



ANNA MATYSKA

Transnational Families in the Making

The Polish experience of living between
Poland and Finland during and after
the Cold War



ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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Anna Matyska

Abstract

This thesis addresses the transnational family life of Polish people residing permanently or temporarily in Finland, their children who grew up in Finland and family members in Poland, during and after the Cold War. The thesis asks how, in changing historical circumstances, such transnational families maintain contact, how they manage their emotional lives, how they negotiate stratification hierarchies, how they maintain intergenerational continuity and what the place of sociocultural ties to Finland in their transnational lives is. The thesis is based on the multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Finland and Poland between 2006 and 2009.

The thesis is theoretically grounded in transnational anthropology as well as taking its inspiration from new kinship studies in anthropology. It contributes to the critical rereading of a sedentary approach to relationships between people, communities and place and its theoretical implementation in the emigration-immigration-assimilation model. It addresses the historical and spatial gap in transnational studies on life across the Iron Curtain and the Polish transnational experience, and speaks against the moralizing tone on migration and family separation in Polish academic and popular discourse.

The thesis considers the transnational family as the fundamental transnational formation. It defines transnational families broadly, as sets of interlocking social relationships made and remade across national borders. The categories of *close ones* (in Polish: *bliscy*) and family members are considered the fundamental categories organizing transnational family space. Transnational family includes blood and in-law relatives, close friends (in Polish: *przyjaciół*), post-divorce family members and companion animals. The thesis argues that transnational families are produced through the relatively ordered process of kinning, the tools of kinning depending upon historical and political circumstances. It indicates that the main means of the making of transnational families are the ritualized practices of technologically-mediated communication and visits. They introduce predictability and structure into transnational family life; providing the means for both the positive and “toxic” forms of transnational emotion work and for the negotiation of inequalities. In this thesis, transnational families emerge as ambivalent experience, entailing a constant negotiation of transnational stratification hierarchies and moral expectations of proper transnational family relationships. Various forms and interpretations of distinction (stemming from money, occupation, cultured behaviour and historical participation) are set against each other and various reference points of just and satisfying relationships are negotiated.

The thesis emphasizes that the discussion of transnational engagement always has to consider the sociocultural experience of the immediate environment of destination places and the potential for the emergence of multi-anchored transnational space. In this thesis, transnational families are emplaced rather than deterritorialized, expanding their living habitat and incorporating new social ties into their transnational family fabric. Emplacement in Finland is particularly visible among the second generation of transnational family members, whom I discuss as the transnational second generation, entangled in post-Cold War transnational connections along with their young peers from Poland and from Finland. I indicate that for second-generation living in Finland, transnational ties to Poland increasingly offer not only a sense of cultural and emotional belonging, but also a space for professional identification and advancement.

In my historical reading of transnationalism, I indicate that the nation-state is an active player in the making of transnational families. The Polish communist and capitalist state has produced different conditions for the existence of transnational families, each of them necessitating a different material and emotional investment from transnational family members. Simultaneously, transnational families work through different historical periods rather than being determined by them. Interrelated with the above, this thesis offers a non-linear historical narrative of transnational families, rather than suggesting a teleological progress from Cold War isolation to post-Cold War transnationalism, or progress from a “worse” to a “better” transnational family life. I conclude the thesis by calling for a “post-Cold War” ethnography of transnationalism which challenges the division between post-communist/post-Cold War and post-colonial studies in order to re-conceive “a singular world with differentiated histories” (Cheri and Verdery, 2009). The combining of these two perspectives is needed in order to understand the unequal opportunities various transnational families have for reconnecting across nation-state borders and for creating transnational social spaces.

Keywords: transnational families, Poland, Finland, Cold War era, post-Cold War era

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Introduction

This thesis is an ethnographic study of transnational families spanning the changing historical landscape of Poland and Finland. The thesis investigates how families enact and negotiate their lives across national borders at different historical moments, during and after the Cold War. Specifically, it asks how such families maintain contact, how they manage their emotional lives and negotiate socioeconomic status hierarchies, how they maintain intergenerational continuity and what the place of sociocultural ties to Finland in their lives is. These questions have been answered through a multi-sited study of Polish people who came to Finland between the 1960s and the 2000s, their *close ones* in Poland, and children of Polish parents (or a Polish parent) who grew up in Finland. Historically speaking, the investigation spans transnational families living in Cold War and post-Cold War Europe.

The thesis speaks from the perspective of transnational anthropology. It contributes to the critical rereading of a sedentary approach to relationships between people, communities and place and its theoretical implementation in traditional migration studies, whereby people's movements across borders are conceived in nationally bounded terms as the cessation of ties with the country of origin followed by the process of gradual, yet inevitable assimilation in the country of destination. The "transnational turn" in anthropology was instigated in the 1980s by scholars such as Arjun Appadurai and Constance Sutton, and furthered by Linda Basch and Nina Glick-Schiller, Karen Fog Olwig, Ulf Hannerz and Ulla Vuorela, among others. It emphasized the emergence of multi-stranded ties across national borders and undermined the nation-state domain as the taken-for-granted locus of people's activity. My study hopes to further the discussion theoretically and empirically, showing the national unboundedness of social life.

In my inquiry, I shall place my focus on intimate transnationalism centred around and radiating outwards from relations of family and kinship. I treat the family as the fundamental formation of a transnational social space and the core arena for people's transnational activity, which changes with time and political conditions. I define transnational family through the everyday experience of my interlocutors. I use the categories of *close ones* (in Polish *bliscy*) and family members as the fundamental categories organizing transnational family space. I include under its framework blood and in-law relatives, close friends (in Polish *przyjaciele*), post-divorce family members

and companion animals, pets and dogs. "Close ones" is an approximate English translation of the term *bliscy* and hence I write it in italics. In my definitions of the transnational family, I find inspirations from transnational studies and a transnational take on anthropologies of family and kinship.

Although my discussion is centred on the transnational family, it has, as I argue, wider relevance. This thesis leans on the idea that people who, despite historical and spatial odds, strive to maintain family relationships across borders and work for the continuation or even spatial expansion of their families help us understand the process of building and the significance of identification with communities, places and nations (Vuorela 2009b) and the role of individual and collective agency and creativity in constructing social life. By looking at the changing life of transnational families, we can capture the interplay between global and national politics and intimate lives and strategies, and their cumulative role in shaping the transnational space. Given the above, I suggest that there is more to transnational separation than emotional strain, the loss of roots or family negligence as many voices of the popular and academic discourse in Poland would posit and others who would consider the transnational family as too inconsequential to be worthy of academic scrutiny. The importance of the transnational family comes from its central role for shaping the everyday transnationalism and the larger political structures in which it is reciprocally embedded, bridging the private-public divide.

In my discussion, I focus on the circumstances and characteristics of transnational family life and avoid asserting moral judgments. I agree with Ulla Vuorela (2009a) that "rather than making any claims for or against the significance of transnational moves from the point of view of individuals and families, there is a need to study the implications of transnational separations and connections, farewells and coming together, encountering or avoiding the culturally different". As Vuorela (ibid.) argues, instead of thinking of transnational families as "panaceas" to maladies of the contemporary, nationally-constraining and globally unequal world, "we need to be concerned [...] rather what individuals and communities can do to forge their social relations" in the situation of separation and under various conditions of mobility.

Polish families, migration and transnationalism

In the face of weak Polish state structures, the family (in Polish *rodzina*) have occupied a central place in Poland's historical narrative. Polish families are claimed to have safeguarded Polish national culture during the partition of Poland between Austria, Russia and Prussia in 1795-1918; to be the basis of civic society and a safe haven for Poles under communist rule in Poland (Buchowski 1996); eventually to crumble under the pressure of capitalism and the opening of Poland to "Western" influence after the communist system collapsed in 1989.

International migration has been a constant feature of this particular family-nation culture. Since the 19th century, Poles have been leaving Poland en masse in search of work and as political refugees. The national narrative of prominent Polish “waves of emigration” starts from the so-called “Great Emigration” (*Wielka Emigracja*) triggered in the 1830s by the defeat of the November uprising against Tsarist Russia, through labour migration to Western Europe¹ and the U.S. in the 1880s-1930s, migration across the Iron Curtain with its peak in the 1980s, and ends with the migration “exodus” after Poland joined the European Union in 2004. Poles residing abroad also played a central role in Poland’s struggles for political sovereignty. The “Great Emigration” is constructed as the embodiment of Polish patriotism; the Polish community in the US at the turn of the 19th and 20th century was considered Poland’s “fourth district”, while during the Cold War, many Polish cultural and political activists were supported anti-communist movement in Poland from afar.

Nevertheless, all the above international mobilities and transnational ties have found insufficient or exceedingly morally-toned research attention. Polish academic literature has often suggested transnational phenomena, theoretically, however, it failed to develop it further. Political and nationalistic ideologies halted the full-fledged development of the transnational paradigm.

Until the end of Cold War, social research in Poland was governed by the particular political interest of the communist government, which pursued politics of relatively closed borders and propagated the moral and material supremacy of the communist system. While the family became an important object of Polish research, studies on contemporary international mobilities and transnational ties were censored and marginalized by the communist authorities. For nearly half of the last century, when Poland became the European nation with the highest rate of emigration, in the 1980s reaching over one million of permanent outflows, information about subsequent emigration waves was publicized only years later and the very act of leaving Poland was portrayed as evil and foolish (Reczyńska 1996). As the Russian demographers’ spokesman Rybakovski emphasized, “in contrast to capitalist countries, no international migration existed under socialism” (Okólski 1997). As a consequence, the academic focus in Poland was on the politically-safe emigration waves and community life of Poles in the destination places – the so-called *Polonia* studies, *Polonia* being a popular and academic term for Polish communities living abroad.

The scientific discourse has shifted gradually after Poland’s transition to capitalist democracy in 1989 and following the liberalization of both political borders and research inquiry. The earlier migration waves have become re-examined along with

¹ I use the terms Western and Eastern Europe, and the West and the East as political, not geographical categories. Similarly, I approach the “Iron Curtain” as a metaphor of the political economic divide which was challenged in practice on many levels.

the study of the current ones. Polish migration has also drawn the increased attention of scholars residing in the countries of Poles' destination, which has resulted in many English-language publications and thus an increased academic recognition of Polish migration issues. In recent years, scholars in Poland and abroad have also started to discuss Polish migration in transnational terms (see for instance Krzyżowski and Urbańska 2010, Burrell 2009, Ryan et al. 2008, Kuźma 2005). Nonetheless, these studies still marginalize transnational families. In the mainstream theoretical discourse, Polish families remain incarcerated into one nation-state as immigrant families, incomplete families or simply Polish families residing in Poland. The studies, which attempt to pursue the transnational framework, often discuss Polish families on the margins of other themes such as migration motives, migration networks, gender, class or integration. Even under the transnational guise, much focus is still placed on "immigration" and "emigration" instead of transnationalism, leaving the picture of transnational families superficial and incomplete. The leading research role is played by sociologists, demographers and economists, whose method of inquiry does not involve getting to know the people they study more closely or even meeting them personally.

In addition, the Polish debate has not lost the moralizing tone of the communist or even pre-communist past, as the political shift does not mean that current political powers do not wish to morally discipline their population and reify their national belonging, while scholars, morally judge people they study. Ninna Nyberg Sørensen (2011) shows that in Central America migrants are raised to the role of national "superheroes", who by sending remittances contribute to the survival of their families, local communities and national budgets. In Polish popular discourse, by contrast, migrants are at best cowards who "escape" from their homeland and at worst villains who "betray" it². Therefore, from the Polish perspective, migration has remained a "moral problem", a potential threat to the integrity and "health" of the Polish nation (cf. Garapich 2009), as much as it has remained perceived as a "problem" from the perspective of destination countries, whereby the incoming population is viewed in terms of the inflow of "immigrants" who undermine their destination countries' social and political-economic security (cf. Sørensen 2012).³

Given the above, this thesis has an academic and ethical dimension. I try to make up for the delayed start in investigating the transnational lives of Polish people and

²Sørensen indicates that the migrant "superhero" is a masculine figure, whereas migrant women are primarily seen as responsible for the disruption of the domestic order. In Poland migration discourse is also gendered. If migrant men are "villains", migrant women are "supervillains".

