a company with Chinese capital. The centre, rapidly spread, attracting new foreign investments. However, the communal policy alone would not have been sufficient in bringing foreign investors to Wólka Kosowska, if it was not for a set of factors linked both to global processes and to local realities. The village's location, near Warsaw, in a place accessible by main transport routes, but also in a central spot providing access both to eastern European markets and German shipping ports (Roguska, Cybulska, 2008:6), was not the least one amongst them.

The current shape and functioning of the centre appeared under the influence of a set of space-related factors, situated on different levels: from global economic trends structuring the macro-space of commercial flows, through the predominantly economic function of the place that they brought forward, to local policies and physical conditions around the centre.

2.2. Long-established spatial structures and their current transformation

A migrant from a city deciding to settle in a particular village finds there not only long-existing local communities – lasting at least a few centuries in most of Poland (Łuczewski 2012; Bukraba-Rylska 2007: 503) – but also long-established spatial structures. Virtually all ground in ordinary village of the Holy Cross voivodeship is private property inherited by local inhabitants from generation to generation, with a school, a church and a shop (possibly a cultural centre or a station of the voluntary fire brigade) as the only public spaces, relatively open to every citizen. Moreover, in numerous villages none of these institutions occur.

2.2.1. A historically constituted spatial structure

Basic spatial structure of most Polish villages dates back to the eighteenth or nineteenth century (Bukraba-Rylska 2008: 182). Houses and farm buildings are usually located along a road, one next to another, with long strips of fields extending behind. Thus, houses are located in close proximity, not more than several dozen metres from one another, allowing lively neighbour relations but also assuring easy access to fields. Neighbours may observe each other during everyday activities, as well as hear what happens in other farms. In the past, the road was used as an important space of social life as neighbours met on the road and in its vicinity to exchange gossip and information. Buildings were usually grouped into a quadrangle around the yard with the house located closest to the road, the barn opposite to the house, cowshed and shed on both sides of the house, to some extent separating the living and working space of the family from intruders' glances.

2.2.2. Changes in architectural style

Architecture of the countryside in central and eastern Poland (where the researched villages are located) has been changing rapidly in the last decades, reflecting the rising aspirations and resources of country inhabitants as well as the devel-

opment of construction industry and urban planning. During the 1980s and the 1990s wooden two-chamber houses were replaced by large brick two-floor houses of dubious aesthetic value but equipped with many modern facilities. Recent years show further changes in village architecture. As the percentage of farmers in overall country population decreases – not only as a result of urban migration but also of changes in employment structure (Wciórka, Zagórski, 2007) – the number of houses without other farm buildings rises and houses appearance becomes more and more modern, representing no connection to traditional architecture of the area.

2.3. Newcomers in the inherited space

Although in both presented cases the social spaces were shaped by the historical and economic processes, the environments newcomers arrive in differ significantly from each other. The space experienced by migrants from China and other Asian countries in Wólka Kosowska was institutionally prepared by the organised investor to receive the new groups of inhabitants and to satisfy their needs to the largest possible extent. Contrary to that situation, individuals moving from urban to rural areas of the Holy Cross voivodeship find themselves in the spaces designed in different historical circumstances to fulfil needs of a different sort of people: agricultural society based on close inter- and intra-family cooperation formed in the previous historical epochs (Chałasiński 1984: 184–249).

In both cases, the organisation of space in a particular location is, in a manner of speaking, inherited. It is the result of a long series of actions and practices taken and upheld by the people inhabiting it.

3. Structure in action

3.1. The impact of space on the social interactions in Wólka Kosowska

Space – defined as above – determines the opportunities open to new groups, sets a particular type of ground for human interactions and influences the relationship newcomers entertain with the place and with its original inhabitants.

When talking about the impact of space-related factors on the social relations in and around the centre, a comparison with the conception of ethnic enclave, commonly used to describe migrant economic institutions, can be illuminating. Alejandro

Portes (1995) defines ethnic enclaves as 'spatially clustered networks of businesses owned by members of the same minority' and adds that '[t]hey are not dispersed among other populations […] but emerge in close proximity to the areas settled by their own group'. On the one hand, Wólka Kosowska centre unites two dimensions present in that definition: spatial concentration of ethnic businesses and their reliance on migrant networks, important both for providing cheap products from abroad and for finding employment in the centre. The spatial concentration concerns not only businesses, but also housing. Answering the needs of those who work and live there, a range of specific services (restaurants, small shops, barbers, but also translators or legal counsellors) has emerged, leading researchers to describing the centre as an autonomous 'small town' (Klorek, Szulecka, 2013:10). On the other hand, the centre has developed in an order contrary to ethnic enclaves in their traditional conceptualisation, where the settling of an ethnic group is the original factor causing the opening of businesses. In the case of interest here, the centre – aiming at attracting outside customers – is turned outwards, and the traits characteristic of an enclave (foreigners settling nearby or the growing array of specific services) can seem a by-product. Many characteristics of the social relations and the functioning of the centre – the concentration of migrant communities and their self-sufficiency – can be explained by spatial factors linked both to global migrant networks and to the submission of the centre's organisation to its economic function.

