

Ageing and learning experiences: The perspective of a Polish senior immigrant in Sweden

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The general aim of this paper is to present some insights into Polish senior immigrants in Sweden. In particular, it seeks to identify and illustrate the important contribution of previous generations of Polish senior immigrants in building on the diverse culture, traditions and values of the Polish community (Polonia) in Sweden. The paper considers what it means to be an older (age 65+ year) Polish immigrant in Sweden. A biographical method was used in this research to gain these insights. The research evidence was largely collected by means of narrative interviews. Life history is one of the ways to gain insights into the experiences of individuals. A narrative output is never an isolated product. There is always a close link between narrative and other social, cultural and ideological contexts. This paper emphasizes that stories and participant experiences will make more sense if there is a good understanding of the broader contexts in which the individual's story and experiences are embedded. Because of its brevity, the focus of this paper is an in-depth rendition of one older woman's learning experiences in adjusting from war-torn Poland to Sweden.

Keywords: *migration, ageing, older adult learning, life experiences, identity.*

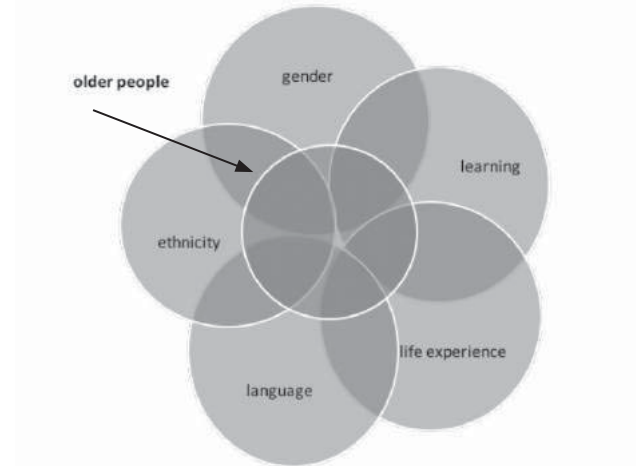
Understanding ageing and old age

Old age has both objective and subjective dimensions. According to Dubas (2016:16). Old age:

... is not only the obvious, tangible, verified empirically illustrated numerical indicators, but it is something difficult to express and capture, it is individualized. Old age is a biological phenomenon and socio-cultural, but also the individual human fate.

Objectively, what old age means can be verified from publications or reports in which knowledge is typically documented by quantitative research, which commonly uses statistical or laboratory experiments. The dimensions of old age can also be expressed in common, everyday language, as, often expressed in social stereotypes about age and in general knowledge, based on the daily patterns of thought that are the result of socialization (Dubas, 2016). Whilst these pictures of old age can be enhanced via research into subjective dimensions of ageing available via knowledge derived from individual biographical experiences, the research is often accused of being intuitive in nature and not supported by 'hard' data (Dubas, 2016). The criticism is that the knowledge is derived from qualitative research that relates to the individual experiences of the person, which is or might be re/constructed according to a changing context, and thus not be subject to rigorous verification. The objective dimension of old age is seen as a kind of foundation of theory to which we can relate, with which we can discuss, argue and activate in the subjective dimension. Nevertheless, these two dimensions: objective and subjective provide the background for an analysis of old age and ageing which I present from two perspectives: the socio-cultural and biographical (Alheit, 2009; Alheit & Dausien, 2002; Bron, 2007; Bron & West, 2000; Dominicé, 2000).

Figure 1: A socio-cultural map of ageing in the context of migration



Source: M. Malec-Rawiński

In my first step towards understanding ageing from a socio-cultural perspective, I constructed a socio-cultural map of ageing in the context of migration (Figure 1). The socio-cultural aspects, i.e. ethnicity, gender, learning, life experiences and language are related also to identity (Bron & Thunborg, 2011). Identity might be seen as being formed in the nexus between agency and structure, assuming an individual is the acting agent (Giddens, 1984). 'In forming and changing learning identities, people experience struggles in relation to who they are in a specific situation or context' (Bron & Thunborg, 2011:1). Therefore the specific context is aging and the specific situation is migration.

