

Outside the Moral Circle

Polish Political Refugees in Norway: Between the Established and the Outsiders

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ABSTRACT: The model of established and outsiders proposed by Norbert Elias is a useful analytical tool for comparing and contrasting different types of habitus. In this paper, I apply this model in a 2010-11 study based on twenty in-depth biographical interviews with Polish Solidarity refugees in Norway who left Poland as a result of the Martial Law of 1981. In this qualitative, biographical research we managed to initiate extensive narratives on the imagery of the immigrant group. The key notion of my analysis is the “moral circle”, an expression used by one of the interviewees in order to describe the differences in the scope and intensity of personal relations in Poland and Norway, as well as the standard of self-control applicable inside and outside it. My aim in this paper is to expand Elias’ perspective by discussing the role which social imagination and cultural differences may play in the dynamics of relations between established and outsiders. [1][#N1]

1. Introduction

The Established and the Outsiders is one of the finest examples of what results may be achieved by combining extensive fieldwork with an innovative theoretical reflection. Over fifty years since its completion, the book still stands both as a model case study in urban sociology and as a valuable conceptual framework for understanding social exclusion. Nevertheless, Elias and Scotson’s work has certainly aged in certain aspects. It is partly due to the fact that it is so strongly embedded in empirical reality. It used to be one of the book’s greatest advantages, but turned into a handicap over time – as is often the case with sociological monographs of this kind.

Winston Parva’s story was typical for the times of industrial boom in Europe in the early postwar years. In those days, internal migration provoked considerable social disturbance and policy concerns. Many cases similar to Winston Parva could be found in the history of the post-war phase of European industrialisation (see e.g. Jajeśniak-Quast 2008). Social struggles such as those described by Elias and Scotson were a significant factor in the development of both European societies and their sociological self-understanding. Nevertheless, in our days, intracultural clashes characteristic of the period of industrialisation and urbanisation [2][#N2] have largely been replaced by intrasocietal but intercultural relations. Mechanisms responsible for generating and amplifying social divisions, inequalities and hostilities, as well as coping strategies launched by involved populations, still occupy the central place in our reflection on social exclusion. The established and the outsiders are still there, but the social setting in which they are made is changed.

In this paper, I argue for an expansion of Elias' analytical framework in order to preserve its utility in studying cases of intercultural encounters that launch the dynamics described in *The Established and the Outsiders*. In particular, the impact of the social imagination and cultural differences needs to be taken into account more than Elias and Scotson saw fit to do. They easily assumed that all members of the population of Winston Parva shared the same general worldview. Consequently, they only covered the cultural background of the people in question to a very limited extent, focussing on figurational effects of the encounter without making the social imagination a distinct variable in their model. The cultural dimension was yet another point on which Winston Parva's established and outsiders were the same – it was a part of the paradox of the social creation of difference. We can no longer hold on to this logic of explanation in the world in which culture has become a major factor in shaping and reshaping social figurations. Any description of habitus adequate to the purpose of analysing intercultural encounters must include categories of cultural difference, and not only of figurational interdependencies. By this token, I will use Elias' theoretical framework to analyse a process in which the creation of the established and the outsiders was, in my view, a result of differences in social imagination, especially related to what I metaphorise in this text as the “moral circle”.

The expression “moral circle” comes from one of twenty in-depth semi-structured interviews that were conducted in the years 2010-2011 as a part of an oral history research, in which my colleague Krzysztof Martyniak and myself took part. [3][#N3] We targeted members and collaborators of the union Solidarność (hereafter: Solidarity) who left for Norway as a result of communist repressions during the Martial Law in Poland (1981-1983) and were still living there as of 2010. I propose to use the notion of moral circle as key category in understanding how cultural differences may contribute to the interviewed immigrants' status of outsiders, which I will discuss in the first part of this article. In the second part, I hope to take Elias' ideas a step further, showing how the sense of being cast out may be negotiated by way of moving the context of encounter into a symbolical time and space of one's choice, which allows the immigrants to stop short of developing a full outsider mentality. As a result, a hybrid of outsider and established is created, or rather a habitus that is between the two types described by Elias. It is an effect of a coping strategy, which I name 'conditional withdrawal into the past'. In the final part, I discuss how this coping strategy works and how it finally fails.

2. The good life versus the moral circle

One of our interviewees said, when trying to describe his relationships with Norwegians: *'the atmosphere of work and cooperation with the Norwegians was much better outside the moral circle. Sometimes they say here, as a joke, “nur for moralsk sirkel”, meaning “beyond the moral circle”* (W5). [4][#N4] In this section I give some background information to explain why I decided to use this notion as a key category in my analysis.

The man who used the metaphor of the 'moral circle' had been living and working in Norway for nearly thirty years, to his general satisfaction. Our interviewees were on the whole rather pleased with their current situation and position in Norwegian society. [5][#N5] This self-perceived success was undoubtedly largely due to many advantages they had had as migrants-to-be. Almost all of them were raised in late fifties and sixties, which made them relatively young at the point of leaving Poland, almost all were university-educated or in the course of their studies. Most of them spoke at least one Western language and had at least one family member abroad. Last but not least, their choice of Norway as a host country was comparatively well informed, which probably accounts for the fact that only one of them had passed through the interim refugee camp – all the others were travelling directly. All of our interviewees migrated together with their families (if they had any)

or managed to have their loved ones join them over time. Most of them were able to find a job in their own profession upon the lapse of but a few years. [6],[#N6]

I am portraying here a group of people who were probably as well equipped to adapt to Western (and, in particular, Norwegian) reality as was reasonably possible in those days for someone who was not a high-profile intellectual or internationally recognized activist. In addition, they had an advantage of relatively much social capital. They were active and, on the whole, socially capable; they were experienced at self-organization, with a unique networking practice. They had every chance of doing well in the new reality – and they did, going by their own self-assessment. When talking to our interviewees, most of them positively evaluated their decision to choose Norway.