³Polish migrants – as Eastern Europeans – may be considered a "low-security risk" in the contemporary European Union, but they are still the European "Other" within (Wolff 1994), culturally and economically threatening to the "Western" order.

challenge the enduring influence of the emigration-immigration-assimilation paradigm. Simultaneously, I attempt to move beyond a moralizing and essentializing tone such paradigm easily brings to popular and academic discourse. I do it with the "anthropological sensibility" of the engaged ethnographic fieldwork (Rainbow et al. 2008, 61-2) and by embedding transnationalism historically.

The historical location

This thesis calls for a historical grounding of transnational phenomena and the expansion of its political economy and temporal context. Most studies discuss transnationalism in relation to global capitalist developments (see Basch et al. 1994). I consider the transnational space as cast under not one but two shadows, of Western capitalism and Soviet communism.

I regard the absence of a Cold War communist context in the development of transnational theory as a reflection of the continuous impact of Cold War representations on intellectual thought and politics. As Pletsch (1981) has argued, in response to the Cold War division of power, the globe was divided into three "conceptual 'worlds'", each with specific social scientific labour allocated. "The First World" was allocated to sociologists, economists and political scientists as "disciplinary generalists", "the Second World" (the world located behind the Iron Curtain) to sociologists, economists and political scientists as "communist area specialists" and "the Third World" to anthropologists. Since transnational theory has been driven by Western anthropologists and anthropologically-inclined scholars, it has been also in the "Third World"- "First World" context that transnational theory has developed most comprehensively. After the Iron Curtain collapsed, Eastern European space has been gradually included in transnational theory. However, the fact that Eastern European countries have been included in transnational debate only as post-Cold War, post-communist countries does not go far enough in dismantling the intellectual impact of the Cold War on the transnational paradigm's developments. My discussion of both the Cold War-past and the post-Cold War present in the Polish-Finnish context aims to make up for the deficiencies.

In my analysis, I am concerned with three historical periods: 1945 to 1989 – the period of the communist regime in Poland and restrictive politics of exit, liberated to a limited extent in the post-Stalinist era since the late 1950s (and in Finland, the process of "finlandization" alongside the development of the capitalist democracy system); 1989 to 2004 – the period of the major rebuilding of Poland's political-economic system and the gradual integration with Western structures; 1 May 2004, to date – Poland's entrance to the European Union. The above periods are divergent in terms of the migration policies adopted by Poland and Finland as well as the socio-economic national climate and Poland's geopolitical position. Nevertheless I do not see them as neatly divided. Rather, they constitute part of continuous Polish mobility.

The attention I pay to the political-economic context of transnationalism is underlined by the assumption that transnational family members are historically situated actors rather than free-floating individuals acting in a vacuum. In this sense, transnational families are not accidental, but are a product of particular historical conditions. Acknowledging that, to paraphrase Nancy Foner (2005, 3), we can see what is unique to a specific situation and what is more general to Polish families' transnational experience. At the same time, I am far from a deterministic reading of history. As Sherry Ortner (1984) argues, history is not simply "something that happens to people". It is also "something they make – within, of course, the very powerful constraints of the system within which they are operating" (ibid.). Thus, from my vantage point, the historical making of the transnational family is also the making of history itself, as a reflection of "the reciprocal constitution over time of societal structures and human agency through everyday social practice" (Morawska 2001).

The transnational space across Poland and Finland

The space between Poland and Finland is a novel site of study and reviewing transnational scholarship one can easily see why: when the transnational paradigm was emerging, scholars from Poland had limited opportunities of doing up-to-date transnational research themselves and few Western social scientists had direct access to Poland, due to political reasons. Chris Hann, Janine Wedel, and Frances Pine are to my knowledge the only Western anthropologists who have done long-term fieldwork in communist Poland. Since the transition, the Western anthropological literature on post-socialist/post-communist countries, Poland included, is blooming. However, the anthropology of post-socialism is interested in local rather than transnational conditions.

As a place of Poles' transnational activity, Finland is also absent from the literature. When Polish people started to appear on transnational research agendas, focus was placed on countries such as the UK, Ireland and Germany, where major Polish immigration has been noted and where Poles have started to constitute a "statistically significant ethnic minority population", to quote Burrell (2009) on the UK. It is justifiable to assume that visibility has been a *sine qua non* of these type of studies and many of their research questions (including why and for how long Poles migrated and their work-related status), correspond to the "problems" stemming from Poles' visibility.

Given the small number of Polish people in Finland and their relatively good status, Poles in Finland are rarely perceived as a "social problem", which, I would argue, aids attempts to focus on other areas of their lives, which are treated as secondary in other countries or are simply none-existent. The intimate lives and transnational ties of Polish people can gain more research attention. Finland's and Poland's shared historical and geographical background and to some extent shared

cultural aspirations combined with the political and economic differences also make up for the specific national context of the study.

Finland is located across the Baltic Sea from Poland, in geographical proximity but not necessarily with easy access, sharing with Poland a common neighbour, Russia, whose existence has always cast a shadow over Poland's and Finland's histories. Interrelated with that, Finland is a politically and economically Western yet "peripheral" country on the geopolitical map of Europe. It has a relatively short history of independence and no history of being a European monarchical power in comparison to Poland, but similarly like Poland treats itself as a cultural-political bridge between the East and the West (Paasi 2005). As a reflection of this bridge, Finland was in a unique position during the Cold War, maintaining ties of "friendship" with both the Eastern and Western Blocks, which consequently projected on Finland's relationship to Poland.⁴

Although this study focuses on Poland and Finland, my interlocutors have transnational ties also to other places in Europe and the rest of the world. I mention them when necessary, but treat them as a diasporic context and source of comparative reflection for my interlocutors, not the focal point of my study. Finland is part of the larger map of Polish people's living places and one cannot forget that. A detailed analysis of transnationalism enacted in different national spaces is however a task for a different study.

Transnational families in the making

My study looks primarily into the practices of transnational family life. I see the transnational family as built upon the everyday and not-so-ordinary ritualized practices of communication and visits, and emotional and material exchanges through which people are "kinned" (Howell 2006, 2003) into a transnational family and maintain transnational family relations. From my perspective, transnational family life is a way of "being" in a transnational space and a way of "belonging" to it, combining the maintenance of family ties and identification with them (I draw here on the categorization of transnationalism by Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). In other words, in everyday life people create and work for their transnational relationships, exchange

⁴ The Finnish context is also one of the reasons for me to abide by the term "communism" in discussing Cold War Poland. The terms "socialism" and "real socialism" would not demonstrate enough distinction with the social democratic regime in Finland. They also would underemphasize that communist rather than socialist ideals governed the pre-1989 Polish system and were considered threatening to the Finnish system. Communism is also closer to the everyday Polish vernacular in which terms such as *komunizm* and *komuna* (the latter having pejorative connotations) are popularly used.

support and negotiate power hierarchies, having a conscious idea of familial belonging or aspiration to such belonging.

In my analysis, I stress tangible family activities as they are the most pronounced for my interlocutors. They entail dealing with various legal and material structures and thus require considerable financial, temporal and emotional investments. Nevertheless, I also conceive intangible practices of “mindwork” (Pessar and Mahler 2003), entailing imaging and thinking as part of transnational family making. Although non-quantifiable, they are an equally “real” aspect of transnationalism; producing and affecting action.

While many studies have pointed to the importance of communication, visits, support or status negotiation in the transnational family, most often these are not analyzed more thoroughly. My study analyzes transnational family life in mundane details. Furthermore, although I do recognize that gender differences are always implicated in migration narratives and national discourse (Sørensen 2005), I also show that transnational family making in my study is both a women’s and a men’s affair. Their engagement is not always the same or equally intensive, but men’s emotional and material presence is indisputable.

Not such a safe haven

My study, conceiving of the transnational family as a process of constant making, also acknowledges its emotional ambivalences. Upon commencing my fieldwork, I conceived of the transnational family as a community of people who maintain “a feeling of collective welfare and unity” despite living in separation by national borders (see Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, 3). I ended up thinking of transnational families as sets of interlocking relationships constantly made and re-made, without presupposing the families’ emotional qualities or sense of uniting togetherness.

Mason and Finch (1993) in their well-known work on British kinship indicate that their interlocutors were often adamant to present their families in a positive light, as a group working together at least at a minimal level. Chamberlain (2006) indicates that the idealization of family life is part of a common and excepted “cultural template” among transnational Caribbeans. My interlocutors forwent that kind of representation, confirming what feminists already started to stress in the 1970s: that the family is not a monolithic unit and a safe haven for its members, but a site of power struggles and often, a site of abuse. Although certainly intertwined with the abundance of positive stories, the painful and negative accounts made me look at the transnational family beyond supportive contact and mutual welfare. Accordingly, this study shows the multidimensionality of transnational family. It discusses caring practices and striving for togetherness, and shows how people use transnational separation to help each other in new ways. However, it also points to frictions and inequalities related to an individual family’s power struggles, division by national borders and divergent socioeconomic locations. I show that transnational family ties can be a trap and a source of ambivalent

belonging, especially if underpinned by strong moral pressures and expectations regarding how family life and relations with the country of origin should be like. Nevertheless, the diversity of sociocultural reference points gives people moral and emotional solace against personal disappointments with their transnational family life, or in other words, affects how transnational separation and the means to counter it are interpreted.

The sociocultural embeddedness of transnational families

In this study, transnationalism encompasses ties to both Poland and Finland. Transnational family members residing in Finland, while maintaining ties to Poland, interact with the local Finnish environment, creating new ties, which they subsequently incorporate into their transnational life. Family members from Poland also develop sociocultural ties to Finland. In consequence, Finnish people and cultural objects become part of transnational space as well. Although Finns were not my direct interlocutors, they are present in this study through my Polish interlocutors' voices and, partially, through my observations. Correspondingly, I consider transnationalism as a multiply anchored phenomenon, embedding people spatially and socially in a manner diverging from the nationally circumvented one. My interlocutors appear here as trans-local actors, making their families from particular places.

My interlocutors do not consider themselves migrants or emigrants, thus I avoid these terms. On the one hand, those who are long-term residents in Finland treat themselves as representatives of both Finnish and Polish places, and already as "hosts" in Finland. On the other hand, temporary workers in Finland see their coming to Finland as mobility for work rather than migration. Being a migrant in Polish discourse suggests moral transgression and a form of incomplete belonging, although combined with the primordial origin rooted in Poland. The migrant "hangs" in-between place, being an "abnormal" part of both. Transnational mobility, however, implies that one still positively belongs.

Linked with the above, I use the term "Polish person" as the analytical shortcut denoting the place of birth and/or place of growing up of my interlocutors, not their exclusive Polish identity or pure point of origin. Some of my interlocutors already feel *sfinszczeni* ("Finnish-ised" in English). Furthermore, the families of a few of my interlocutors had ties beyond what is currently Poland's territory already before my interlocutors were born. Polish society's ethnic heterogeneity until World War, II, forced mobility under German occupation, the shifts of the Polish borders after the Yalta Conference in 1945 and the related massive population movement over long distances, all contributed to my interlocutors' claiming some form of identification with foreign ethnic ties or with a foreign land, including Germany, Armenia, and Ukraine. I find it important to point out, for from the start it undermines thinking about transnationalism as a radical shift from sedentarism. From this perspective, my work

should be read as another step in the analytical undertaking of “de-incarcerating”⁵ people from their apparently natural nation-state containers, which in their families started long before my interlocutors were born, as the provenance of Poland’s and Europe’s turbulent history.