Every society has its own culture with a particular set of norms that are socially sanctioned. These norms are transferred by traditions and induce a specific style of life for every person (Giddens, 1991). In each culture, the social position of every man and woman has a different status. Thus, older women might be differently perceived in that society than older men. Old age often decreases a woman's self-esteem because she is not able to fulfill all of the required normative roles. However the masculinity of older men is also questioned (Sandberg, 2011), and like femininity has to be redefined. The next factor, which cannot be ignored, is language. Language is a tool express to ourselves and our identity, as well as to enable us to be able to be understood by others. To know

the language of country to which we migrate is a kind of 'passport', opening up the possibility of experiencing a new culture, making new friends and re/constructing identity. Surrounded by and embedded in culture, sometimes we do not realize that the way of seeing older adults is culturally and socially formed and mediated. As Bron argues (2007:207), 'Language as well as culture and its values, beliefs, speech patterns, and forms of understanding are not static phenomena. They change through interaction in different milieus, contexts, and situations, as well as at work.' The way of living and the way migrants communicate are very much connected with their life experiences including prior learning experiences. Therefore, biographical learning and life experiences are crucial for understanding these processes and also for constructing identity.

The second perspective for understanding old age and ageing is the biographical perspective. Using this perspective, I analyzed ageing from three key components: life course, identity and significant learning experience (Antikainen, Houtsonen, Huotelin & Kauppila, 1996). The significant learning experiences across the life course follow Antikainen *et al.*'s (1996) schema, in which experiences guide the story of life, which might change, re/build, re/construct or strengthen the identity of the person who tells the story. However, those changes of identity are "subordinate" to the core of identity. Moreover, the identity of the individual in the modern world is an unfinished project, in constant change, movement and re/construction (Giddens, 1991). Nevertheless personal identity is always based upon a previous mapping of life experiences (Heymans, 1992). Therefore, those key elements of identity correspond with the socio-cultural map of ageing, where learning experiences are the important elements of ageing and identity in old age from the perspective of a life course approach.

The context of migration

Migration, including for some the process of becoming a refugee, involves complex, multi-contextual processes that affect every social dimension of human existence (Castels & Miller, 2009). This suggests that the process of migration should be considered from many perspectives, not only from a sociological, economic, political, demographic, historical, psychological perspective, but also from the subjective, individual perspective. The subjective perspective of

migration is mostly connected with knowledge derived from individual biographical experiences of the migrant. The factors causing migration (political, economic, psychological or social) are sometimes clearly visible in the individual life story of each migrant, while others are irrelevant or vice versa.

The *individual* perspective is very much connected with microstructures and social contacts in the host country. Increasing social contacts create new perspectives in a migrant's life in the host country and make a return to a home country more complicated (Castels & Miller, 2009). Being and living in a host country triggers the process of re/thinking about culture, language, tradition, functioning of institutions and history in the context of a "new" place and time. Migration invariably leads to confrontation with the boundaries of our heritage (Chambers, 1994), to seek out roots, the migrant's place in the world and to discover their limits. I have used this individual, subjective perspective as the main mechanism in my reflection on migration in this research.

There are as many reasons for migration as there are migrants. There are positive and negative aspects of every migration. There are many 'faces' to each migrant's world. The world of Polish migrants to Sweden is similarly multi-faceted. One face of the migrants' world is the world of Polish senior immigrants to Sweden. The world of more recent immigrants seems to be quite different from the world of Polish immigrants who came to Sweden quite a long time ago (around 30-40 years). The heterogeneity of the migrant population of older Polish people leads to diversity in many aspects: values, needs, problems, lifestyles and learning. It thus requires researchers to look at migration and ageing as a multifaceted, multidimensional and multi-contextual process. I concur with Muszyński (2016:23), who argues that the consciousness of the narrator and his/her interpretation of life experience is an important element in researching ageing, especially in a migration context. However, it is possible to distil and understand it only from the biographical perspective.