The measures which they applied in their evaluations fall into two distinct categories. The first are what they frequently referred to as 'good' or 'better life'. They typically used financial standing, lifestyle (including workload and pace of life) as well as state of their own health as reference measures when asked their opinion of their present situation (Bucholc and Martyniak 2011: 123ff). Norway was an attractive country for them, because life was 'good' there, better there than in Poland. They believed they were in better health than their peers in Poland (which they largely attributed to lower level of stress in every day life), they estimated the level of their social, financial and personal safety as much higher than what they could expect, had they stayed in Poland. If we construed an index combining health, social well-being and safety, Norway would be very high on that index, and our interviewees would probably agree to call it 'the index of good life'.

However, there is also a second measure applied by our interviewees when evaluating their situation in Norway. Whenever a subject of relations with the Norwegians was discussed, the following type of narrative was infallibly launched:

In the beginning, I must say, it was positive, very positive. I have found assistance, friendliness, helpfulness. But after 21 years I have a lot of Norwegian acquaintances, can't say I don't, but there isn't one I could call a friend. (W8)

There are no friends of choice here. There are friends of necessity, because there is nobody else. That's the problem. (W9)

It seems that the social life our interviewees led in Norway was not as good as the 'good life' composed of financial and physical well-being and security. Their general assessment may be summarized as follows: whereas life in Norway is better, there are more close human relationships in Poland – more friends, more people one chooses freely. Outside the moral circle life is good – but what of the moral circle itself?

I suggest to conceptualise the notion of moral circle as composed of people who see one another as morally significant. It is a notion that derives from the language and the imagery of the Norwegian established, used by an outsider to describe what he saw as a clear division between two spheres of interactions between humans. In one of them, people are reduced to their functional utility and are perceived as legitimate interaction partners only within the framework of functional relationships. In the other, people are not only agents fulfilling some specified function and, in this sense, necessary, but important in themselves. The test of such an attitude towards someone is the ability to attribute a unique set of qualities to him or her specifically, thus acknowledging his or her uniqueness or 'personhood' (see Taylor 1985). However, the notion of a moral circle is not philosophically based. It only serves to approach the fact on which my interviewee remarked: a division of people in daily interactions and in cultural imagery into two categories, only one of which corresponds to the philosophically conceived 'person'. A person's uniqueness consists in being one-of-a-kind,

which in interactional categories implies that a person may never be fully substituted by any other person. This gives the perception of a person an altogether different meaning, generated by the sense of importance irreducible to functional utility. A reverse situation would occur when an actor is ascribed qualities which he or she shared with a number of other people constituting a social category. Such an actor would be interchangeable with any other individual having the same relevant quality.

Interchangeability has one consequence of extreme importance, which Georg Simmel explored in his classical studies of love, lie and secrecy (see Simmel [1908] 1950). Distances between people in social life generally vary depending on the scope of engagement of the actors. A prudent distribution of attention is indispensable for providing an adequate variation and a sufficient level of emotional exchange. This need to distribute attention and emotional arousal in a manner adequate to both social organization and an individual's place in it was also one of the main themes of Elias' sociology of leisure and excitement (Elias & Dunning 2008). Elias stressed the difficulties of appropriate management of emotions and arousal in modern societies and pointed out differences between distribution and intensity of emotions in various societies (e.g. Elias 2008a; 2010; 2012), both in historical and synchronic comparisons. The notion of moral circle fits into this theoretical field, as it denotes the milieu of people who are morally significant, therefore eligible objects of certain emotions and respectively standardised of behaviour.

In the energetic balance of our daily interactions we naturally tend to attach the value of 'person' to the happy few. This is particularly conspicuous in the contexts in which density of interactions is too hard to manage – the personal element may then become virtually nullified, as Georg Simmel proposes in his study of metropolis. Neutrality and equanimity becomes a standard. Lack of interchangeability is only one among the many nuances and, frequently, nuisances we come across in the moral (personal) relations that are unheard of outside the moral circle. It is generally much easier to operate on a limited set of premises that are consistently applied to every member of a certain social category defined in functional terms, than to engage in tedious personal interactions with people who are meaningless apart from their functional utility.

It has frequently been observed that what I would call the borderline between the moral circle and what is outside it runs differently in different societies. This is one of the sources of old distinctions such as high and low context culture (Hall 1976). The pattern of moral and impersonal relations tends to become typified for a certain stage of civilization in a specified figuration and is a component of habitus developed by people living in it. Individuals tend to adjust their ideas of the scope of personal and impersonal relations to the conditions created by the social setting in which they live. They make it a starting point for their actions, including those subversive or revolutionary, aimed at changing the prevailing pattern. We can expect certain dynamics in defining and redefining the moral circle to accompany figural shifts and changes in balances of power, which could be detected in historical research.