Another element linking spatial and social structure is the centre's isolation on the micro level. While the centre's place in the region as a whole is important, mostly through providing workplaces (Klorek, Szulecka, 2013: 33) and supporting small retail stores, looking at immediate surroundings the boundaries appear more marked. The centre and the village are set along the same road, but the space occupied by the centre is limited on one side by an exit route from Warsaw, and on the other by a small river and a stretch of empty land. There seems to be little communication between the two, despite the fact that some villagers work in the centre, and a few foreigners live in the vicinity of the village. When inquired about the village, many of the centre's employees state that they have never been or see no interest in going there. Inversely, in the village, the authors were informed that no foreigners lived

there, although a few foreign children attend kindergarten. No signs indicating the proximity of the centre or any foreign presence are to be found. Any such sings present between the centre and the village get rarer as one gets nearer to the village dwellings. A gated residence where many foreigners live is set nearby, but it is separated from its surroundings by a grating. Thus, the closer one gets to the places where people live and lead their private lives, the less contact between different groups there seems to be. This is reflected in the relationship between foreigners and natives as described by the centre's employees, who, often blaming the lack of linguistic proficiency, state that it is rare to see the relationships between Poles and foreigners extend beyond work (Wysieńska 2012: 153; Klorek, Szulecka, 2013: 50–53). While conflicts clearly exist, leading the press to speculate about the centre being a 'ticking bomb' (Karpieszuk 2012), they are not apparent and for many do not seem to be at the centre of their preoccupations. Moreover, they seem more often to concern two immigrants groups, i.e. the Vietnamese and the Chinese, rather than the immigrants and the local community. One encounters mistrust, as for instance when Polish restaurant owners suggested that one cannot know what their foreign competitors put in their food. However, overall, it would seem that, as one of the village inhabitants claimed, the foreigners 'don't bother anyone' – the mutual relationship is neutral, correct or even friendly where contact is required and non-existent in all other situations.

A good example of the predominately economic function of the centre and of the partitioning of spheres this entails can be seen in the use made of national designations. Most malls and businesses are named after the nationality of their owners – there are 'Chinese', 'Vietnamese', 'Turkish' and 'Polish' malls, but also an array of restaurants and other services bearing this kind of names. Some even use national colours in their logos. The separation between nationalities is maintained and inscribed in the space of the centre, ordering and organising it. However, it disappears from people's accounts when they focus on the trading function of the place – inquired about the organisation of the centre, many of them concentrated on pragmatic aspects (opening hours, prices and quality of goods), leaving the question of national

origins entirely out of the picture. Once again, the economic sphere is an exception from the otherwise dominant separation.

The way the space in and around the centre is organised and used mirrors the interactions between Poles and foreigners. The centre, set up as a strictly economic institution separate from its surroundings (Wysieńska 2012: 159), does not allow for crossing of the boundaries between natives and newcomers in any other field than professional life. Physically present, but apart both in space and in terms of social relations, the newcomers are indeed in a liminal state, both absent and present.

3.2. Goodwill and contradictory aspirations

Deciding to move to a rural area, migrants find their destination already quite precisely structured and filled. On the one hand, they are not numerous and scattered in provincial villages, distant from the metropolis. They acquire plots or whole farms which are surrounded by native inhabitants' farms and buildings. On the other hand, this kind of newcomers do not try to deliberately separate themselves from local neighbours – they seek what one of interviewees called 'culture of the land'. They are prone to be engaged in activities for the local community. If their lifestyle is not shocking for local dwellers, they are accepted by their new communities, or – at least – declare they are accepted. Theoretically, both spatial structure and their good will predispose them to establish good relations with the local inhabitants. However, the interviews with migrants living a dozen or so years in the provincial villages of the Holy Cross voivodeship suggest that after a long time of living among the native populations, they still feel distinct.