The methodological framework

My wider research project of ageing from the perspective of Polish seniors' immigrants in Sweden (Malec, 2012; Malec-Rawiński, 2016) was designed using a biographical approach as well as through an

ethnography. In the research project, older adults, Polish seniors im/migrants, were the focal point. The main research aim was to consider what it means to be a Polish migrant in Sweden from two perspectives: time (past, present, future) and culture (Polish and Swedish). My research goal was to further develop the idea of a phenomenon of learning to be old, effectively an examination of biographical ageing or ageing biographically. A biographical approach (Alheit, 2005; Alheit, 2009; Alheit & Dausien, 2002; Bron, 2007; Bron & West, 2000; Dominicé, 2000) was used to investigate the process of ageing from a learning perspective with the intention of understanding learning as a part of life to be better recognized in later life. The research questions were: What is important for life from the biographical and ageing perspective? What is the picture of the formal, non-formal education and informal learning of the Polish senior migrants in Sweden? What does it mean to age as a migrant?

Biographical theory is closely concerned with learning. It takes into account an individual life in its totality (in all its stages and phases) as a framework for potential learning. Referring to the concept of 'unlived life' (Alheit, 1995:64), through reflection of one's own biography, individuals can ascribe/imply meanings, and create new meanings to the processes of their lives, to events and experiences of the past, to ongoing events and experiences as well as to ideas and dreams of the future. The reflective learning process can change people's perspectives and life chances and in this way learning can become transformative (Bron, 2007). Biographical theory provides an interesting explanation of biographical activity as a result of interaction between different environments, which at the same time are the product of biographical activity (Bron, 2007). I used biographical theory from a symbolic interactionism perspective (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934; Berger & Luckman, 1996), in order to explore the life worlds of Polish migrants.

The methodology of the project was based on in-depth narrative interviews with older adults, all Polish senior migrants now living in Sweden. It was desirable to include diverse interviewees from a range of professional, educational and gender backgrounds. The aim was to understand the biographical learning and ageing of this group of older people. The research was conducted in 2010 and 2011 as part of a scholarship from the Swedish Institute (SI). I collected data from seventeen older Polish adult migrants who came to Sweden many (30-

40 years) years ago. All were over 60 years of age and most had been in Sweden for at least 30 years. That they had lived both in the Swedish and Polish cultures was the main criteria of participant selection. To locate interviewees, I used a 'snow-ball' technique which allowed me to regard the first interviewee as an 'opener' who would introduce me to the next subject. I interviewed older adults (over 60) with diverse professional and educational backgrounds of both genders: eleven women and six men. The interviewees read, commented upon and authorized their written life histories. For data analysis, a grounded theory approach was used (Glaser, 1992; 1995). Grounded theory requires a careful and discrete sequence of analysis: open coding, selective coding, discovery and naming categories (Glaser, 1992).

The process of analysis

The process of analysis took a long time, requiring many hours of reading, coding, categorizing and making maps of emergent categories. Reflecting on the autobiographical experiences I was part of during this research, the researched people became, to borrow the phrase from actress Danuta Stenka, 'signpost people', as actors who played a meaningful role in my life as significant others (Sullivan, 1947). Without meeting them, I would not be who I am now, both as a researcher, as a woman or even as a human being. The researched people, along with my grandmothers (Malec-Rawiński 2014; 2016), became 'teachers of life', and 'signposts of life' (Malec, 2012), who helped me to understand what life and ageing is and what is important about life experiences. In essence, the research process helped me to discover and learn much about the values which directed decisions in my own life.

Being a researcher obliged me to take on some of the onerous responsibilities of knowledge of collected data and the authenticity of my analysis. Klementowska¹ (2015:1) claimed that 'People are more important than the text. The text appears and then will disappear, like a book. The people will stay, and they might suffer.' Particularly important is the way in which the researcher interprets and analyses the narratives produced in the interview and the way it impacts either positively or negatively on the interviewee (Elliott, 2005:141). Therefore, the ethics of collection and analysis of data were very important to me. As Elliott (2005:142) claimed, 'It is a key ethical principle that the anonymity

and privacy of those who participate in the research process should be respected.' I agree with Egger (1995:124), that 'In all cases of working with life-stories we take the responsibility for the situations in which the stories will be told', and also for what will come after.