There are two basic dimensions along which moral circles may differ and evolve. One is their size: the number of people included in the circle. The other is their content: who the people within the moral circle are, what kind of emotions apply to objects inside and outside the moral circle, what their intensity and hue is and what standards of behaviour apply to them. The content of the moral circle is a product of civilizing process in the sense Elias gave to this term; the term implies a certain (double) standard of self-restraint and expression. To an extent, it is also explainable in terms of figural conditioning. To take just two examples out of Elias' writings: the habitus of francophone cosmopolitan court society as described by Elias included a certain image of moral circle, which was unacceptable in the German bourgeoisie, which Elias explains by different interests and figural positions of the two groups (see Elias 2012). The habitus of the British seems to be different from that of Germans when it comes to treating other people personally, which results from a specific figuration of British society, including, among other things, the absence of *Bauerntum* in Britain (Elias 2008b).

At the same time, the moral circle is primarily a notion which refers to the sphere of social imagery: the courtiers and the British policemen in the story reported by Elias had a certain view of who is and who is not morally linked to whom, and in what way, which was part of their respective we-images. Both the size and the contents of the moral circle depend on the meaning people attach to themselves and others and on the expectations they form. Moral circles as imagined by various groups may be visualized as superimposed on their social networks, adding a layer of ordering which need not and would not be problematized and put to reflection, unless confronted with an ordering done by means of a moral circle different in size and/or contents.

The moral circle, in this sense, is also a core of social identification understood in the simplest way possible, as dividing the world into those who are 'the same' and those who are 'unlike' ourselves (De Swaan 1995: 25). We only identify with people who share our image of the moral circle and are 'like us' in this respect; whose ordering superimposed on social networks agrees with our own. Our expectations as to who shall and who shall not be treated as morally significant tend to agree with those who are 'like us', be they our kin, our nation or our ethnic group, whereas discrepancies in the size and/or content of the moral circle will most likely result in unintelligibility and lack of coordinated action. When two populations whose imageries contain different notions of a moral circle encounter regularly in the same space, the situation is very likely to develop along the lines of the established and the outsiders.

3. Outsider trajectories in Norway

One idea is crucial for Elias and Scotson's book, which is a common tenet of sociological theories of social exclusion: outsiders are made and not born. The making of outsiders follows a line which I describe as an outsider's trajectory, leading from a zero point of an encounter with another to the full outsider habitus. Outsiders are a product of figurational dynamics and so are the established. A similar idea was famously expressed by Erving Goffman's claim that the normal and the deviant be complementary and interdependent social categories (see Goffman 1963). It is not origin, race, gender or any other external sign that causes exclusion (see Elias 1994: xvii) – culture does not cause it, either. The key to the status of an outsider is the reaction of the established. This reaction, in turn, has to draw on cultural repertoires of means of expression and standards of behaviour. In this paper, I only describe this reaction as it is seen by the outsiders, which I consider a drawback of my analysis, related to limitations of the empirical material on which is based.

On the other hand, the reaction of the established only takes effect upon the outsiders once they interpret it, translate it into their understanding of their own situation and transmit it into the patterns of interactions between the outsiders and the established. The reply of the outsiders, in turn, will cause the established to react further and in this way the intergroup dynamic will unfold, which will again lead to new interpretations and translations. Thereby, in Elias' work the cultural moment is implied – exclusion of the outsiders will not be performed for the same reason and in the same way in every society and it will not produce identical habitus in every case, although they will all share certain properties which are determined by the dynamics of established-outsider figurations. Moreover, the manifestations of exclusion will vary depending on who the involved parties are. For example, it is perfectly possible to imagine the Winston Parva case the other way round: the newcomers gaining control and slowly but surely casting the 'old families' out into the margins of social life. [7][#N7] It would depend on organisational and networking capabilities of both groups and their motivation in striving for power, but also on their cultural resources and mobilization. The established and the outsiders start as equals (see Elias 1994: xvii, xxi), but not the same – and not the same in every case. Size and content of the moral circle are part of cultural repertoires which may be used both to consolidate and to exclude, provided that there is a difference between the established and the outsiders in this respects. For this

reason, I believe that there might be intercultural encounters in which the notion of the moral circle would not be a useful category: if a theoretical notion does not differentiate, it does not explain, either.

Elias makes it clear that the established and the outsiders compete for power. Being (and feeling) relatively more powerless than the established is a part of an outsider's status. Control over a social territory is at stake. Though various strategies may be applied whose aim is to establish oneself in the disputed territory, [8].[#N8] there are basically two spheres in which the struggle for power between the established and the outsiders takes place. One is the real space and time of the disputed territory and the other is the symbolic domain. In the real space it is enough to remove the opponents from certain areas, by physical barriers or by violent repression. In the symbolic universe the victory is achieved when the outsiders-to-be are no longer able to claim power and, consequently, start to legitimize the power of the established-to-be by representing themselves as having been cast out deservedly, as 'not belonging' to the established society for some good reason (see Elias, Scotson 1994: 80). All these add up to form the outsider trajectory, which I propose to divide into three stages: encounter, surprise and acceptance.

a. Encounter

In our research, Polish immigrants, upon their arrival in Norway, found themselves outside the moral circle of their Norwegian hosts. In their narratives, they construe it as understandable enough: they were newcomers, usually they did not speak the language of the land and came from a very different reality. Moreover, as some of them notice, Norway in the early eighties was a country which was only 'beginning to taste its welfare' (W8), it did not attract too many immigrants. A stranger was a rare spectacle, even in the biggest cities. The outsider trajectory starts with an acceptance of not-belonging, which is supposed to be temporary only. The newcomers anticipated that their relation with their Norwegian hosts would develop according to their expectations based on their Polish experience. The first stage of outsider trajectory is a phase of projecting these expectations which are based on previous experience onto their Norwegian surroundings.