The ethnography of the insider; that is the “view from somewhere”

Donna Haraway (1988) in her article “Situated knowledges” argues for the “particularity and embodiment of all visions” against the “god trick of seeing everything from nowhere”. “The moral is simple”, she writes, “only partial perspective promises objective vision”. My particular location and embodiment are constitutive for the insider, multi-sited ethnography on which I base this study. I am a Polish woman whose academic apparatus is rooted in the Tampere school of social anthropology, the intellectual leader of which is Ulla Vuorela. It is a theoretical perspective filtered through my experience of fieldwork and transnational living between Poland and Finland for the last few years. My interlocutors consider me as “one of their own” (*svój*), which eased our initial encounters. Had I been Finnish, my fieldwork would probably have been more difficult and the conversations different (which does not mean of inferior quality). Perhaps the study would evoke less critical reading of migration discourse, since for me it is not only a strictly academic debate, but also a debate of which I am a subject as a Polish national on the move. I am a person constructed as a foreigner and an immigrant in Finland and an emigrant in Poland, although I feel at home in both these countries.

It is not accidental that many researchers who develop the transnational paradigm are transnational actors themselves (see for instance Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001). I assume that many of them have personal stakes in de-pathologising their life across multiple countries and physically away from the people they care about, and feel uneasy towards the discourse of assimilation. Personal stakes do not have to entail an automatic idealization of transnational life though – as this thesis shows. De-pathologising entails asking research questions, which try not to pose judgment and presuppose the answer. The questions and answers I give shed only a partial perspective on transnational life, since we all speak from somewhere. However, within the context of situated knowledges my research is objective.

Mapping intimate transnational worlds

To restate, this thesis investigates family life lived across borders. It asks how people make their families across national borders in the context of the Cold War and post-

⁵ I am drawing here on Appadurai’s (1988) critique of the traditional image of “natives” as not only belonging to but “incarcerated” or confined in particular places.

Cold War shifts of Poland and Finland. The detailed questions of this thesis have evolved as the fieldwork progressed, in interaction with the transnational life I documented.

In the first three chapters, I ground the thesis theoretically, methodologically and historically. The remaining chapters build upon my ethnographic data to answer particular research questions. In the subsequent chapters, I ask how people maintain embodied and disembodied contact, conduct their emotional life, negotiate socioeconomic family hierarchies. I also ask what the place of sociocultural ties to Finland in transnational family life is, and how Polish parents' children living in Finland engage in transnational practices. The aim is to provide a comprehensive and dynamic picture of transnational family life.

Chapter 1 Theoretical and empirical inspirations

In this chapter, I locate my study theoretically in the debates on transnationalism and transnational families. I stress the role of anthropologists in developing the transnational paradigm. I elaborate on my conceptualizations of transnationalism and the transnational family, which in the latter case brings me also to anthropological discussions on families and kinship, including Polish conceptualization. I indicate the approaches to family useful for my study. In the last part of the chapter, I critically introduce theoretical perspectives and empirical research on Polish families in the context of transnational separation. I approach them as negative and positive reference points for my study and show how this thesis can contribute theoretically in the specifically Polish context of transnationalism.

Conceptualizing transnationalism

There are multiple perspectives in studying the relationship between place and community. The transnational anthropology pursued in this thesis emphasizes the unboundedness of social life and cultural identifications, and looks at variously contingent ties and social organizations build across nation-state borders (Vuorela 2009b).

The transnational paradigm, nowadays accepted across different disciplines, is a response to the sedentary perception of the world. Classical social sciences saw space as inherently fragmented into separate state containers, each with its “naturally” ascribed territory, nation and culture (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Everyday social life was seen as rooted in and enacted in bounded places. In contrast, transnational studies recognize that “social life crosses, transcends and sometimes transforms borders and boundaries in many different ways” (Levitt and Khagram 2008,1) and that a nationally-bounded approach is insufficient for capturing it.

Due to their ethnographic sensibility and focus on the “periphery” rather than core countries, anthropologists have played a central role in developing the transnational paradigm. In anthropology, transnationalism has emerged as a bottom-up approach which has tried to make up for the theoretical deficiencies in explaining people’s lives extending above and beyond a single national location. The anthropologist of “transnational turn” noticed that their objects are not “automatically and naturally anchored in space” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), but that their history and

lived experiences are built upon different forms of mobility and border-crossing, which should be given proper research attention rather than be pushed to analytical margins (Malkki 1992). To exemplify, Karen Fog Olwig preceded her extensive research on Caribbean transnational networks by more localized fieldwork in the Caribbean at the turn of 1980s (Olwig 1985). Ulla Vuorela started her engagement with transnational anthropology in Dar es Salaam, among people whom she knew since her fieldwork in Tanzania in the 1970s (Vuorela 2009b). Similarly, Ulf Hannerz wrote his popular work “Transnational connections” (1996) in the aftermath of his fieldwork in Nigeria, where he discovered the inadequacy of established concepts in explaining contemporary Nigerian culture. “Consequently I began to cast about for ways of dealing with the latter, ethnographically and conceptually”, Hannerz (2006) recalls. All the above authors started from classic, ethnographic research and following their ethnographic insights, ended up pursuing the transnational paradigm.

Although transnational anthropology addresses various forms of mobility across borders and points to transnationalism as a condition of life in general, many of its debates have been developed in relation to migration and integration issues. The concept of transnationalism in migration studies is not new. As early as 1916 Randolph Bourne used it in his article “Trans-national America” to challenge the accurateness of the melting-pot paradigm and its assumption of multicultural assimilation. In the face of the massive involvement of immigrants to the United States in the nation-state building projects in Europe during World War, I, Bourne wrote:

No reverberatory effect of the Great War has caused American public opinion more solicitude than the failure of the ‘melting-pot.’ The discovery of diverse nationalistic feelings among our great alien population has come to most people as an intense shock. It has brought out the unpleasant inconsistencies of our traditional beliefs.

In the vein of the Bourne’s critique, albeit only seven decades later, anthropologists and anthropologically-oriented sociologists have called for the total overhaul of a standard emigration-immigration-assimilation model, which assumes that upon arriving in the country of destination people leave their past world behind and focus on assimilation into the new society. Within migration studies, scholars have started to develop the concepts of transnational social field and transnational social space, and construct new terms with which to categorize migrant populations. Glick-Schiller, Bash and Blanc-Szanton in their pioneering work, *Towards transnational perspective on migration* published in 1992,⁶ stated:

When comparing our observations of the social relations of immigrants to the United States from [...] the eastern Caribbean, Haiti, and the Philippines - we

⁶ Two years later, the same authors published the often-quoted book, *Nations Unbound*, which follows up and develops the ideas from 1992.

found that migrants from each population were forging and sustaining multi-stranded social relations that linked their societies of origin and settlement. We called this immigrant experience "transnationalism" to emphasize the emergence of a social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. Immigrants are understood to be transmigrants when they develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political – that span borders. [...] Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns within a field of social relations that links together their country of origin and their country or countries of settlement. (1992, ix)

Transnationalism as a novel and innovative paradigm to approach migration met with considerable enthusiasm, which was rapidly matched by voices of criticism. The critical reappraisal referred foremost to the lack of clarity on what kind of phenomena should be included under the concept of transnationalism. Guarnizo, Portes and Haller (2003, 1212) indicated that the growing body of case studies instead of clarifying the matter introduced “theoretical ambiguity and analytical confusion”. Issues of size, scope and reasons for transnational involvement remained unclear (Dahiden 2005, Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004, Guarnizo et al. 2003, Portes et al. 2002, Portes et al. 1999). Ambiguity also regarded who gains and in what way from the transnational way of life and who is cast aside. Al-Ali and Koser (2002, 1) accused earlier works for essentialism.

Other critical comments considered the novelty and the actual significance of the paradigm. According to Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004, 1187) transnational migration scholars made the ill-assumed claim for a discontinuity between “now and then” and in so doing “effectively dehistoricised the present”. There were also questions regarding the endurance of transnationalism. It was possible that transnationalism was in fact a short-lived phenomenon bounded to the first generation and as such did not have a groundbreaking effect on assimilation patterns registered previously (see for instance Lucassen 2006, Portes 2003).

Various works have tried to address many of these issues. Some critical arguments have been dismissed as wide of the mark (see for instance the response of Glick-Schiller & Levitt, 2006 to Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004). The existence of transnational phenomena in the past was commonly acknowledged, but it was also emphasized that by no means was this to undermine its ongoing theoretical relevance (Glick-Schiller & Levitt 2006, Portes et al. 2002, Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). To clarify the content of transnationalism, the host of typologies of its scale, frequency and level of institutionalization have been introduced. An overreaching distinction has been made between objective and subjective transnationalism as a way of differentiating between tangible and quantifiable transnational practices and intangible, immaterial ones. Smith and Guarnizo (1998) have introduced the terms of transnationalism “from above” (transnational institutions and corporations) and “from below” (local and grassroots activities across borders); Gardner (2002) differentiated between “great” (at the level of nation-states) and “little” transnationalism (the family and household level);

Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002, 2005) differentiated between “linear” (aimed at preservation of interpersonal links), “resource-based” (linked with the availability of economic resources) and “reactive transnationalism” (a reaction to the discrimination). With regard to the agents of transnationalism, Faist (2000) proposed categories of “transnational communities”, “transnational circuits” and “transnational kinship groups”. Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) made a distinction between a transnational way of being and a transnational way of belonging, the former referring to active participation in transnationalism and the latter, to participation combined with conscious transnational identification.

In my approach, I retain various elements of transnationalism from the above debates. I consider transnationalism to be a process linking individual and collective actors between different nation-states, leading to the emergence of transnational social space. Focusing on the practice of transnationalism, I see its tangible and intangible forms as mutually constitutive. “Cognitive agency” to use Pessar’s and Mahler’s (2003) term, is intertwined with physical agency. I consider transnationalism to be historically grounded, and thus see transnationalism from below (or “little” transnationalism) in relation to the variable presence and the strength of transnationalism from above.

I agree that the transnational perspective allows the uncovering of what was previously either obscured or documented but regarded as problematic and thus without influence on the dominant paradigm. As past anthropological studies which were focused on small populations and “remote” localities noticed the mobility of “natives”, but did not give them much theoretical significance in undermining sedentary views, so did various scholars focusing on “immigration” know about the transnational ties of the people they studied, but marginalized them for the sake of the assimilation framework. Therefore, in my view, transnationalism is a heuristic device permitting not only the study of current issues, but also the uncovering of phenomena previously analyzed in an exceedingly nationalistic manner or simply overlooked. This includes analyzing transnationalism in the contemporary context of global post-Cold War capitalism and the former Cold War capitalist-communist divide.

I recognize, however, that transnationalism is a concept qualitatively different from transnational migration, even if it owes migration studies its popularity and rich theoretical-empirical debate. If transnationalism is only equated to transnational migration, and the latter is conceived as a life-long process of building multiple ties to different places and oscillating between them (see for instance Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004), then people who engage in it as migrants, albeit transnational ones, remain migrants until the end of their lives. Given that children of the “immigrants” are often given the category of “second generation immigrants”, not even children who grew up in the country of “destination” can escape the migrant category. This runs the risk of reifying the hierarchical divisions between migrants, non-migrants and the host society in transnational studies.