As Schuller (1992:19) claims, '... not all individuals pass through the same set of stages'. Nevertheless I identified many categories from the analysis of the collected data that were common to respondents.

I divided these sets of categories into two broad groups. The first group comprised a recognition of life experiences from the people researched: such as learning, the body, Second World War experiences, post-war experiences, family, experiences of migration connected with learning, family and Swedish society. Indeed there were many subcategories linked to those main categories and to one another. The second group of identified categories need to be more develop and will be present in the next paper'.

Findings

The above-mentioned categories are visible in all of the narratives. To effectively present more illustrative detail in this brief paper, I have chosen to concentrate on just one of the seventeen interviewees, the life history of 'Maria'. This case study, as with many of the narratives, provides evidence of many levels and aspects of lifelong learning. As Chambers (1994) claims, in the migrants' world the significance lies in the story that is constantly de-constructed and re-constructed in the interaction between what is inherited and what the migrant experienced in a new place. A key factor for the course of the migrants' life story is the cultural distance between the country of origin and the host country, and the decision to migrate, whether forced or voluntary (Niedźwiecki, 2010). These aspects are crucial in Maria's story. Maria migrated to Sweden after retirement as a family reunion. Her daughter had lived in Sweden for many years. Maria, in telling her life story, was constantly de-constructing and re-constructing her life experiences from the perspective of her longevity. When I first met her, she was 93 years old and a very reflective woman whose life had been outstanding.

As Maria said, *a lot of interesting things from my life touched the history (...)*. On the other hand, she claimed *my life went back (differently) to what I was prepared for, however the life was rich.*

During the Second World War, by the age of 24, she was a commandant, lieutenant, general and a spy as well². She was very much engaged in the liberation of Poland. When the Second World War was over her life turned in unexpected ways. A new political system, communism came in. She was arrested during roundup “*łapanka*” or “*kocioł*” (in Polish)³, went to prison and was sentenced to death. However, she defended herself. To place Maria’s life experiences in the context of the multiple data categories recognized from the people I researched, I will, for brevity, restrict myself to just four categories: Second World War experiences, post-war experiences, experiences of migration and learning. In my experience as an interviewer in the wider research (Malec 2012; Malec-Rawiński, 2014; 2016), these are essential in understanding ageing and learning from a biographical perspective in a migration context.

1. Second World War experiences

Maria was brought up in the spirit of patriotism. She was a brave and strong young woman. As a servicewoman she was a right- and left-handed shooter. Being a general (officer) in the underground (Home) army, conspiracy set her up for a specific style of life (and) lack of privacy (...). As she said, (...) *life wasn’t mine, I lived for the others (...)*, She had to lie, (...) *all the time, and there were always lies*. However she had no choice, She had *the feeling of doing the “big thing” – important (...)*, which meant that she wasn’t *thinking about herself (...)*. She was all the time *on the edge life and death*. As she said, *I hadn’t my own life*. As a spy she was on the watch all the time. She spoke German, so sometimes she pretended she was German. on one hand, the life in conspiracy, made her identity unstable. On the other hand, the conspiracy became a natural situation. As she said, (...) *the conspiracy was embraced (in my life) ... the natural thing was that you live normally, you live in this twisted way, you are twisted constantly (you don’t know another life)*. Maria lacked a private life but had dreams and plans for future.