A few words must now be said regarding this experience, as it was a part of the cultural background (in particular, the collective memory) of our interviewees which I believe constitutes a major factor in the further development of their relations with the Norwegians. I will not focus on the history and sociological interpretations of Solidarity as a social movement or as a political phenomenon. There is a vast and rich scholarship on the subject. [9].[#N9] Instead, I will only refer to extant research in order to substantiate my claims as to the link between the kind of mentality which was reflected in our interviews, and the experience of Solidarity as rendered by its many (and frequently discordant) scientific translators. Although its lasting impact is debatable, the necessity to take into account the moral context of Solidarity seems to be a common point in which the debating parties agree (see Szacka 2006: 75). The experience of Solidarity will therefore be treated here both as a common cultural resource of the interviewed group, and as a reference point for their encounter with the Norwegians.

The final lasting remembrance of Poland, which remained a crucial point for our interviewees up until now, was the 'carnival of Solidarity'. It was the period between 1980 and the announcement of the Martial Law on the 13th of December 1981, which brought a huge wave of positive thinking and a widespread sense of moral empowerment to Poland. The atmosphere of the day was commonly described as the return of 'normality'. This normality consisted, among the other things, of a more human touch and closeness between people; more solidarity in the literal meaning of the word. The moral circle of people in Poland – notwithstanding its default size and content, which would be a different matter altogether –. expanded enormously in these days and the impression it made was a very strong one. People were getting closer and they were getting out into the public, carrying with them what they defined as their authenticity – both metaphorically and literally.

“Let us say it openly, it was a massive social movement, including people from all social strata, of all political views. (...) They did not divide the people as they do now” (W5), says one of the respondents, playing on the chord of unity that was so easily dissolved in later politics. Community spirit (as well as a sense of belonging to a group, whose strength comes from the number) culminated in the sense of becoming a “we” by gaining power (see Mennell 2003: 371): *‘When you leave your house as an individual, in the street you meet friends, so you’re a group now, two, three, four, five, maybe ten people. But when you get downtown and there is a demonstration than it’s a mass of people. These are “we”’* (W4)

The sense of ubiquitous feelings of sympathy and cooperativeness went hand in hand with this feeling of empowerment: *‘It was an incredible movement among the people, solidarity, meaning honesty and willingness and self-sacrifice. It was an amazing period, one would like to experience something like this once again.’* (W4) Many more such quotes both from our research and other works could be evoked to evidence that the normality coming back was in fact a social idyll of equality, freedom and brotherhood.

The Martial Law cut off this normality abruptly, and I believe that it was exactly the state of exception that initiated a complicated process of associating normality with a sort of a collective euphoria during the ‘carnival of Solidarity’. Distress caused by subsequent deprivation was severe, but it did not touch the core expectations of ‘normality’ – and these formed the starting point of new experience of a rather different normality of Norwegian society.

b. Surprise

Our interviewees reached Norway between 1981 and 1989. Most of them had no previous experience with Norwegians and few expectations, apart from the fact that they were seeking ‘normality’ and trying to escape from the ‘grey walls’ closing in over their life under the Martial Law (W10). Gradually, they integrated in terms of participation in Norwegian language, culture and institutions – they found jobs, they purchased homes and apartments, they raised and educated their children according to Norwegian ways. Success of these aspects of their integration is crucial for the understanding of their outsider status. The established-outsider model was applied to immigrant integration issues before (see e.g. Korte 2003, Treibel 1993, May 2004, Loyal 2011). It is clear – that only an examination of both sides of the established-outsider setup both from the symbolic, proxemic and institutional angle [10][#N10] could guarantee a full application of Elias’s theoretical framework. An analysis such as mine, focusing solely on the social imagination of one of the involved groups, is only a tentative effort to reconstruct figurational effects without really exploring the figuration in question. Therefore, I can only confirm that our interviewees expressed no sense of exclusion from Norwegian social life in either institutional or proxemic aspect. Their perception of symbolic exclusion, however, did not diminish with the growth of their cultural competence, command of language and habits of coexistence, as its core turned to be the local moral circle, whose size and content could not be successfully negotiated.

In fact, quite the opposite may have been the case. After the initial help, assistance and friendliness, many interviewees felt that they were being left to themselves gradually as their stay in Norway went on. What initially might have seemed a prospectively close relation turned out – to the surprise of the newcomers – to be a mere acquaintance by Norwegian standards. This is the second stage of the outsider trajectory. At this point the outsiders-to-be realise that their initial expectations as to development of relationship with the locals cannot stand. They see that the images of moral circle – their own and that of their hosts – fail to overlap. Surprise, disappointment and even a certain post-factum merriment belong to this phase, as demonstrated by the following tale that was told by one of our interviewees when asked about his disappointments with life in Norway:

There was a story when our daughter came back from school (she was maybe ten) and she discovered that there had been a burglary (...) and she called my wife at work. (...) And then my wife realized that she [the daughter] had come home after a burglary and was terrified, because she did not know whether the burglar was still there and what would happen next. And my wife decided to ask a colleague to go there with her, because she was afraid to go by herself. It was a matter of ten minutes, just to be there while she would be getting in. And he said that he was very busy, that he had a meeting on the next day and that he could not go with her. So this was the disappointment of my wife's, but this man was also very special. He was an old bachelor, a special sort of person, if you know what I mean, so I do not put it down to his being a Norwegian (...). (W6)

Even though the interviewee does not attribute this behaviour to Norwegian background of his wife's colleague today, his wife did at the time. Moreover, even though the question was not about the Norwegians, but about life in Norway, the interviewee automatically used the interpretation scheme referring to national differences (admittedly, a reaction quite to be expected in an interview structured along the problems of immigrant life). The wife's reaction was typical of the second stage of outsider trajectory, when various encounters lead to a dawning realisation that social life is governed by different rules in Norway than in Poland. Compassion and readiness to assist which would move a Pole to go with his colleague to her house after a burglary need not be expected of a Norwegian in the same position. For a Pole they would have been close enough as colleagues working in the same office – for a Norwegian they were (conceivably) too distant.