Being a migrant suggests that one does not quite belong, neither to the country of destination nor to the country of origin: he or she is not yet a member of the “host” society on the one hand, and no more a “non-migrant”, on the other hand. In research literature in English, the category of a “migrant” also involves a class bias. The migrant is usually associated with the lower economic and/or ethnic strata of the population, whereas the elites living in foreign places are often called expatriates or simply mobile people. Paradoxically, this categorical class-bias also applies to the researchers themselves. When researchers go to study people in foreign places, including “non-migrants” in transnational networks, they cross national borders in order to go to work. Yet, such researchers do not talk about their fieldwork mobility as migration and about themselves as migrants⁷ – that is unless they are the “immigrants” who go back to their country of origin to study their own people.

This way of thinking echoes the old anthropological notion of the “native”, whereby the natives have always been those whom the anthropologists studied, never the anthropologists themselves (Appadurai 1988). Therefore, through the migrant/non-migrant/host – categorization yet another hidden hierarchy is put in place, suggesting that some people naturally belong everywhere or at least do not “not-belong”, while others are continuously displaced. The Polish scholar Jan Gruszyński would most likely agree with my argument. Gruszyński, as early as 1990, noticed the abuse of migration-related categories in Polish academia and scientific discourse. He criticized the categories of migrants and emigrants and as well as the interrelated term “Polonia”, which commonly denotes the community of Poles and their descendants living abroad. Gruszyński wrote:

In the past in Poland the term Polonia was exploited due to ideological reasons. It was used to describe all the Poles living abroad, persons of Polish origin and contemporary emigration. Nowadays in public discourse exploited is the term “migration” in respect of those who stay abroad temporarily or more permanently and who do not consider themselves as emigrants. (1990, 143)

Accordingly, I prefer to talk about transnationalism as a multi-stranded process enacted across borders by different type of transnational actors, rather than by migrants and non-migrants, and about my interlocutors as people who at the time of my research lived permanently or temporarily in Finland: long-term residents of Finland, newcomers, temporary workers. Those in Poland are people for whom the main part of their everyday physical life was at the time of my research enacted in Poland. Living “in Finland” or “in Poland” does not preclude here having two homes or is not understood as a fixed belonging. Rather the differentiation allows us to pay attention to a different

⁷ For instance, Bronisław Malinowski is often conceived as a Polish immigrant to Britain. In the Triobriand Islands he was simply, “The Ethnographer”.

anchoring of my interlocutors as they go about the business of their everyday transnational life.

To continue with the critical note, I also question the place of so-called integration or assimilation in the context of transnationalism. On the one hand, transnational migration studies indicate that transnationalism is a mode of integration (see for instance Levitt and Jaworski 2007). On the other hand, there is a pervasive trend to see transnationalism as primarily about connections to the “sending society”. Quite indicative here is the statement made by Fournon and Glick-Schiller (2006, 172) that, “To speak about the transnational connections of persons who are emigrated [...] is to describe only one set of relationships that such persons establish. For example, many persons from Haiti become well incorporated in their new country, developing relations at work and in their neighbourhood” (see also Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2005, 2002, Morawska 2005, Levitt et al. 2003). Therefore, from the latter’s perspective instead of transnationalism as linked to multiple countries it is possible to talk about two disjunctive “sets of relationships”, one being of transnational, another of the “incorporation” kind. The intensity of each of these relationships would engender various configurations of incorporation and transnationalism, not denying that how people integrate may affect their transnational practices.

In contrast I treat transnationalism as not only about ties to one’s first “homeland”, but about the dialectics and intertwinement of connections to different places and people who are associated with, but not bound to these places. In fact, one could say that the transnational anthropology perspective encourages thinking about transnational emplacement rather than integration (cf. Huttunen 2010). As Sørensen (1994) argues, the concepts of assimilation and integration “have proved very persistent in migration studies, even though severely criticized. This may be because the scholarly concepts of integration and assimilation smoothly merged into policy language and because of nation-states’ policy goals towards their immigrant population.” Moving beyond the concept of integration would allow us to move beyond the problem of what is integration and to whom one should integrate (reproducing the host/immigrant dichotomy thereof) and focus on how people “here” and “there” build their transnational worlds, developed ties to different places and participate in each other’s lives, to eventually blur the “here” and “there” altogether.

In my research, this move also entails the “de-ethnicisation” of transnational space. This means acknowledging that a single transnational process may involve people of different ethnic background and having different societies of “origin” and “destination”, in my study: Poles born in Poland, Finns born in Finland as well people born in other places. In the transnational migration vernacular the above conception of transnationalism would include “migrants”, “non-migrants” and “hosts”, and not only migrants and non-migrants as is usually the case.

Interlinked with the above, I understand transnationalism as a process anchored in and linking different places, that is territorialized rather than deterritorialized. I interpret territorialization not in the essentialized sense of binding people to particular places, but rather in terms of recognizing that all the processes stem from particular localities. The aim of transnationalism as a means of dismantling the naturalized links between the social and the spatial is to show that people's lives can be territorialized in a different way, not to "deterritorialize" them completely. It is also by stressing anchoring in different, historically and culturally particular places, that transnationalism stands in conceptual contrast to globalization, which as Hannerz (1996, 6) argues, tends to "describe just about any process or relationship that somehow crosses state boundaries". Transnationalism is from this perspective more humble, but also better contextualized and grounded. It pays attention to the mobility and cross-border linkages as they take place in particular temporal and spatial conditions.

Transnational families

I place intimate relations radiating from the relationships of family and kinship at the core of transnational processes. The transnational paradigm from the onset pointed to the role of family in the construction of transnational space. In the already mentioned book *Nations unbound*, Basch et al. argued:

The family is a matrix from which a complexly layered transnational social life is constructed and elaborated. Almost ubiquitously at the social centre of this transnational field, the family facilitates the survival of its members, serving as a buffer against the intrusiveness of individual state policies; it fosters the social reproduction of its members, their class formation and mobility; and as the repository of cultural practices and ideology shaped in the home society, it mediates identity formation in the new setting as it socializes its members into a transnational way of life. (1994, 79)

Scholars recognize that transnational actors have different experience of kinship structures and expectations depending upon their cultural location and conditions of mobility. "Yet kinship, however defined, has been stretched and reconfigured as households and families have been extended transnationally" (ibid., 238).

Initially the accounts of Caribbean transnational families dominated the field, following a long history of transnational migration and expansive kinship networks in the Caribbean (Olwig 2007, 2003, Chamberlain 2006, Sørensen 2005, Guarnizo 1997). Gradually though, the research scope has enlarged to transnational families of other ethnic groups. The accounts of families with the non-European background still take the lead (Smith 2005, Espiritu 2003, Parreñas 2003, 2001, Salih 2003, Aranda 2003, Gardner 2002), but increased attention is being paid to families originating from Eastern and Western European countries (see for instance Ackers, 2004, on families

within the European Union, Al-Ali, 2002, and Huttunen, 2007, on Bosnian families; Baldassar, 2001, on Italian families).

One can consider the emergence of the family theme in transnational studies as inevitable. It is hardly possible to talk about the various aspects of transnationalism, such as gender, identity, ethnicity, home or economy without referring to family ties. Less often though, the transnational family is approached as a focal point of the research. More often than not, the analysis of transnational family emerges as a sort of a spin-off of the investigation of migration motives, identities, gender or incorporation modes within transnational space. It is dealt with in a section, a chapter, or interweaved with other dimensions. It is seen as an important institution, but addressed among the many (see for instance Voigt-Graf 2005, Smith 2005, Levitt 2001, Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001, Guarnizo 1997).

Because the investigation of intimate life brings the subjective, emotional and imaginative to the fore, transnational families are considered of less importance than more formalized and high-scale transnational practices at the community and state level. Guarnizo and Portes, frequently quoted transnational migration sociologists, recurrently argue that quantifiable, regular and preferably institutionalized forms of participation are the most vital for transnationalism. Drawing on such an assumption, they have concluded that only a minority of people from the group of Dominicans, Salvadorans and Colombians they studied in the United States showed signs of transnational involvement (for the results see Guarnizo et al. 2003, Portes et al. 2002).

Researchers of intimate transnationalism would disagree with the above, indicating that if the family is commonly assumed to be "the provenance of most everyday migrant transnationalism" (Vertovec 2009, 61), it should be put at the centre of transnational debate. Focus on the family sheds light on the most fundamental transnational experience and allows us to see other dimension of transnational processes, not necessarily linked with resistance to material and racial subjugation in the receiving societies or with elements of "marked culture", that is the elements related primarily to the identification with nation states and ethnic groups.⁸ As an advocate of transnational family research, Karen Fog Olwig (2003), critically argues, the focus on "marked culture" is "rather narrow unless one is content to define research on sociocultural aspects of transnational migration as a small subfield dealing with cultural displays of identification in migrants' ethnic organizations closely affiliated with particular nation-states of origin". According to Olwig, the investigation of the transnational family not only expands our knowledge of the "unmarked culture", but it also helps us to better understand the "marked culture" itself (ibid.).

⁸ I draw here on Olwig's (2003) reading of Appadurai (1996).

Two general approaches can be identified in transnational family research. In the first one, the transnational family is empirically narrowed to the transnational household defined as a household where at least one of the core family members lives abroad. Here transnationalism is usually linked to the household strategy of economic reproduction entailing migration and the regular flow of remittances back home. The analysis of household transnationalism includes gendered conjugal relationships, transnational parenting, the restructuration of household organization and the management of a remittance-based household budget (Pribilsky 2004, Hirsch 2003, Parreñas 2001, Herrera Lima 2001, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 2001, Guarnizo 1997).

In the second approach, attention is paid to transnational family networks spanning multiple households (Aranda 2008, 2003, Olwig 2007, 2003, Chamberlain 2006, Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). Here family relations are approached in their entirety, taking into account changes in family composition throughout the life course and in response to the situational context. Mary Chamberlain, whose research focuses on Caribbean transnational families, justifies her approach in the following manner:

in understanding families [...] it seems more fruitful to focus not on one time frame or one set of relationships [...] but on multiple destinations. Any one individual will relate to family members through a fluid set of relationships. In the life of the family, different relationships become dominant or subordinate at any time while the roles any one individual will perform in a family are multifarious and multifaceted. (2006, 63)

Deborah Bryceson and Ulla Vuorela even more emphatically argue for the fluidity of transnational family borders and membership:

by their nature, transnational families constitute an elusive phenomenon – spatially dispersed and seemingly capable of unending social mutations. Their ability to reconstitute and redefine themselves over time contingent on spatial practicality and emotional and material needs challenges even the most multi-disciplinary social scientist's analytical efforts. (2002, 3)

Later on Vuorela reemphasized the malleability and inclusivity of transnational families by introducing the term "familyscapes":

Transnational families come about when individuals and communities move about, establish new family lines in different places, and finally, share living spaces that may span continents, extend across oceans and cross many borders. Family histories may be built on multisited genealogies and narratives, live through connecting places and people into familyscape, by which I mean to the places and spaces where people connect through a sense of familial belonging. Belonging may be longer or short moments in history, built in grand narratives or just shards of memory. (2009a)

This thesis follows the above understanding. I see transnational families as social formations constituted of interlocking familial relationships that are in the process of being constantly made and remade across national borders. The boundaries of

transnational families are carved out of wider kinship networks and change along with the biographical situation of its members and the wider situational context (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, 14-19).

In my definition, people are not automatically born into transnational family membership, but are brought to it through the continuous process of “kinning” (Howell 2006, 2003) or “kinwork” (Di Leonardo 1987) – terms which stress transnational practice and remind us that the transnational family involves work, often conscious work, and is not just an effect of spontaneous and effortless family being. In a transnational setting kinning becomes heavily mediated through transnational rituals of communication and visits, which accompany emotional sharing, material exchanges and various forms of co-presence across borders. Transnational rituals span from transnational patterned interactions, which are the least formalized but the most frequently enacted, to pre-planned and well organized events, happening recurrently or once-in-a-lifetime.⁹ They are constitutive for kinning into the transnational family and thus the making of the transnational family, but the effects of such rituals may be increased cohesion as much as tensions and conflicts. The transnational family is here an ambivalent experience, underpinned by the co-existence of contradictory emotions and attitudes.¹⁰ Its reproduction is always the reproduction of particular power hierarchies and the exercise of influence over others across borders, whether people are content to be participating in their transnational families or not.