2. Post-War experiences

The war and post-war experiences were regarded by Maria as the “*hump*”. This related particularly to her unforgettable memories of her time in prison. As Maria claimed, prison was (...) *the place of internal*

meetings (...). I was lying all the time during interrogation When she defended herself she even surprised herself. As she said, (...) *during the life course such things come, that you don't know yourself, you don't know how you will react to certain things ... immediately you know, I sobered up and I became completely different, I defended myself (...)*. She was sentenced to years in prison. Thanks to a National Amnesty after three years she was released from prison. She became very close to the women she was with – they developed a kind of “prison community”. After coming out of prison, she and her family were persecuted. *There was such a huge chaos after leaving the prison ... it was completely unknown what happened. You do not know whether you came back to childhood or returned to pre-war or postwar times. ... Nothing was ... you did not attempt for anything ... such a confusion in the head and in life ... difficult to describe ... you do not know who you are (...)*. She faced difficulties finding a job for many months. She had no money and no future perspectives. (...) *You don't know where to start, where to live, no money, no friends, nothing (...)*. She had suicidal thoughts. *I was terribly upset, I wanted to jump off a bridge (...)*. She inherited a post-war stigma, “the enemy of the nation” – “a wretched moral midget of the reaction⁴”. As Maria said, (...) *I've gone through so many things, everything. I was strong, and then I fainted. I was completely broken. (...) I didn't exist ... I lost my identity ... “point zero”... I was a “hound”*. This situation is consistent with the “floating” concept established by Bron (2000), who claims that to be “floating” relates to an experience of being fragmented, in the middle of “nowhere”, without a feeling of present or past and of being unable to create a future. Bron (2000) describes floating as a deep feeling of being paralyzed by events, circumstances or experiences that a person cannot deal with in many aspects: psychological, emotionally and socially. It is a kind of trap; the person is stuck and unable to move either backwards or forwards. The person might feel overwhelmed. ‘Coping with floating engages affective and cognitive facilities’ (Bron, 2007:216). This concept of “floating” can also be used to understand identity crises (Bron & Thunborg, 2015).

The post-war experiences were meaningful for the rest of Maria's life. She struggled with the stigma of what she self-described as “*the wretched moral midget of the reaction*” and some other difficulties for many years. As she said, *I did not know (what to do), to defend myself, to run away, to create or to stay, nothing at all ... fate played with me, I wanted to deal with it ... I could not ... and everything floundered so*

much. While Maria had a daughter, she never got married. She worked hard and used all her capacities to create "a normal" home and family for her daughter. This *abnormal life*, as Maria called it, changed after her migration to Sweden, though she *didn't plan to stay*.

3. Experiences of migration

Migration to Sweden opened a new and transformative chapter in Maria's life. As she said, *...the second part of life... (was) the better one (...)*. Maria started to experience a relatively normal life in Sweden compared to her previous life in Poland. As she said, *finally, there is something normal, stable. Sweden impressed me with its order, its normality, and after all my life, there is some kind of normality*. Already retired, Maria sold her house in Poland and came to Sweden to be reunited with her daughter. When she migrated, she effectively started a new life. As she said, *I was full of life. I was 60 years old, but I was not old. I did not think that I was retired; I was already on the run. No, I had thousands of plans. I started reading, walking, meeting people, new tracks. First of all I was reading a lot and I was very interested in it*.

For Maria, the Swedish language was the most important thing to learn and adapt in her new, host country. As she said, *I started to learn the (Swedish) language first and foremost, because I thought to myself as I arrived here, 'I have to live yet'*. Attending a Swedish course and meeting new people meant *the world has become wider (...)*. *It opened the window to the world* and helped Maria to better understand Swedish culture as well as some of the people she met and befriended in the course. As she said, there was *(...) such a community at this course, I learned such contact with the Swedes: how do they behave, common food, traveling by car, visiting in Sweden. So, this course showed me Sweden and introduced me into everyday life*. People who she met helped her to move into her own apartment, independent from her daughter, and become independent in Sweden. As she said, *I started Swedish life*.

Maria inevitably experienced cultural shock (Oberg, 1960; Winkelman, 1994). As she said, *Sweden is another world ... honesty ... order ... decency ... shops full of things ... the possibility of buying*. Living in Sweden gave Maria freedom and she started reading historical books

and seeking out people she knew from wartime. As she said, *my life here began with such liberty, a different kind, open to the world, mainly in contact with London⁵ and the Home Army*. In the meantime she became an important person for the history of Poland. In the Polish town where she was persecuted and couldn't stay after leaving prison, they built and named the Chamber of Memory in her honor. Nowadays, she is very much honored in Poland. She said, *Who would have thought, first "spits" and then "strokes"*. However Maria doesn't feel comfortable (...) *to be put on a pedestal, I don't know who I am. (...) I can't play this role*.