On the other hand, what was astounding for Poles was the fact that practices that they associated with being close in moral terms in Poland were possible in Norway despite the fact that the people in question were definitely not in the same moral circle:

The way people trusted each other was incredible. This faith in people. Whatever you said, they all believed you at once. Whatever you said (...) I had not received my scholarship yet and I went to a lady and I told her so, and she just took the money from the drawer and gave it to me. Without any question or checking anything. A guy just came in and said he had no money. (W9)

For a Polish person this kind of behaviour is not understandable, because it could only be possible within the moral circle, on the basis of a personal relation. This indicates a difference in contents of the moral circle: trust in money matters was not limited to the moral circle in the habitus represented by the Norwegians; trust was, so to say, impersonal. Trusting, on the other hand, did not make people closer: it just made their lives easier. Maybe trust and money in Norway were related in a way Putnam wanted them to be in viable capitalism-cum-democracy (Putnam 1993), and not in the way people coming from an economy based on a permanent grey market and economy of deficit were used to, where an office team was something like an auxiliary survival unit. However, this personalised, non-capitalist trust for Polish immigrants was also a moral asset on which they were used to build their sense of security as co-extensive with personal belonging to a group. It came as a surprise that there might be other sources of security, which did not depend on personal relationship or even acquaintance.

c. Acceptance

Surprises lead into the next, third stage of outsider trajectory: placid or bitter acceptance of the differences as to the size and content of the moral circle. It gradually dawns on the outsiders in the making that their initial

feeling of not-belonging cannot be successfully negotiated. This generated a long-standing sense of being an outsider (the word itself came up in some of our interviews). In 2010-2011 most of our interviewees still felt Norway was not – or 'not really' – their place: *'I feel like hanging about somewhere in between; I am not a Norwegian, Norway is not my country.'* (W8) This is understandable enough, especially when talking to a social researcher from the home country. However, what the interviewees themselves saw as the cause of the constant gap between themselves and their Norwegian surrounding could be described as the difference in the default size and content of moral circle.

'This is a different lifestyle. People are pleased with their lives and the values they cherish. They respect their neighbours, they do not intrude. (...) It is a different way of establishing a relationship. It requires time.' (W4) It is not the fact that the Norwegians do not wish to include the immigrants in their moral circles that is the problem, but the fact that their default moral circle settings make it impossible to include someone like an immigrant. This is largely due to both time requirements for a personal relationship, which our interviewees estimate as much higher for Norway than for Poland. It would seem that the time necessary to create a strong personal bond is too long for a newcomer to be able ever to do so. Some of our interviewees go for an economic explanation:

In Poland [before 1989] there existed a necessity to maintain relations with people, who had access to food and so on. Here, in Norway, it's enough to have money. If you have money, you may achieve a higher standard. If you have less, there is still no worry that there will be no food. There is always security. (W4)

Such explanations typically combine the motifs of money and security in an ambivalent manner: money supersedes and substitutes moral relations, which allows for more security, but as a cost of a moral loss, although security itself is also morally valuable. All of our interviewees put a lot of emphasis on the fact that life in Norway is easier, that the things are easily done (this easiness of life might become yet another variable on the 'good life' index mentioned above). It was surprisingly easy to start a business, get employment, buy a flat, start learning something, find one's way around in official matters. Reality was well organised, in ardent contrast with what they remembered from communist Poland. In Norway it was easy to become a functional member of the society. On the other hand, when we asked how their relations with the Norwegians look like apart from this "functional" adaptation, we typically got responses along the following lines:

In general, when you have two kids and two full time jobs, and you strive to stay in touch with the family in Poland and go there rather often, the time gets shorter still (...). I could say that we really move rather within the family structure, although, as I said, there are many friends, people we know. (W6)

Simmel would hardly be surprised that it is easier to function well in the society in which depersonalised relations greatly prevail over the personal ones. Nevertheless, a moral circle composed of the nearest Polish family in Norway and the link to Poland (maintained by internet and affordable air travel) may be very fragile. Some of our interviewees who had lost their spouses suddenly found that they were left with virtually no moral circle apart maybe from their still dependent children. The Norwegian moral circle as perceived by our interviewees normally only involves the family and the long-standing neighbours. Outside of it are functional relations of business, work, school, public duties, but also mutual help and social activities.