For Howell (2003) kinning refers to the ways through which a person is “brought into a significant and *permanent*¹¹ relationship that is expressed in a kin idiom”. From my point of view, since transnational family membership is neither fixed nor uniformly satisfying, the process of kinning can be reversed. People may be de-kinned from transnational family depending on current needs, life-cycle and situational circumstances, in other words, kinwork can be consciously and deliberately suspended. This brings my understanding of transnational kinning close to Bryceson’s and Vuorela’s (2002, 14-19) concept of relativising, by which the authors indicate multiple ways through which people re-draw their transnational family boundaries, making them changeable and negotiable. Two concepts are useful in their complementarity, kinning stressing the effort of working on a particular relationship, whereas relativising stresses both the inclusion and exclusion of particular people from the transnational family “on the basis of temporal, spatial and need-related considerations” (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, 14).

⁹ For the categorization of family rituals in a local setting see the seminal work of Wolin and Bennett (1984).

¹⁰ On the concept of ambivalence in kinship see Peletz (2002).

¹¹ My own emphasis.

Transnational family membership in the context of anthropology of family and kinship

The above conceptualization of transnational family is strongly informed by new kinship and family studies in anthropology. I address them in this in this section in order to indicate whom I consider a transnational family member in this thesis.

Howell, di Leonardo and Peletz mentioned in the previous section are representative of anthropologists who have contributed to the rethinking of our conventional Euro-American notion of family and kinship. They took family membership out of the biological framework and stressed social relatedness, agency, everyday practice and emic understandings of kinship. Theoretical foundations for challenging the naturalness of family in anthropology have been laid by David Schneider. There were other scholars with similar notions before him (see for instance Needham 1971), but his work is considered to most powerfully shatter the old conceptualizations. Schneider showed that the American notion of sexual intercourse as the natural basis for kinship is a cultural construct not a natural fact (1968). From this followed his critical re-appraisal of anthropological studies of other societies. Schneider (1984) argued that what Western anthropologists deem as the Other's emic concepts of kinship are in fact the reflection of their own ideas, as not everywhere the ties produced by sexual intercourse are templates for culturally meaningful relationships. The deconstruction of the apparently natural edifice of kinship was also instigated by feminist scholars. Feminists challenged the image of family as "a monolithic unit", an unchangeable entity with clear-cut boundaries, fixed role division and interfamilial relations rooted in nature, and stressed inequalities and power struggles (see for instance Thorne and Yalom 1982).

Starting from the 1990s, anthropologists of kinship followed in Schneider's footsteps but also deconstructed his critique drawing upon insights from new research on technologically-assisted reproduction, gay and lesbian families, and adoption practices (important authors include Carsten 2000, 2004, Strathern 1992, 2005, Weston 1992). They indicate that not only family membership, but also nature itself are cultural constructs. The division between biological family membership and social family membership is thus fiction, for both forms of membership are rooted in culture. There is nothing like "nature" without our cultural notions of what nature is. In the end, we always choose how much significance we give to biology in constructing our relationships (Strathern 1993), rather than biology determining kinship choices for us.

Sceptics might say that if we take any certain footing on which family membership could be conceived we are left with no reason to pursue family as a justified object of study. Family seems to be just a "word". Nevertheless, I agree with Bourdieu, who argues that:

if it is true that the family is only a word, it is also true that it is an active 'watchword', or rather, a category, a collective principle of construction of

collective reality. Every time we use a classificatory concept like 'family'... we tacitly admit that the reality to which we give the name 'family', and which we place in the category of 'real' families, is a family in reality" (1996, 20).

From my vantage point, therefore, the fluidity and uncertainty of family membership does not preclude family as a powerful metaphor which validates the importance of particular relationships in people's lives.

Specifically Polish scholarship on family and kinship still follows a fairly traditional, genealogical approach, focusing on blood and in-law family relations. However, there is evidence that a more inclusive approach would be more apt, given the still relatively strong culturally and economically-based familism (*rodzinnosc*) and collective character (*wspolnotowosc*) of Polish society. Boldyrew's (2008) historical study indicates the inclusivity of Polish family membership as early as in Poland under the partitions. Boldyrew shows that in the face of high death rates adoptions and remarriages were common and uncles and aunts often took on the role of second mothers or fathers to their young kin. Children out-of-wedlock and children who were disabled were easily left outside the family definition. The servants living in the same household were habitually part of the family. Boldyrew indicates that god parenting was a common practice of stretching the family borders. She quotes an interesting example of noble Polish families who chose representatives of royalty or high-end aristocracy as godparents for their children in order to gain prestige, or nominated people from their subjugated villages as the godparents to bond with the local population. Some noble children had up to eighteen pairs of godparents from the subjugated villages (*ibid.*, 267-73)

Under the communist regime, Polish families saliently straddled the kinship-friendship divide. In the face of economic difficulties and political tensions between "us" – the nation, and "them" – the communist government, people built their everyday economic and social life on close interpersonal cooperation. Buchowski (1996), a renowned Polish anthropologist, describes Polish communist society as composed of "cross-cutting units based on extended families", while Giza-Poleszczuk (2007b) talks about "turned-into-family friendship groups" (*sfamilizowane grupy znajomych*). For Buchowski, extended kinship groups were the basis of civic society specific to communist Poland. A unique insight into 1980s-Polish communist society seen through Western eyes is given by American anthropologist Janine Wedel (1986). In her ethnographic book *Private Poland*, in the chapter entitled "Familial society", Wedel argues:

[In Poland] family boundaries may be manipulatable and situational. The family can be defined narrowly and broadly, and people often conceive of it in operational terms. Those who have no living close family members and the few who have little contact with family often consider *przyjaciele* (close friends) as family. Close friends become "just like family". [...] "The family" is not necessarily derived from a blood group. What is important is that an individual

has a defined circle of people around him who perform the duties of family members. (1986, 103)

In discussing the “familism” of Polish society, Wedel refers also to Stefan Nowak, the Polish sociologist who in his classic article from 1979 placed family and close friendship at the centre of the Polish value system. In his article, Nowak brings about an important categorical division of Polish relatedness, whereby instead of a broad category of friends there are *przyjaciele* (very close friends), *znajomi* and *koledzy/koleżanki*. Out of these three categories, *przyjaciele* is the most intimate and familial one. I quote Nowak's text in the English translation by Wedel:

When Americans say about someone “he is my best friend”, at the most we can say that the Polish equivalent of that is “good acquaintance” (*dobry znajomy*) [...] To our friends we can go for help in many difficult situation and, in relation to them, we are obliged to offer help. A lot of Poles would go very far both in their expectations of real help and in terms of offering such help to their friends. Having a circle of *przyjaciele* increases the feeling of safety, both in psychological as well as in very “practical” aspects of life. (Nowak 1979, cited in Wedel 1986, 104)

The bond with *przyjaciele* is strengthened by the kinship idiom in which such relationships are often expressed as *przyjaciele* of the parents are habitually “uncles” and “aunts” for the children. Polish language in fact enforces the kinship idiom in such intimate, age-unequal relationships.

The collapse of communism in 1989 reconfigured many of the intimate relationships in Poland, with the simultaneous continuity of some of the old patterns. In demographic terms, Polish nuclear families started to undergo similar changes as in Western countries, facing lower birth rates, increased divorce rates, single parenthood and cohabitation (Kwak 2005, Slany 2002). Some authors interpret the above changes as the sign of a crisis in the Polish family. I would prefer to see them as a further encouragement to define the family in inclusive and flexible terms, showing that in everyday life people have to deal with fuzzy kinship relationships.

Although after political transition the number of persons who maintain steady contact with many relatives has been shrinking, family life has remained fairly intensive. According to Żurek (2001), who studied contemporary Polish urban families, instead of talking about the nuclear family, we should talk about the spatially expanded large family (*duża rodzina rozproszona*), that is the family scattered across different, but interconnected and cooperating households.

Close friends remain an important node of Polish relatedness. One of the leading Polish research centres, CBOS, repeatedly includes in its representative survey on family bonds questions regarding close friends. The study conducted in 2008 shows that Polish people maintain more frequent contacts with *przyjaciele* than with in-laws, siblings, grandparents or the family of the spouse and other relatives but less frequent than with adult children, parents and grandchildren. Also almost everybody has people in their family with whom they are *przyjaciele*. Żurek's (2005) sociological research on

young Polish urban adults indicates that her informants considered *przyjaciele* to be their most intimate others, closer than a partner or fiancé. Although Żurek relegates *przyjaciele* to the sphere outside the family, the latter treated in a strictly biological sense, she provided plenty of evidence that such a definition should be rethought if it is to serve the purpose of understanding people's everyday lives.

Considering the above observations and my own fieldwork, I read transnational family membership inclusively. It includes blood and in-law family members (to whom I refer in the thesis as genealogical family members or relatives), close friends (the aforementioned *przyjaciele*) and post-divorce family members. I use the category of close family members interchangeably with the category of *close ones*, in Polish *bliscy*. The latter is widely used in everyday Polish language and legal documents (and is surprising absent in the academic literature). It implies the relationship of intimacy, emotional closeness and kinship and eludes clear-cut definitions outside of the lived experience. As such, the term *bliscy* has kinning at its very core, for the status of *bliski* is never given pre-birth, but is gradually achieved. Usually, *bliscy* are the closest blood and affinal family members, as well as close friends who function as family.

I also include pets (or, as I prefer to call them, companion animals) into the transnational family definition. Scholars rarely do that, although from the perspective of my study companion animals are the most obvious among non-blood family members. Haraway (2006, 104) indicates that the companion species are usually left out of scholarship due to the “repressive literary conventions of scientific publishing”. Yet in their “obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship with human beings” (Haraway 2003, 6) they constitute people as much as people constitute them. Importantly, the inclusion of companion animals does not preclude the discussion of transnational family in terms of personal relations. To quote Smuts:

For me, the distinction between human and nonhuman beings, so central to our culture, has diminished in importance as individual identities became paramount. Another way to say this is that I now experience individuals of many other species first and foremost as persons. In the language I am developing here, relating to other beings as persons has nothing to do with whether we attribute human characteristics to them. It has to do, instead, with recognizing that they are social subjects like us, whose idiosyncratic, subjective experience of us plays the same role in their relations with us that our subjective experience of them plays in our relations with them. If they relate to us as individuals, and we relate to them as individuals, it is possible for us to have a personal relationship. (2006, 18)

The consideration of companion animals as personified family members also reflects a growing trend in anthropology to study human-animal relations, a trend which Cassidy (2012) describes as “multispecies ethnographies”.

Incomplete, immigrant and transnational families in Polish-related literature

The transnational migration paradigm is usually considered a response to the imperative of immigrants' assimilation pervading the academic and popular discourse and policy-making in Western countries of destination. Poland, however, has an equally strong tradition of studying Polish people abroad from the perspective of Poland as a country of origin. It is a tradition driven by long-distance nationalistic tendencies¹² of the Polish state and its fear of the potential loss of Polish human capital and the moral disorganization of Polish society. This section aims at a brief overview of the literature which pertains specifically to Polish families and transnational migration, indicating the gap this thesis helps to fill. To emphasize, this theme has predominantly appeared within the context of other research interests like community life and cultural reproduction in the destination countries, motives for migration, economic or sociocultural consequence of migration or family problems and pathologies. Transnationalism as a theoretical paradigm in approaching Polish intimate life has appeared only recently, although already since the 1970s various studies have been providing empirical evidences for its existence.