4. Learning from a biographical perspective

In biographical learning all experiences become integrated and create a new construct of meaning. Bron (2006:19) claims that 'Biographical learning consists of experience, knowledge, reflection, self-reflection and of all the lessons that follow experience enclosed in our life stories'. Moreover, Alheit (2009:65) argues that 'Biographical learning takes place in social structures and cultural contexts of interpretation' encompassing everyday life. Therefore, in analyzing what is learned at an individual level, as in Maria's story, it is necessary also to consider the external structures and the objective elements that challenge the course of a life (Alheit & Dausien, 2002). There is also a close link between a narrative and other social, cultural and ideological contexts (Denzin, 1989). A narrative is the common form of biographical representation (Bron, 2007), and its output is never an isolated product. From a biographical perspective, learning isn't a separate part of life. Therefore, by analyzing all collected data, exemplified by Maria's life history, some new fields of learning emerge.

Many parts of the formal education (school, study), non-formal education and informal learning continuum are crucial in Maria's life. As a young woman, she was an active member (a soldier) at the Home Army during the Second World War, where learning and changes were occurring every day. As she said, *I was constantly learning, constantly changing (...)*. She was learning to survive, to be alive and to fight. Then, as Maria described, there were the *strong experiences* in prison, of living with other women in a small cell. As she said, (...) *in the prison I experienced (learnt) the most, (from) the internal meetings with other people. [I learnt] that I can live with people*. She learnt that there

are some situations that until we have experienced them, we don't know ourselves or what our reactions will be. We might only guess. However the reality could be completely different from that imagined. Maria learnt what a lie and the truth means. In some circumstances for Maria, there was no border between them, becoming lost in what is the truth was and was not. After leaving prison, she was persecuted. She learnt again to survive, to be alive and not give up in the "new political system". She wasn't prepared for being with someone, to build a family. Therefore she tried her best but she sometimes failed. She also learnt to be a mother.

Maria was a lifelong learner. As she said, *(...) learning all the time... is a must ... Migration to Sweden led to experiences of ... normality in Sweden versus abnormality in Poland.* She was learning a new culture and a new language. She already knew German, so learning the second foreign language, being age 60, wasn't such a big deal. The Swedish course, the place of non-formal education, became an important part in Maria's life. She met "significant others" (Sullivan, 1947), people who helped to transform her life. As Maria said, *it is also essential to meet the "right" people. One of the "right people" was a Swedish theatre director who invited her to play in the theatre with retired actors. As an actor she learnt the Swedish accent, and as she said, a new wave of theatre people came.*

Maria was engaged in many NGOs living in Sweden, most of which were focused on the history of Poland. As an active member she traveled and learnt a lot. All her life she was open to the younger generation, (...) talking with youngsters ... trying to understand them (...). Intergenerational learning was a part of her life.

Although, as she said, *I was one step away from death all the time, she stayed positive and (...) interested, I have to tell you that I lived in a very interesting, difficult time, which required of me to change, constantly and with difficulty, but interestingly, and I fitted into this life. I participated in this difficult life. I passed some examination of my life, atypical, not so schematic ... I lived not to according to the given scheme (...).*

War and post-War experiences brought different kind of emotions, which she internalised for quite a long time. It took time for her to learn to release anger and hate, to forgive and to become calm, and not to become irritated. All of her life she learnt to accept what life brings, and

as she said, towards the end of her life, (...) I have stayed independent as long as possible ... not giving up (...). And she learnt to enjoy life to have fun in later life. ... Small things enrich your life (...). Clearly I learn a lot from Maria as well.⁶

Biographical narratives like Maria's reveal how the continuity of 'being oneself' is created and illustrates how the process of biographical learning can take place over a lifetime. Maria's case study illustrates the complexity of learning and ageing in the context of migration from the perspective of life experiences. However, as Bron (2007:219) observed, '... the stories people tell are temporal products showing that the individual life is never ending and always open to new experiences, negotiations and changes, often unexpected, as are identities and social roles'. As Alheit (2002) suggests, everybody has a unique biographical plan and a lifetime of learning, which can be revealed through the analysis of narrative biographies.