The above overview of an outsider trajectory allows us to update Elias's approach. Keeping to the family circle is a typical outsider reaction to exclusion. One of the insights by Elias and Scotson was that the outsiders do not consolidate, organise or unify in the face of the established closing ranks, but scatter and disperse, both in physical and in the symbolic sense (Elias, Scotson 1994: 57). However, it is not necessary that the established form a consistent and cohesive, self-aware social unit, as it used to be in Winston Parva. The Norwegian case analyzed here proves that relative exclusion may be produced with equal efficiency by confronting the newcomers with a vision of the world in which everyone keeps to his or her small milieu and the possibility for integration is excluded by the very cultural model of the established. In this way habitus and culture matter in the established-outsider dynamic. By reversal of Elias's scheme (outsiders longing for close relations and solidarity against the established who value distance, independence and privacy) the moral circle becomes a vehicle of estrangement.

4. Coping strategy: a moral circle of one's own

I now come to the second part of my argument. I have discussed the role which the content and size of moral circle play role in intercultural processes of exclusion. In this section, I would like to have a look at the coping strategies used by the outsiders in order to reorient their social action and adjust their imagery. A cultural category was the vehicle of estrangement and, as I will show presently, the coping strategies also use particular cultural resources of the group in question, in particular those made available by the collective memory.

Elias and Scotson's analysis is based upon an assumption that as soon as one group is deemed to threaten another, which is strong enough to consistently apply the strategies of exclusion, the established-outsiders dynamics is launched. In a way, my case goes even further than the Winston Parva one insofar as it shows that the new group need not even constitute a perceived threat to the established – it is enough if the default moral circle of the established is smaller than that of the outsiders. However, it is easy to think about strategies that could be applied by the outsiders in order to challenge the hegemony of the established habitus with its image of moral circle. The coping strategy largely applied by our interviewees was what I will call a 'conditional retreat into the past'.

Although Elias and Scotson never actually notice this strategy otherwise than in loose remarks on the established group policy, they do offer an apt description of it: 'Confronted with the difficulties of a highly mobile and quickly changing world one is apt to seek refuge in the image of a social order which never changes and projects it to a past that never was.' (Elias, Scotson 1994: 160) Not only the established seek refuge in what Karl Mannheim called 'conservative utopia' ([1936] 1968). The same applies to outcasts of all sorts, both real and self-proclaimed. [\[11\]\[#N11\]](#) Our interviewees were feeling outsiders in Norway 2010-2011, but there was still a place where they could be at home: Poland at the dawn of nineteen eighties, which in a careful assortment of memories became a moral Eldorado.

To construe a reference point in that way required a lot of fastidious data selection and an active work of memory. Both Norway and Poland changed a lot since the eighties, having undergone a thorough modernization. Contemporary Poland is not home to our interviewees:

The language is so changed, I can't understand what they are saying. This young generation is something totally different, not mine. I don't know if I should be afraid, or... this Poland of mine, this X [home town of the interviewee] of mine was left there somewhere, it is no longer

there, it was – unfortunately – so painful, that although this is the same place, it's no longer the same. (W12)

This and similar impressions might partly account for the decision not to leave Norway, despite giving it a lot of thought, which all of our interviewees declared to have done from time to time. Their homeland is no longer and the current Polish reality is disenchanting:

I follow what is going on in Poland, I listen to what my family are saying and I am often saddened, because it is not the Poland we were fighting for, this solidarity is missing. So I have a great grief and I understand my mother now, who is dead so many years now and who used to say that life was better under communism. I guess that those ex-activists who were spreading the ideas of solidarity, nobility, honesty, are not really altogether honest when they occupy some post or other. (W13)

Not only the politicians, but also the people in the street are strange and the very ambience is unrecognizable:

For me it's like a certain group of people vanished, like from the street, and a completely new stratum went up to the fore. What could be called, I do not know... the intellectuals, and generally the people wearing coats and so on [are no longer there]... Now, it was my first impression that all the, so to say, peasant girls went out, put on their jeans and got out into the street. This was my first impression. A certain social stratum completely... This was a completely different Poland. (W9)

The feeling that today's Poland is strange and unwanted, seems to prevail in the narratives launched by the comparison of Poland and Norway. After a long absence a feeling of not-belonging, that is so well-known from the Norwegian experience, is transposed onto Poland: *'After such a long time away I feel like I was sort of in between, I do not feel Norwegian, Norway is not my country, but in Poland... when my mother-in-law died, I had to go about a lot of things in the offices and I sometimes asked myself: "Does this lady speak Polish or Chinese"?' (W8)*

Another quotation summarizes the point on clash with current Polish reality rather well:

I missed Poland very much up until the moment when I first visited it in 1991. I thought everything was great in Poland, I saw it all through rosy glasses. Then I discovered that the nature of people and of the society is changed, it was no longer the country I had left. I still do miss Poland (...) but I want to stay in Norway. (W14)

It might be asked why should Poland be unchanged if Norway – as stressed by all the interviewees – has undergone a great transformation. The reason is simple: the moral circle in Norway is felt to have remained unaffected, the initial effect of comparison having anchored the opinions for good. Whereas in the case of Poland, the image of the moral circle has undergone substantial changes in the course of transformation begun in 1989 and it never achieved the size and content of the times of carnival of Solidarity. This relative deprivation is also responsible for the negative appraisal of Polish recent history by some of the interviewees, whereas the Norwegian modernization is typically favorably considered.

It seems that our interviewees chose their reference space (Poland) and time (the carnival of Solidarity) judiciously. They are no longer there, they cannot change. On the other hand, these are the days in which they were the established: they had the sense of unity, strength and control over reality. '*We felt strong*' (W4) – says one of our interviewees very simply. They no longer do, despite their positive self-assessment.