Before 1989, Polish scholars had limited possibilities to deal with up-to-date transnationalism. The Polish communist government was highly interested in "Polonia" in the West,¹³ but as long as its members represented the ideologically appropriate attitude. The uncomfortable topic of contemporary outflow from Poland, which usually resulted in illegal stay abroad, was suppressed. In the academic institutes on Polonia launched in Warsaw¹⁴, Krakow, Lublin and Poznań in the 1970s, the focus was on the politically safe history of pre-War migration, population structures and cultural and community life of Poles in the destination places (Jończy 2003, Reczyńska 1996). Polish anthropologists played a significant role here, as studying Polonia in the West was one of the research areas in which Western-type Polish anthropological inquiry (as opposed to folklore studies) could be exercised and receive funding from the Polish communist state (Posern-Zieliński 2005). The tradition of studying Poles' life abroad, in the situation of "emigration", remains strong to date.¹⁵

¹² Schiller and Fouron (2001, 4) define long-distance nationalism as "a claim for membership in a political community that stretches beyond the territorial borders of a homeland". The Polish state attempted the inclusion of Polish people abroad into the realm of the Polish nation-state following Poland's independence. In the case of Poland, long-distance nationalism is thus a phenomenon linked to the very emergence of Poland, which recent global capitalist developments have only intensified.

¹³ For political reasons Polonia residing east of Poland could only be studied after 1989.

¹⁴ The capital city of Poland.

¹⁵ In the Finnish context, the popularity of Polonia studies is reflected in two texts: *Polish people in Finland* by Elżbieta Later-Chodyłowa (2004) and the collection of texts *Poles in Scandinavia* edited by Edward Olszewski (1997).

The intimate sphere of life of the “emigrant” in the destination country has been conceived through the overlapping concepts of the immigrant/emigrant family, the Polonia family (*rodzina polonijna*) and the transplanted family (*rodzina przeszczepiona*). These concepts have provided the framework for studying other topics regarded as important: the questions of “identity” and the preservation of Polish ethnic heritage in a foreign environment, the reproduction of Polishness across generations and incorporation into a new place of residence (see for instance Koszałka 2005, 2004, Sprengel 2004, Smolicz 2003, Grabowska 1998, Dyczewski 1992, Gruszyński 1990, Smolicz and Secombe 1990, Sobisiak 1983, Babiński 1977). Although in the discussion of the immigrant family one can notice the threads of symbolic or practical transnationalism, transnational ties have not been made conceptually explicit, thus keeping the emigration-immigration-assimilation model fairly strong. Interesting is here the idea of transplanted family introduced by the Polish-American scholar and novelist, Danuta Mostwin, for it is a fitting example of “botanical metaphors” through which “the naturalizing of the links between people and places is routinely conceived”, as Malkki (1992) indicates. The “transplanted family” is the topic of Mostwin’s dissertation defended in the United States in the 1970s (Mostwin 1980). It is based on Mostwin’s study of Polish post-war emigration to the US, which she has later on complemented with the study of 1970s-1980s-Polish emigration wave (Mostwin 1991). In her works, Mostwin indicates psychological crisis, anxiety and identity disintegration to be the inherent feature of emigration experience. From her conceptual view-point, an emigrant is a “transplanted” person (Mostwin uses the term *przeszczepienie*) who experiences his/her emigration drama in the equally-crisis-ridden “transplanted family”. A “transplanted” person is uprooted from their original homeland and transplanted into a new place of dwelling, faced with the inevitable process of growing new roots. The new roots may retain Polish values and traces of Polishness,¹⁶ but they are part of the inevitable process of assimilation nevertheless. As a follow-up on this perspective, I would regard Mostwin’s contestation, arguably based on her personal as much as a scholarly experience, which she provided in an interview for the Canada-based *The Polish Monthly Magazine* in 2006 (Waliszewski 2006). In the interview, Mostwin states that “emigration” is an all-human drama and the life of an emigrant – “a chain of one crisis after another”. “Emigrants” treasure and long for the world they have left behind but “there is no coming back”: “The path to the home has already been covered with thick grass”. Even if return is possible, an emigrant is bound to feel alien among the people and places he/she has once abandoned.

¹⁶ Mostwin, for instance, writes about a hybrid “third value” regarding second generation of Polish Americans (see Mostwin 1995).

My critique towards the above is not the denial of painful emotions associated with migration. Their presupposition linked with the inevitability of assimilation to a single, nationally-bounded place of living and the obscuring of nationalistic ideologies of migration and particular nationalistic emotional regimes is, however, problematic. In Mostwin's work, one can discern a strong influence of the American "melting-pot" paradigm, the tradition of Polonia studies and her own personal experience as a Polish "emigrant" in the United States. Mostwin is not self-reflexive in her writing, but gives enough clues of her personal experience, to speculate how they affected her approach.

Similar negative tones as in Mostwin's account underpin studies which empirically address transnational ties, but deal with them through the disorganization thesis. The disorganization thesis, working with the assumption that under migration pressure transnationally-separated and immigrant families become "disorganized", has a long history in studying Polish migration. It was first introduced by Thomas and Znaniecki whose book *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918-1920, is often referred to in international migration scholarship (see for instance Faist 2000), recently also as an example of tacit transnationalism in the past. However, since it discusses Polish migration, it seems to hold particularly strong importance in Poland, where the disorganization thesis is also argued to constantly reconfirm itself as permanent and unchangeable (Slany and Malek 2002). Correspondingly, many scholars indicate that migration largely disrupts family cohesion, leading in extreme cases to the utter dissolution of family bonds (see for instance Okólski 2005, 24, Kuźma 2005, 2001, Balcerzak-Paradowska 2004, 44, 123, Romaniszyn 2003, Korczyńska 2003, Solga 2002, Łukowski 2001, Kukolowicz 1999, Latuch 1996, Dyczewski 1992, 2, Okroy 1989). The focal point of academic interest is here a "threatened" and emotionally fragile conjugal unit.¹⁷ Indicated are the informal collapses of marriage, divorces and spouses' promiscuity – all phenomena interpreted as dysfunctional and pathological which ultimately lead to the destabilization of not only particular families but also of the Polish social and national order (Żebrowski 2001, 24, Minkiewicz 1994, 97, 101). Terms such as "Brussels marriages" or "Vienna marriages" denote the emergence of a new form of matrimonial life, which involves maintaining two sets of relationships by the migrant spouses: the legitimate family in Poland and an informal one in the place of immigration (Romaniszyn 2003). It reflects what in derogatory terms is described as a breakdown or at least a momentary suspension of moral norms regulating sexual and inter-marriage relations. These norms have been traditionally underpinned by Catholic values whose importance is said to diminish in the "demoralizing" context of

¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, women's migration is considered the most threatening to family order (cf. Sørensen, 1994, 2005, for similarly gendered narratives of Dominican migration).

emigration and hedonistic, Western values (Koszalka 2004, Okroy 1989). For instance, Reroń argues:

In the pluralistic society the field of formation of the moral consciousness is closed. It offers more feeling of freedom but it does not guarantee uniform cultural models. [...] The new social situations generate a sense of moral ambiguity. Therefore the separation of a married couple caused by labour migration is definitely unfavourable for the family. (2005, 205-206)

The disorganization thesis drives not only the results of many studies but also their initial hypotheses. Korczyńska's study, for instance, starts with the assumption that: "Migration is linked with the disruption of the family bonds and a disturbance of the family's socialization functions" (2003, 32). In a similar vein, Stańkowski argues: "The parents' labour migration has a negative influence on family cohesion and permanence" (2006, 246). Concurrently with such assumptions, separated families are interpreted as "incomplete", "broken" and "disorganized" (see for instance Kawula 2006, 101, Balcerzak-Paradowska 2004, 123, Bolesta 2002, Danilewicz 2001, Rauziński 2000, Kukolowicz 1999, Latuch 1996, 1992, Auleytner and Błaszczuk 1995, Minkiewicz 1994, Kozdrowicz 1989, Jarosz 1987).¹⁸

Because the Polish Catholic Church has traditionally been interested in the family and emigration issues, authors affiliated with Catholic institutions particularly accentuate the disorganization thesis (see for instance Reroń 2005, Jurczyk 2005, Wojacek 2005, Koszalka 2005, 2004, Bolesta 2002, Okroy 1989). They suggest that migration, especially when separating a conjugal couple, poses a threat to the indivisible and sacred institution of marriage and the only "natural" family model and gendered role division. It is compared with the risks brought by cohabitation, homosexual and one-parent families, all of which disturb the "healthy" and "natural" order of things within the family and society.

From the transnational perspective, the idea of disorganization obviously disregards a more nuanced and multidimensional view of family life. It stresses the "nuclear family" and overlooks other family formations and forms of family membership not based on sexual reproduction. It presupposes and emphasizes absence and loss, obscures the processes of reorganization and restructuring of relationships and the negotiation of family borders. It deals with the transnational context, but it speaks from the nation-bound perspective. It assumes that "the right thing to do" would be "to take care of only our own family, our own community in our own nation", (Hochschild 2000, 141-142) favouring what Hochschild called the primordial approach. In this context, one could quote Butler (2000) who – regarding the notion of single motherhood – asks rhetorically: "Is this loss, which assumes unfulfilled norm, or

¹⁸ A similar critique is made by Sylwia Urbańska (2009) who studies Polish transnational motherhood.

is it another configuration of primary attachment whose primary loss is not to have a language in which to articulate its terms?" The transnational paradigm can be considered an attempt to provide an alternative language for relationships stretched across borders.

Despite many works which are at theoretical odds with my thesis, I should stress that the increasing number of studies has started to explicitly discuss transnational processes in the last decade and, as I already mentioned, various older Polish studies were characterized by tacit transnationalism. Already in 1990, Kantor in the work entitled *Between Zaborowo and Chicago* discussed cross-border intimate and community contacts dating back to the 1920s between Polish immigrants living in Chicago and their hometown of Zaborowo in Poland. From today's perspective, Kantor's work is an exemplary transnational study. Conscious of transnational ties were also scholars studying Polonia. For instance, in 1990 Kubiak, the leader of Polonia studies, drawing on his 1970s-1980s fieldwork among Polonia in the United States suggested that in the wake of rediscovering Poland by second and third generation through contacts with Polish kin and participation in language schools and summer camps organized in Poland, we should not conclude their lives in the assimilation mode as yet. It can be safely assumed that during communism most Polish social scientists knew about or even personally participated in transnational family ties stretching across the Iron Curtain but since contemporary migration was silenced out it could not be the subject of a serious debate.

When political transition allowed for the unrestrained study of international migration, the existence of dense migration networks, in some cases launched by pioneer migrants at the end of the 19th century, has been thoroughly documented by the ethnosurvey-based study carried out in the years 1994-1996 and 1999 by researchers affiliated with the newly established Center of Migration Research (CMR) in Warsaw. The analysis, drawing on the concepts of migration networks and social capital, indicates that social/migration capital plays a significant role especially in the development of a circulatory (incomplete or pendular) type of migration, characteristic of the majority of Polish rural migrants after 1989. They also indicate that social capital is more valuable if located within the immediate family circle (nuclear family and family of origin), featured by stronger than other social groups' feelings of solidarity and reciprocity (for the study results see Osipowicz 2002, Górny et al. 2001, Frejka et al. 1998, Jaźwińska et al. 1996).

Migration network analysis is a significant step towards the transnational framework. In 2005 Kaczmarczyk, drawing on the results of research carried out by CMR, distinguished five features of contemporary Polish migration movements which according to him substantiate the thesis on the existence of transnational spaces between the Poland and Western European countries of Poles' destination: the dense webs of cross-border interpersonal ties, the pendular nature of migration, rotation

systems of work, a developed transportation system which “shortens” geographical distance enabling the migrants to perceive their international movements in terms of work commuting rather than emigration and finally, institutional structures in the host country which cater to migrants’ needs and link them, along personal ties, with their country of origin (Kaczmarczyk 2005).