To some extent, this can be explained by differences in the level of education between the usually well-educated newcomers (Kajdanek 2011: 179) and the usually poorly educated native farmers as well as rather artistic professions of the migrants in comparison to more *practical* skills of the natives (Laskowska-Otwinowska 2008). Moreover, the newcomers rarely cultivate anything more than their gardens, while families in the region, even in the presence of other sources of income, usually do not abandon agriculture entirely. The newcomers are prone to send their children to different schools than their neighbours if they perceive the closest one not good enough

and, generally, seem to treat distance as a less important impediment than the locals do. However, these demographic and economic factors cannot be treated as the only explanation of long-lasting divisions. Their existence must also be attributed to aesthetic values and lifestyles of both categories: the newcomers feel disappointed by the natives' lack of interest in non-governmental activities for education and preserving the cultural heritage of the area. They perceive most natives as concentrated on material values and trying to manifest materialistic aspirations in the space of their farms.

Thus, the interaction between the locals and the newcomers is influenced both by the way space has been organised, and by the way it is perceived and used. It is linked as much to values attached to space as to barriers erected in it.

3.3. Various contexts, similar outcomes

Unlike Section 2 – focusing on differences in the (pre)organisation of space in Wólka Kosowska and remote villages of the Holy Cross voivodeship, the present one reveals similar social outcomes of the newcomers' arrival. Although families moving from urban to provincial rural areas are not spatially separated from their native neighbours in their private life – as the Asian migrants in Wólka Kosowska are – and seem to be much more interested in local community issues, the result of both kinds of migration is similar: the appearance of a new kind of social divisions, which usually do not imply open conflicts between the two groups – newcomers and natives – but are difficult to eliminate, regardless of the attitudes of particular individuals.

4. Redefinition, negotiation, separation – actors in space
4.1. The redefinition of space inside the trade centre

Determinant as it might be, the impact of pre-existing conditions is not a fatality, nor is it entirely a one-way process. The established context can be a ground for negotiation around the ownership, organisation and meaning of space. Moreover, a locality is composed of many different spaces, on many scales, some of which might be more open to divergent interpretations than others.

A clear counter-example to the claim that spatial structures entirely determine social relations is offered by the daily life inside the centre's buildings. Decided upon by the investors, the inside of the buildings is ordered by a logic of economic efficiency. All the buildings present the observer with a vast space divided into regular blocks of stores separated by alleys. At a first glance they could appear partitioned into small, closed spaces. However, the use made of the alleys and the stores by those working in them transforms the buildings. The alleys are not merely empty ground between stores but are used for a wide array of activities, from presenting and storing goods, through waste disposal, to spending free time on resting, eating, playing games or having conversations. Some employees bring their children to work and one can see them playing in the alleys. Vendors can be seen in the store doorways, talking to colleagues across the alley. The boundaries between private and professional life are constantly blurred (Klorek, Szulecka, 2013: 44). Hence, rather than defining the inside of the buildings as professional space, one could refer here to concepts of semi-public or semi-private space. However, while those two types of space can be defined by a form of closure due to their appropriation by users (Bartoszek et al., 1997: 20), in this case the confusion of private and public has the effect of opening up a potentially closed and partitioned space.

This openness also finds a reflection in the interactions between ethnic groups that can be observed in the buildings. While the centre is the ground of complex – and at times conflicting – relationships (Wysieńska 2012: 151), the atmosphere in the malls can be described as friendly. One can observe Poles (both customers and workers) interacting with foreigners, or employees of different origin talking and joking together (Klorek, Szulecka, 2013: 55), in so far as their language skills permit it. Many customers in the centre are regulars and their behaviour towards foreign merchants bears marks of certain familiarity between them. Younger employees in particular can often be seen interacting across ethnic lines. Thus, the professional space invaded by private life is the one permitting the most interaction between ethnic groups.

Two points can be noted here. Firstly, just as the division of private space corresponds to the isolation of the newcomers from natives, their contacts in professional life are linked to a more open organisation of space. Secondly, while in the sur-

roundings of the centre the newcomers find themselves excluded both spatially and socially by pre-existing conditions, inside the centre this relationship is complex: the foreigners are not newcomers in the centre, but its owners. The use they make of that space influences and shapes it. Thus, rather than a simple case of inclusion or exclusion of newcomers from a community, Wólka Kosowska is a juxtaposition of two distinct spaces. While the economic institution itself provides a ground where newcomers can interact with natives and shape the space they work in, in the neighbourhood as a whole, pre-established spatial relations pervade, excluding the newcomers from sharing in the private lives of the natives.

4.2. Within the communities but still aside

Although living among the native population and forced to maintain relations with its representatives, urban migrants seem to be separated from local dwellers by mental differences – as far as interviews suggest, social relationships across the categories are rare and there is little convergence of behaviour and attitudes.