Here comes the tricky moment in this otherwise clear construction of conditional withdrawal into the past, which makes all the difference between a sentimental remembrance and a self-defense mechanism. Our interviewees only see themselves as established because they have developed an imagined disputed territory between themselves and the Norwegians. The real territory of battle back in the eighties was spreading between the communist authorities and the opposition, but it is no longer a valid reference point for construing today's immigrant identity in Norway. [12],[#N12]. 'We have no access to their moral circle, but they cannot enter ours either' – they seem to say. Little does it matter that most Norwegians would never dream of entering the Arcadia of Poland before the Martial Law for the simple reason of being unaware of its continuing existence. [13],[#N13]. This shows why withdrawal into the past is an attractive strategy. It allows those engaging in it to have and hold a place of their own and (in this case) to retain their own, larger moral circle unchallenged. At the same time, it is also a very efficient method of avoiding the need to make any move into the present, because there is no real competition with the Norwegians over the past (of course, there might be and sometimes is a competition with other Poles claiming to use the resources which the past is hiding). Conditional withdrawal is convenient, but it can hamper the activity and increase the sense of permanent 'being in between' and placid acceptance of not-belonging.

By withdrawing into the past the outsiders affirm domination of the established image of the moral circle. At the same time, their own identity becomes hybridised: a part of their past in Poland and the emotional load related to that is combined with their current status-related self-consciousness as people living in contemporary Norway, with no apparent continuity between these two elements. The merger, however, is not seamless. Arguably, every social identity is a combination of some elements selected over some others. By calling the identity created by a conditional withdrawal into the past 'hybrid', I do not take the word in any deprecatory sense and I do not assume that there are any 'purer' forms of group identification. I merely indicate that a combination described here is not coherent from the point of view of their bearers. It is not a 'broken' identity (Gephart and Saurwein 2012), either – it does not come from a traumatic experience or a deprivation causing the original identity to be dysfunctional and suppressed. It is an identity that does not reflect any 'we-image' of any group in actual existence, and the reason for that is the temporal, spatial and emotional heterogeneity of its components.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, Elias and Scotson's analysis was extended to a situation that was in many respects different from that of Winston Parva. Our interviewees were not subjected to any kind of discrimination, they were not pushed out of any physical space, their encounter with the Norwegians was, on the whole, satisfactory. Nevertheless, they felt cast out symbolically, as they were not able to enter the moral circle of the Norwegians, nor could they adapt to the size and content of the moral circle by the Norwegian standard. This exclusion was sufficient to achieve the effects described by Elias, including in particular the acceptance of their status, the withdrawal from any attempts to become 'really Norwegian' and 'keeping to themselves'.

The scope of moral relations turned out to be decisive for the integration. Moral circle became the instrument of estrangement and the sense of not-belonging resulted in conditional withdrawal into the past and locating the moral circle of the immigrant in some other place and time, more favourable to them. In the search of the

moral circle closer to their expectations and needs the Polish immigrants moved back in time and away in space, creating a conservative utopia of an imagined reference territory (Mannheim [1936] 1968). The Arcadia of the past – a paradise lost – was an extreme case of utopian mentality at work, as it was located in an absolutely exceptional period in Polish history, which guaranteed the maximum level of withdrawal and the minimum reality-congruence of image of moral circle created on such basis.

It is difficult to unequivocally claim that the hybrid identity described above would be more likely to emerge in intercultural contexts, especially migration-related, than in those which Mannheim had in mind when he was writing about utopian mentality. The tendency to withdraw is a strategy of the weaker, as Elias and Scotson demonstrated, and the weaker may as well withdraw into the past as elsewhere in the present. I have extensively analysed a case of conservative utopian mentality, in which cultural difference was introduced as an important factor supporting the need to withdraw into the past. I studied coping strategies adopted by Polish small merchants of the interwar period facing degradation and pauperisation, especially as a result of the world crisis in 1930ies. There was no migration background there: cultural difference between Poles and Jews was simply called upon in order to strengthen the negative picture of the present and the idealisation of the past. [14].[#N14]. It would seem that migration is just a factor enhancing the perception of difference and facilitating using it in coping strategies by both parties in the struggle for power.

It is probably the typical figuration created through migration and not the cultural difference itself that is responsible for the intensity with which various utopian imageries are employed by groups involved in them (see Appadurai 2006). Large-scale processes of migration, which shape the lives (including emotional lives) of great masses of migrant populations nowadays (see Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2011), create settings in which difference tends to be mobilised by both parties to the same end: to have a sense of belonging to a group and a place, as well as a spatially and temporarily localised cutting of universe, in which to find this group. Migration in globalising world leads to an intermingling of dispersion and concentration which I did not discuss in this paper, but whose main effect is rampant expropriation. There are very few places in the contemporary world that belong to a single group in the sense that nobody is either contesting or defending their possession of it. Coping strategies such as the conditional withdrawal into the past are a small-scale cultural answer to the fact that belonging is becoming more and more problematic, especially where the struggle for power between the established and the outsiders takes a latent, mild form, like in my case.

Past trajectories and current situation of our interviewees not only confirm Elias' conclusions as far as the outcome of established-outsiders dynamics is concerned. It also takes his analysis a step further. In intercultural encounter the barriers may not only be related to organisational potential, networking capabilities, interests, resources and motivation of the groups involved. Cultural equipment also matters. An image of the moral circle is a category describing which and how many people may become partners of personal relationship and what emotional bonds are eligible in such relationships. It may become an efficient vehicle of estrangement and exclusion, even lacking any deliberate action on the part of the established. I believe that cultural variables such as size and content of the moral circle may be a valuable supplement to figurational research of social exclusion.