Dense intimate networks spanning national borders and facilitating migration have also been documented by Grzymala-Kazłowska (2005) and Kuźma (2001, 2005) regarding the Polish community in Brussels, as well as in research by the Silesian Institute in Opole (Heffner 2003, Solga 2002) with regard to Polish outflow to Germany (see also Schmidt 2000). After Poland joined the European Union transnational intimate networks of Polish migrants have been noted in the research based in Great Britain by Garapich (2009), Burrell (2009), Ryan et al. (2008), White and Ryan (2008), among others. Morokvasic (2004) and Urbańska (2009) address Polish women’s migration and their transnational caregiving strategies. The topic of Polish transnationalism is nowadays increasingly common due to the post-accession migration exodus, which also prompts researchers to focus on the present transnational ties of Polish people rather than study their past and present transnational experience together.¹⁹

My work shares some of the above tropes, however to a much greater extent elaborates on family life in particular and expands the historical dimension of transnational living by including the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. I also stress the anthropological transnational perspective, in contrast to merely noting transnational connections as a way of elucidating other concepts. I try to keep the actors “here” and “there” and multiple national perspectives within one framework, which works by Burrell, Ryan or others still do not sufficiently do, by sliding at times into international migration discourse. As I stressed in the previous section I treat the transnational family very inclusively, and do not limit it to nuclear or blood-based families. I argue that to understand transnational families we should not limit ourselves to conventionally conceived forms of relatedness or treat the transnational family on the margins of other conceptual objects of study such as ethnic identity, social networks, migration motives or gender.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I introduced the transnationalism and transnational families as the main analytical tools of my study. I indicated new anthropological approaches to family and kinship and selected academic discussions of Polish families, which I found useful in

¹⁹ One of the exceptions is the article on temporal contexts of Polish transnationalism written by the sociologically-oriented British historian Kathy Burrell (2008b).

building my approach to transnational families. Finally, I indicated which theoretical approaches in Polish-related literature my study distances itself from and which it aims to develop further. I stressed that despite the growing presence of the transnational perspective on Polish social life, there is still a great influence of the nationalistic approach and a tendency to think in terms of emigration-immigration-assimilation rather than transnational framework.

Chapter 2 Ethnography in a transnational space

This study is based on the ethnographic fieldwork which I carried out in southern Finland and in Poland between the end of 2006 and first half of 2009 among Polish people and their children in Finland as well as their *close ones* in Poland. Overall, the thesis follows the lives of 84 people, making up forty transnational families. The ethnographic material includes ethnographic interviews transcribed verbatim and fieldnotes from participant observation. Interviews and participant observation document my interlocutors' present experience. The past is captured through talk supported by various documents and the research literature. In my investigation, I have combined the features of classical ethnography based on interpersonal and informal engagement with the people, and of multi-site ethnography characteristic of transnational anthropology, which involved travelling transnationally and domestically to meet with my interlocutors. The study was conducted in various cities and rural towns in Finland and Poland, following transnational family networks.

My interlocutors

My fieldwork point-of-departure were Polish people who came to Finland as adults. I looked for people who came to Finland in different historical periods, from the Cold War to the post-accession period. The earliest year of coming to Finland of my interlocutors is 1963, the latest 2007. I found my interlocutors at meetings after Polish Catholic masses, through the Internet and by snowball sampling. I gained access to a group of men working as sub-contractors for a Finnish company through one of my second-generation interlocutors. Furthermore, I located three of my interlocutors through my family connections from Poland.

My interlocutors constitute a diversified group in terms of age, gender, sociocultural and economic background, family situation, reasons for coming to and the expected length of stay in Finland. They are men and women of various economic status in Poland and in Finland (from lower to high economic strata), with various educational background (from primary school to PhD), originating from middle-sized towns and cities in Poland (northern, southern and central Poland, including Gdańsk, Gdynia, Świnoujście, Warsaw, Płock, Łódź, Krakow and Wrocław), coming to Finland for work, family or study reasons. The socio-demographic heterogeneity of my interlocutors reflects the various historical moments in which they came to Finland, the

particular features of Poland-Finland space and the changes in their family life course. It indicates how changeable transnational family borders and mobility trajectories are.

The majority of my interlocutors during my fieldwork were permanent residents to Finland, that is they planned to live in Finland for the foreseeable future.²⁰ Although they had often the experience of living in Finland temporarily in the past, in the present they did not plan to move away from Finland, unless for retirement. Those of my interlocutors, who during my fieldwork stayed in Finland temporarily, worked in Finland on contracts with Finnish, Polish or other foreign companies. The length of their contract was from six months to two years.

From the group of permanent residents, four people lived in Finland in a single household due to divorce or the death of a partner in Finland. Seventeen people lived in Finland with a Finnish partner (whom I also met but often did not interact with extensively), one person with an Estonian partner. Fourteen Polish couples in my study lived in Finland together. The above family situation was often the result of multiple shifts. Four Polish couples in Finland initially lived across borders. Several of my interlocutors have re-married in Finland multiple times, to a Finnish or/and Polish person. For instance, one of my male interlocutors was single upon coming to Finland, got married to a Finnish woman, divorced, married a Polish woman with whom he has children, and divorced again. Soon after we met, he got romantically involved with a Polish woman who lives in Poland. Two Polish couples of my study got married after each partner divorced a Finnish person. Some of the relationship shifts also took place throughout my fieldwork.

All of my interlocutors who lived temporarily in Finland were men. Only one lived in Finland with his wife whom I also closely befriended. The rest of the temporary workers were either single or left spouses and/or children in Poland. In Finland, they lived in common apartments rented by their employer.

Following my research interest in the intergenerational continuity of transnational ties, my interlocutors are also people who were born and/or grew up in Finland and have at least one Polish parent. I met one woman in Poland when she lived there as a degree student. I also got acquainted with all the children who currently lived with my adult interlocutors in one household in Finland.

Furthermore, I met seventeen of my interlocutors' *close ones* living in Poland (including parents, siblings, nieces and nephews, one spouse and one close friend) and conducted ten interviews. I interviewed one father and one mother (whom I also met personally in Finland) over the phone due to the state of their health. My interlocutors in Finland chose with whom in Poland I could talk.

²⁰ I consider as the permanent residency in Finland a situation in which person works and lives most of their everyday life in Finland. However, permanency does not exclude future permanent relocations; therefore, throughout what follows I approach this term in "mental quotation marks".

Apart from all the above interlocutors, I also met many other Polish people whose stories constitute a complementary ethnographic material for this study.

Meeting and socializing

As mentioned, my fieldwork combined participant observation and interviews, with the former supporting material from the latter. I “entered” the field by introducing myself as a researcher doing a PhD on Polish people living in Finland and their contacts with families in Poland. I was always generous in sharing information about my life with my interlocutors. When they expressed interest, or when the topic arose, I told them about my family situation, views on Finland, income and work. I tried to keep my political views at bay.

In Finland, I would meet and socialize with my interlocutors in their homes, at Church meetings, in public spaces (cafes, restaurants) and at other informal and formal get-togethers. We only occasionally met at my home, since many of my interlocutors lived 50 to 200 kilometres away from my place of residence in Finland. In-between our meetings we would talk on the phone, on Skype and via e-mail. I also followed virtual social networking sites such as Facebook and Nasza-Klasa (the Polish counterpart of Facebook), where many of my interlocutors spent their free time. In Poland, in all but one case, I met with my interlocutors in their homes.

Although I conducted my fieldwork predominantly in Polish and among Polish people, the Finnish cultural context affected our interactions to various degrees. With my interlocutors in Finland, following the Finnish custom, from the onset we agreed to be on first-name terms. Regarding interlocutors significantly older than me, it was a deviation from more formalized forms of address common in Poland evoked by the titles “Mrs” (*Pani*) or “Mr” (*Pan*). By calling each other by our first names, we implicitly agreed to flatten the age-based power hierarchy of our relationship. I also insisted on the young children of my adult interlocutors calling me by my first name. Ironically, though, I myself had difficulty calling my older interlocutors by their first name and spontaneously followed the Polish habit. My interlocutors were equally inconsistent in their behaviour towards me. We frequently ended up with a semi-formal form of address, adding our first names to the formal “Mr.” or “Mrs.” In the Polish cultural context, this form conveys a degree of intimacy, but maintains the age boundary, that is the boundary of respect. Thus, we failed to uphold the Finnish pattern, but we still managed to maintain close rapport.

Our meetings were usually mediated by food and alcohol, constituting a Polish-Finnish mix. Often we ate and/or drank things my interlocutors had recently brought (or had been sent) from Poland or prepared dishes they knew from Poland, alongside the foodstuff they bought in Finland or dishes they had learnt to make in Finland. I, on my part, usually brought alcohol, Finnish vodka or wine, Finnish fruits (when in season) or Finnish chocolates. The food usually evoked a myriad of transnational

comparative comments, including prices and tastes, often referring to visits to Poland and people associated with given food in Poland or Finland (who passed on a given skill or who make it the best). Thus, I continuously felt the strong sociocultural enmeshment of our meetings in the ties to both Poland and Finland, which we deliberately produced and emphasized through our talk and consumption.

The drinking of alcohol – of which my interlocutors were always the initiators – was a distinct mediator helping to create rapport. Given the heterogeneity of my interlocutors' background, more than ever I have become conscious that alcohol is an important part of Polish socializing, regardless of gender, age or social strata. "I do not trust people who do not drink", one of my 80-year old interlocutors in Poland told me, after I accepted his offer to have a drink. Alcohol managed to dismantle various boundaries between us, even if we called each other Mrs and Mr. I would tentatively suggest that in Poland joint alcohol drinking is regarded as a gateway to more serious discussions. It is appropriate for going beyond trivial topics, simultaneously creating a situation of intimacy. In these terms, its presence can be considered as fitting in the ethnographic fieldwork.

Ethnographic interviews

Interviews were important part of my fieldwork. Ulf Hannerz (2006), reflecting upon his own changing engagement with anthropology, pointed out increased polymorphisms of approaches and experiences of doing anthropological fieldwork and, following on from that, moral and political preoccupation among the anthropological community with the meanings of fieldwork – what Marcus (1995) called "methodological anxieties". An intensive participant observation in a single – preferably remote – site which used to determine the anthropological craft, is at present one among other approaches anthropologists pursue to understand social life. The more anthropologists study upwards, sideways (among people like them) and backwards (looking to the past), and the more the communities they study are spatially dispersed, the less possibility and methodological rationale for staying put and engaging in the long-term observation there are. The reality of modern life is that there is "less to participate in and observe fruitfully even if we had total access" and that "access to people, to informants, is in fact often limited, regulated and timed" (ibid, 34). The importance of interviews in my study is the function of people I studied and the research questions. My field was multi-sited domestically, transnationally and temporally. I studied heavily dispersed people, who themselves live in dispersed family networks. Many people were busy travelling transnationally and did not have time for intensive continuous socializing. The past family experiences were accessible mainly through talk. Thus, my fieldwork encompassed intermittent but repeatable face-to-face (as well as telephone and online) interactions, in which a considerable amount of time was spent on informal conversations and more formalized interviews. The fact of my

“nativeness “ to the people I studied was a considerable asset in the context of intermittent involvements – often the intimacy and trust were almost immediate, and difficult experiences recounted without much hesitation.