The division has little to do with 'a distinction' as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1984). Newcomers are much more interested in and familiar with the elite culture than natives, but they do not try to exclude the latter from participation in artistic events. Quite the contrary, the newcomers – as involved in social work – would like to popularise artistic activities among the natives, but without a vast resonance. Moreover, the newcomers highly value folk culture, which makes them more omnivorous (Peterson 2005) than the natives are. However, to some extent they fit in the ironic description of middle-class tastes by David Brooks (2000). This is reflected in the appearance of buildings belonging to migrants and natives; the former try to give their houses a rustic appearance, while the latter try to make their village as modern as possible without care for connections with tradition. Thus, despite living in the same villages, the newcomers mark their distinctiveness by shaping the aesthetics of private space.

4.3. Different spheres, different manifestations of social distance

Therefore, although in both cases investigated the groups of newcomers and natives tend to remain separate, this division has different outcomes in shaping the social spaces by the migrants in Wólka Kosowska and by the newcomers in the Holy Cross voivodeship. In the former case, clear separation of the living space, as well as visible cultural differences, do not necessarily imply attempts of both sides to separate in the working space. Furthermore, this latter space allows a certain extent of agency on the immigrants' part. Urban migrants living in the rural communities manifest their distinct taste (it is still an unsolved question whether such distinguishing is deliberate) through the shape of their private spaces, especially houses.

5. Global to local and back

5.1. Migrant networks and power dynamics

Finally, after this analysis, a few aforementioned elements concerning the relation between the local context under study and global processes need to be stressed and developed further. As postulated in the introduction, this relationship is what one could call circular; while the global finds its reflection in and is the reason behind some local phenomena, it is through the local context that individuals experience and participate in global dynamics.

The existence of the centre in Wólka Kosowska can in many ways be seen as a visible manifestation of the link between the global and the local scene. It appears as an illustration of globalising processes. It is important to remind here that Poland is, so far, a very homogeneous country in terms of ethnicity and that it has yet to experience the challenges of multicultural society that other European countries have to face. The number of foreigners living permanently in Poland represents only about 0.1% of the general population (Adach-Stankiewicz et al., 2012). In this context, Wólka Kosowska is a unique example of a highly visible and concentrated foreign population settling in the country. The press accounts concerning the centre are very telling: they often concentrate on the most exotic elements, underline the contrast between the Polish village and its foreign neighbours, and focus on the most strikingly inter-cultural aspects of the interaction between the two. A lot of attention is

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paid to children – the first generation of foreigners in Poland, their adaptation to Polish society, but also the experience of Polish children making foreign friends, or learning languages (for the latter element see, for example, Blikowska 2012). This was also present in conversations with the Polish employees of the centre; independently of their opinion on inter-group relations, they tended to be positive about the relationships between children of different origin and on the impact this contact has on them. One could go as far as to say that the discourse produced by both the workers at the centre and press accounts presents Wólka Kosowska as an epitome of globalisation, and of the fears but also hopes for the future it produces. The global process ceases to be abstract and distant. Through the contact with the centre, it becomes a lived experience.

This discourse is built on a reality; as mentioned before, the functioning of the centre relies on global migrant networks stretching across the globe. In that sense, the presence of the centre truly links the local and global dimensions. Wólka Kosowska is one amongst a vast web of interlinked locations. It occupies a particular place in this web, determined by a series of dynamics – from economic logic to geopolitical position.

The different places in such a global web are not linked together on equal terms. Globalisation is also a set of power relations in which different regions and localities of the world are situated. It is not only a phenomenon of interconnection, but also of domination and inequality. In this respect, there is one element in the organisation and functioning of Wólka Kosowska that appears to mirror a global logic. Indeed, while globalisation entails an intensification of flows worldwide, this is not equally true for all kinds of flows. While economic exchange is widely welcome, many developed countries are simultaneously trying to limit the flows of people (Massey 1995: 25). One could go as far as to see parallels between this interpretation of globalisation as open to economic activity, but not necessarily to other aspects of migration flows, and the relation between inclusion and separation observed in Wólka Kosowska. Here as well economic exchange seems rather unproblematic. Other aspects of human interaction appear much more complex and communication on other levels is harder to obtain.