Conclusion

Analysis of the collected data illustrates that ageing is part of the process of forming and transforming identities (Bron & Thunborg, 2011) in relation to the three key components: life course, identity and significant learning experiences (Antikainen, Houtsonen, Huotelin & Kauppila, 1996). In the context of forming and transforming identities, identity might be seen as re/constructed through biographical learning.

I have gained some useful insights from the comparative research of Ogbu (2002). He suggests that if we want to understand the differences between minority groups and the dominant group(s) we need to know and understand the process of incorporation into a minority group, in particular the way and how the dominant group treats them and what their life histories are. Therefore, we should firstly learn about a migrant's life experiences before designing actions that may be required to plan and facilitate learning in older age, as well as to bring about changes to improve the quality of life of older people in a host country. This study suggests that there is still a lot of research to do in forming and transforming identities in the context of migration and learning in host countries, especially for diverse groups of older migrants. While this research focusing on one older migrant might be seen as a small contribution, I consider that the insights in this paper provide

enough evidence to suggest a need to pay more regard to the process of ageing (as a subjective process in an objective world) in the context of migration using a biographical perspective.

Whilst my paper provides only one illustrative life history, it suggests that the process of migration goes well beyond representing just one critical life event. This case study is arguably illustrative of many other diverse life histories of people from older generations of migrants from diverse countries who have experienced many, similar radical changes in their lives. It illustrates that older migrants cannot be simply reduced to their migration experience, but that they also carry a lot of other relevant life experiences to the new host country with them, and rich opportunities for learning: lifelong and lifewide.

Older adults, particularly senior migrants, do not represent an attractive group in modern Western society. They are seen more as "recipients" rather than "donors" (Banno Gomes, 2002). This group is marked by a double stigma: emigration and ageing. I have become aware of a wider research lacuna in relation to older migrants: in this specific case, that Polish immigrants in Sweden are not sufficiently interesting even for research by The Multicultural Centre located in Stockholm in *Botkyrka kommun*. There is no published research about Polish immigrants, despite them becoming an increasing proportion in Swedish society. This is one more reason to conduct future research into Polish migrants in Sweden from different generations, also from a biographical perspective.

Endnotes

- 1 She is the reporter, the journalist and the writer.
- 2 The main resistance force in German-occupied Poland was the *Armia Krajowa* ("Home Army"; abbreviated "AK"), which numbered some 400,000 fighters: one of them was Maria. Throughout most of the war, AK was one of the three largest resistance movements. The main goal of the AK was preparing and conducting the national uprising in case of advancing frontlines or general collapse of the German armed forces. There were complex hierarchical structures - staff, high commands of arms and services, territorial commands (regions, and on lower level - districts), weapons were collected, officers and soldiers were trained, information about enemy was gathered (Polish contribution to the Allied victory in World War 2 (1939-1945)).

- 3 The term łapanka comes from the Polish verb łapać ("to catch"). The term was also used for describing the tactic of cordoning-off of streets, and the systematic searching of buildings. Such roundups, łapanka, were carried out by the Germans during the Second War World. However the Soviets used similar tactics to round up middle-class Poles in the part of Poland that they occupied following the 1939 invasion of Poland. People were transported to labor camps in remote regions of the Soviet Union or into prisons after the Second War World.
- 4 The propaganda term used during the People's Republic of Poland to soldiers of the Home Army, in Polish, Armia Krajowa (AK).
- 5 In London there was the post-war emigration, which arrived with General Anders.
- 6 She was an open mind person; she had to distance herself and she made fun of herself. Maria died on 1st of August 2012, on the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. It is meaningful date for people who had fought during the Second War World.

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