There is one more conclusion that I find crucial for understanding how the mechanism described by Elias and Scotson operates in cases of immigrant integration. It is not only the weak, the inadaptable, the subaltern who are prone to become outsiders in intercultural encounters. Our interviewees had a lot of independence in thinking, were well educated, had a history of anti-regime opposition in communist Poland. They were used to organisation, could cooperate efficiently and had experience in community-building. This group was very much different from the third zone people in Winston Parva. Nevertheless, they succumbed easily, striving to reconcile good life and moral closeness by means of an elaborate utopian construction. Their relations with real people around them largely abandoned the moral circle, whereas their moral circle abandoned the here

and now. As a result the coping strategies applied by our interviewees were strengthening and petrifying the power structure in the emergent figuration of which immigrants became part, by consolidation of their own not-belonging.

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List of interviewees cited:

- W4 – male, age 61, married, no children, in Norway since 1981.
- W5 – male, age 58, married, one child, in Norway since 1984.
- W6 – male, age 53, married, one child, in Norway since 1987.
- W8 – male, age 52, married, two children, in Norway since 1984.
- W9 – male, age 61, married, three children, in Norway since 1981.
- W10 – female, age 55, married, one child, in Norway since 1984.
- W12 – male, age 62, married, one child, in Norway since 1984.
- W13 – female, age 51, widow, two children, in Norway since 1989.
- W14 – male, age 51, divorced, one child, in Norway since 1984.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Giselinde Kuipers and Rineke van Daalen, as well as the peer reviewers of "Human Figurations", for their pertinent comments, which helped me greatly improve this article. The final version of this paper was prepared during my fellowship at Käte-Hamburger-Kolleg "Recht als Kultur" in Bonn, whose hospitality I hereby acknowledge with gratitude. ♣[#N1-ptri]
2. See e.g. the discussion in Elias 2008b. ♣[#N2-ptri]
3. The project *Polska emigracja polityczna stanu wojennego 1981 do Norwegii* was jointly conducted by the following institutions: Archiwum Państwowe in Milanówek, Poland, Opplandsarkivet avd. Maihaugen in Lillehammer, Norway and Fundacja KOS based in Warsaw, Poland. Krzysztof Martyniak (then Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw) and I were responsible for the sociological side of the project. The preliminary account of our research may be found in Buchole and Martyniak 2011. ♣[#N3-ptri]
4. A list of interviewees can be found after the references. ♣[#N4-ptri]

5. It must be noted that during face-to-face encounter of several interviewees with the research team (see footnote 13) many interviewees were surprised to learn that the picture of their stay in Norway based on their narratives was so positive. They seemed to be able to recall many more negative sides of their life in Norway when they gathered together in the same limited space for over two days. I do not venture any interpretation of this fact here. The fact, however, although not methodically documented, seemed to be there beyond any doubt: being in the group of other immigrants of similar background sharpened the memories of what was wrong in Norway. ↗[#N5-ptri]
6. A detailed account of our findings is to be found in Bucholc and Martyniak 2011. ↗[#N6-ptri]
7. It is fairly common in urban sociology to discover that the population superior in terms of the cultural or economic capital level, when moving in certain less advantaged areas, gradually transforms the neighbourhood adapting it to their needs and tastes. This way they dismantle the traditional way of life of the (poorer) neighbours, who are therefore cast out even though technically they were the first to live there and stood a good chance of establishing themselves against the newcomers (on new developments in urban communities in comparative perspective see e.g. Misiak 2012). ↗[#N7-ptri]
8. In relation to women I have discussed these strategies in: Bucholc 2011. ↗[#N8-ptri]
9. Please see e.g. (in English) Touraine 1983, Ash 1984, Ost 2005, Bloom 2006, Szacka 2006 and (in Polish) Mielczarek 2006; for free-narrated biographical accounts (in Polish) Grupińska and Wawrzyniak 2011. ↗[#N9-ptri]
10. I have discussed these three aspects of exclusion in relations to women in: Bucholc 2011. ↗[#N10-ptri]
11. I have conducted a detailed analysis of a similar operation consisting essentially in withdrawal into a fictional past, applied by small merchants in interwar Poland, in: Bucholc 2012. ↗[#N11-ptri]
12. Whereas the opposition members who never left Poland or came back from emigration frequently refer to this part of their personal biographies as a vital source of their identity, as shown for example by the interviews conducted by Anka Grupińska and Joanna Wawrzyniak (Grupińska and Wawrzyniak 2011). ↗[#N12-ptri]
13. Actually, this is not true of a small but significant group of people who were active in the organizations helping the Poles in the eighties, such as *Solidaritet Norge-Polen*. We (the Polish research team in the project whose findings are reported here) had a chance to meet some of them in Lillehammer in 2011 during a conference summarizing our project (<http://www.opam.no/solidaritet/pl/seminarium-lillehammer> [<http://www.opam.no/solidaritet/pl/seminarium-lillehammer>]). They somehow entered the imagined reality of their Polish partners and to a certain extent stayed there. Their case could suggest that a more sizeable moral circle has got a certain power of attraction for those habituated to a smaller one, but I would not want to take this issue further than this brief remark for lack of substantive evidence. ↗[#N13-ptri]
14. Bucholc Marta (2012) *Konserwatywna utopia kapitalizmu. Etyczne iluzje międzywojennego kuptectwa*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. ↗[#N14-ptri]

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