5.2. Global trends in Polish conditions

Similarly, movements from urban to rural areas are not specific to contemporary Poland. Suburbanisation can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, when it commenced in southern counties of England (Burchardt 2012). Since the 1950s it became an important social process in the United States leading to a situation where in 2000 a half of the U.S. population lived in suburban areas (Hobbs, Stoops, 2002: 10) which, though counted by statisticians as metropolitan areas and considered urban, existed as rural areas before the suburbanisation occurred. Moreover, suburbanisation appears to be a common process throughout the world, including the European Union (Cox 2009).

However, as claimed by Katarzyna Kajdanek (2012: 35), suburbanisation in Polish conditions differs significantly from the American or British model, not only due to more recent beginning of suburban movements in Poland, but also through its 'selective and insular nature'. Moreover, Polish suburbanisation is motivated mostly by the economic factors: insufficient housing supply, high prices of apartments and parcels of land in down-town areas, which pushes to peripheries families of lower social status, rather than – as it happened in the USA and Western Europe – more affluent groups (ibidem: 38).

The new settlers' movement is also a global phenomenon, not limited to Poland, having its roots in the alternative cultures or even counter-culture of the 1960s and the 1970s (Laskowska-Otwinowska 2008: 10). In Poland it has had specific and rather narrow social background as the Polish new settlers are mostly members of intelligentsia, people of high cultural capital, which they do not want to use in the struggle for better social and economic position, but follow the values of ecology and communal life instead. They are not numerous, but can be a significant element of the social structure in the localities they reside.

The newcomers' influence on the local communities is not limited to the educational and cultural activities for the local communities, which they are involved in. They were also the first to introduce some technological and social innovations to their villages of residence, for example the internet (or telephone in the earlier dec-

ades). In the attempts to secure educational opportunities for their own offspring (for arranging additional classes, courses or excursions) they create additional possibilities for their native neighbours' children. Good example is given by an interviewee (a highly educated person), who by giving classes of English to the talented son of his neighbours (farmers), contributed to the later success of the boy – currently the rising star of Polish pharmacology.

Thus, moving to rural areas in search of traditional, natural way of life, the newcomers are also – against their own intentions – helping the natives to make 'the first stage on the long road to a post-productivist countryside, in which countryside becomes detached from agriculture, there is socio-economic convergence between town and country, and the "rural" increasingly becomes defined by landscape and identity rather than economic function' (Burchardt 2012: 1). By that means, the newcomers influence ceases to be local only, and contributes to the global trends changing rural areas in the whole country.

6. Conclusion

All spaces analysed in this research are socially constructed, but the newcomers did not take part in these processes. They found their new localities already spatially structured – to a lesser or greater extent – be it by the investor, the commune office arrangements, or traditional land divisions of the Polish countryside and by less traditional aesthetic preferences of local inhabitants. In each case the newcomers – whose culture, social and economic position as well as habits and attitudes towards space are different than the natives' – are forced to deal with the already enforced spatial arrangements and corresponding social conditions. Asian workers, in spite of the language barrier, cultural differences, or even negative stereotyping, have to cooperate with local Polish inhabitants and clients in the common space of the trading malls. Urban to rural migrants are also dealing with the infrastructure available in the local spaces they are moving to and have to, at least initially, take for granted the locals' aesthetic and habits.

Obviously, in the aforementioned cases spatial structures are only intermediating global economic processes, deeply embedded social structures and cultural di-

visions. The trading malls of Wólka Kosowska or the living spaces of Polish villages appeared as a result of the globalisation of economy and the blurring of urban-rural dichotomy. Individuals cannot sensually experience the interests and logic behind those macro processes.They can, however, experience the working or living spaces thus created. Regardless of their attitude toward those processes, migrants and natives enter the spaces which force them to act and interact in a globalised or intercultural environment.

Theoretically, newcomers can negotiate the structure of their common spaces with the established community. In practice, it seems that they do so to a very limited extent. Places where the newcomers live and/or work tend to reflect a relative lack of relationship with the locals. Moreover, the degree of isolation varies according to the sphere of life concerned, mirroring a difference existing in the interactions between different groups. It would appear that the degree to which space is negotiable also varies according to the migrants' settlement concentration – Asians in Wólka Kosowska are in a position to shape their environment only in the economic field where they are a majority, while the dispersed newcomers in the Holy Cross voivodeship villages have no such possibility outside their own farms.

At the same time, one can witness a certain number of conflicts or differences concerning the conceptions of space shared by those groups, be they linked to the appearance of places, or to the question of the responsibility for and treatment of common spaces. In the case of urban to rural migrants, the aesthetic dimension and the question of conceptions of space appears with more force. In the cases of international migration, the differences between locals and newcomers are more vivid, rendering their isolation in space more striking.

7. References

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