Interviews lasted from one to four hours. Two interviews (with second-generation interlocutors) were made in English, the remaining ones, in Polish. I recorded the interviews or made verbatim notes. Most people did not mind being recorded. Two of my interlocutors living in Finland a long time made an anecdotal remark that they hoped I would not use the recorded material akin to the “Rywin affair”,²¹ which already at the outset suggested their familiarity with Polish affairs and keenness for transnational contextualization. Six full interviews as well as several follow-up interviews took place over the phone/Skype, which was determined by the convenience or lack of possibility to meet otherwise.

The interviews were extended and free-flowing. They resembled ordinary conversations rather than strict interviewing (Hannerz 2006). When I wanted to make an interview, I told my interlocutors I would like to “talk” with them (in Polish *chciałabym porozmawiać*). I avoided terms like “doing an interview” (*zrobić wywiad*) which would sound too formal and suggested our interviews as a strictly one-sided affair, with the interviewer who asks and the interviewee who answers. Accordingly, I tried not to ask too many questions and let people talk on their own. I told my interlocutors I was interested in contacts with Poland and family life, but when my interlocutors talked about Finland, I did not interrupt. When my interlocutors were talking about negative experiences, I offered my personal experiences or experiences of people I knew to encourage the sense of safety.

In the case of Polish couples living together in Finland, in all but two cases I interviewed couples jointly, but usually I also had the occasion to talk to the partner separately and informally. In the case of interlocutors married to Finns, Finnish partners were often present during the interview, making some remarks in Finnish or rudimentary Polish. My interlocutors' dependent children (if they lived in one household), were also present throughout at least some part of the interview, venturing their own comments in Polish.

I transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim. The quotes appearing throughout this study are my personal translation. I also include, in italicized form, the words as they were said in the original language by my interlocutors (with the exception of two interviews made only in English, which are quoted with a standard font). My interlocutors used words in Polish, Finnish, Russian or English. Sometimes they used a word because they forgot the appropriate Polish one, they did not know the translation

²¹ “The Rywin affair”, known also as Rywingate, was an infamous corruption scandal in Poland, the main events of which took place between 2002 – 2004. The affair was sparked by the publication of the secret recording of the offer of a bribe.

or a Polish equivalent of the word does not exist. Sometimes they preferred to use a given word in a particular language. All these I keep as a sign of people's multiple locations and identifications.

A travelling anthropologist

My ethnography not only regards people on the move, but was itself done on the move. Much of the fieldwork involved travelling to different places within Finland, Poland and in-between Poland and Finland. I travelled to meet with my interlocutors, to attend various Polish events and church masses. Travel figured significantly in my fieldwork experience. I used public transportation, which made the organization of meetings time-consuming and exhausting, but also informative in its own right.

I got to know the Finnish landscape and was often emotionally consumed by it. As many of my fieldnotes were written on the bus or on the train, they include my perception of travel as well. "Again nothing but trees, snow and more trees", I wrote upon one of my returns home in the wintertime of 2008, contemplating the view from my train window. In the wintertime, darkness engulfed the landscape, bringing the feeling of peacefulness and emptiness. In summer, I enthusiastically wrote, "It is 10 p.m. and still so much light!" Travelling through the sparsely-populated natural landscape only to find myself among more nature in my interlocutors' gardens, it was difficult not to think about their lives in the disassociation from the material environment they inhabited.

Travel in Poland brought different experiences. It could have been the same amount of kilometres and yet the travel seemed somewhat slower, the transportation less luxurious (although also cheaper). The landscape was urbanized, and as one of my interlocutors would say, "more diversified" than in Finland. As if to respond to the Finnish brother-in-law of one of my interlocutors who during his first visit to Poland exclaimed, "Where are the lakes?", they were to be found in very few places. Travelling to meet my interlocutors in Poland I had the feeling of travelling along the family networks in a common transnational space. Yet the landscapes I travelled through were different in terms of economy, geography and my emotional experience of them.

I did not only write my fieldnotes "on the move", but also parts of this thesis' drafts. Writing the actual draft in a situation of mobility created a peculiar feeling of being in and out of fieldwork. Here I was, on the bus, at the airport or in the plane to Poland, writing about the trials and tribulation of transnational life, when Polish people around me talked about their family experiences and Finland. Sometimes I would meet my interlocutors at the airport in Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, Gdańsk or Warsaw, in the waiting room or roaming across airport halls, also like me going or coming from Poland. Sometimes, I would get a ride home if we lived in the same town or we would wait for the same train already in Poland. Such encounters on the move I treat as a complementary ethnographic material. They illuminate in practice what I got to know

through talk. It is an analytical advantage of doing ethnography “at home”, in this particular case a transnational space across Poland and Finland.

The accidental meetings “on the move” between people who live far from each other both in Finland and in Poland also shows the intimacy of the Polish community in Finland. It is not only me who knows many people due my fieldwork, but also many people whom I would not have suspected of knowing each other, have met at some point of their life in Finland. There are approximately 6000 Polish people staying temporarily or permanently in Finland. It is a relatively small number of people in a low-populated country, facilitating the intersection of Polish social networks. As in the above fieldnotes, meetings encompassed different historical waves and different generations of transnational actors; people from different walks of life with Poland and Finland as a common reference point.

The ethnography of the insider (and its limits)

I established my fieldwork contacts drawing on the common ethnic background between my interlocutors and me. I experienced a great deal of ethnic²² solidarity manifested in the phrase “We have to help each other”, expressed by one of my interlocutors, “we” standing for Polish people residing in nationally foreign environment. There was only one person who, when I asked him for a meeting, repeatedly refused due to multiple business trips abroad. Relative dispersal and social isolation experienced by at least some of my interlocutors in Finland was additionally helpful. Our meetings offered them not only the opportunity for interaction with a fellow national, but also for close social contact in general.

As a Polish person living in Finland and studying my fellow compatriots, I consider myself “a virtual anthropologist”, one lacking the real Other, with a blurred identity and an unclear (or rather more explicitly unclear than in classic anthropological cases) subjective/objective stance (Weston 1997). A virtual anthropologist, who in the nationally-bounded ethnography transgresses the popular categories of Insider/Outsider and Objective/Subjective, in the transnationally-located study additionally disrupts the well-known dichotomous categories of ethnography at “home” and “away”. When I started my fieldwork, my home was in Poland. As the fieldwork progressed, Finland became my home as well, gradually giving this ethnography the features of ethnography at “home away from home” – a category relevant when I was meeting my interlocutors in Finland, Poland or travelling in-between.

However, I do not see my homes in Poland and Finland as synonymous. I have lived in Poland longer than in Finland and my sociocultural and emotional ties to

²² I use the terms “ethnic” and “national” interchangeably, given the relative ethnic homogeneity of Polish society after the end of World War, II.

Poland are stronger. The time-span and historical moment of my residence in Poland and Finland are also factors which limit my status of “insider” among my interlocutors. We share both or at least one “home”, but our life histories and experiences are different.

Because I came to Finland around 2005, for people living in Finland long-time I was to some extent a stranger, a person who was new to Finland and who did not share with them the experience of life abroad. They were already insiders to Finland. I was not. The status of insider to Finland particularly characterizes my interlocutors who were born or grew up in Finland. We were often of similar age, but we had different paths to adulthood and different experiences of Poland and Finland. On the other hand, with people who had recently come to Finland we had been growing into Finland simultaneously, even if from different vantage points. Furthermore, with my older interlocutors (forty years and above) we come from a different Poland, historically and socially speaking. L. P. Hartley (1953) famously said that the “the past is a foreign country”. Accordingly, I have not lived in the country in which my older interlocutors reached their adolescence. I was nine when Lech Wałęsa became Polish president (1990), and thus spent most of my formative years in capitalist and democratic Poland. I remember the communist times vaguely, mainly through material objects (both from the East and the West), family stories, and national narratives. My interlocutors themselves presumed my foreignness to this period. I heard: “You do not know these times”, “I am telling you, this is how it was: ask your parents”. Our age differences were thus deepened by the different historical location vis-à-vis the communist past.

Aside from temporal and spatial location, my sociocultural background also affected my insider status. I come from Łódź, one of the biggest cities in Poland, from a family with urban origins, with university degree back to the third generation. Both my parents are engineers, during communism representing the so-called “working intelligentsia” (*pracująca inteligencja*). Until I began my fieldwork, I was not very familiar with the proletarian environment from which some my interlocutors come from. Throughout our meetings, I had to keep in mind the language I used, the topics of conversation and what I drunk. I also tended to play down my education. Finally, my gender positioned me closer to women than to men, although the significant number of male interlocutors involved in this study helps balance the gender bias.

The differences notwithstanding, I quickly became comfortable with all my interlocutors, as I think they quickly got comfortable with me. The Finnish context additionally accentuated our common ties to Poland, on which I could draw by building our relationship and overcoming various differences. In Poland, I would have been a regular researcher whose “Polishness” would have been take-for-granted. In Finland,

my Polishness was an additional asset.²³ Ultimately, this ethnography was conducted under the mutual presumption of cultural commonality between my interlocutors and me, as well as our similar position in the Finnish and global ethnic hierarchy. At some point, the presumed similarities were disadvantageous, but they also forced me to be more reflexive regarding the taken-for-granted issues. I was also a person to whom various “politically incorrect” statements about Finland could be directed more easily and bitterness shared more readily.

My family background also gave me the opportunity to share different political-ideological traditions with my interlocutors and thus sensitized me towards their conflicting ideological viewpoints (see Chapter Eight in particular). On a practical level, it aided my fieldwork by my ability to participate in Church services.

My grandparents represented two extreme sides of Polish society. My maternal grandfather was a communist party activist and with my maternal grandmother firmly supported the communist system. My paternal grandparents, on the other hand, were devoted Catholic, active in their local parish. My parents though both deviated from their parents’ attitudes. Although my mother was not baptized (thus constituting a definite minority of Polish population, approximately five per cent) and has never gone to Church, she did not mind me being baptized or attending Sunday school. She has supported the political transition in Poland and has voted for the liberal centre ever since the collapse of the regime, whereas my maternal kin always supported the post-communists and referred to the past with great nostalgia. My father has also supported the transition and the liberal centre. Unlike his family of origin, he has never been an avid churchgoer and has never pressured me to go to Church. The ideological atmosphere of my growing up has thus been diversified and to date my extended family life is marked by heated ideological debates.

Data analysis and theory in the making

Cerwonka and Malkki (2007) indicate that ethnographic fieldwork is a heuristic research method which entails a constant dialogue between ethnographic practice and theory. It is the simultaneous process of theory building and data collecting through informed and calculated “improvisation”. Throughout the fieldwork, I was continuously shifting between the material I had gathered, my research questions and theoretical tools, adjusting all the elements in the process. I re-read interview transcripts and fieldnotes from the perspective of particular research questions and theory, modifying them if I discovered the discrepancy between what I have presumed and the lived experience. In response to my fieldwork, I refined my concepts of the transnational family and

²³ I assume that it would have had less value in the countries with high number of Polish people, for instance in the UK.

transnationalism and focused on the particular aspects of family life which became the most crucial.

My analysis was also a constant dialogue between the Polish language of the data and English language of their analysis often embedded within the fieldnotes themselves. I was continuously decoding what I heard and saw into English concepts, attempting to produce the ethnographic “thick description” which would retain the Polish particularity, but which would be available for international readership and comparison through the English language.

Ethical issues

As I already mentioned, Finland is an intimate space. Many people I talked to know each other and mutually know they had participated in the research. The same, obviously, applies to those of my interlocutors who belong to the same family. Their honesty would have been impossible, if not the full anonymity guaranteed on my part, both against the wider public audience and people they intimately know, beginning from children, through spouses, parents, other kin and friends. Therefore, all the names of persons and places used in this thesis are different from the original and some of the personal details changed if not crucial for the argument. The names I use oscillate with the original ones in terms of age-specific popularity and national provenance, and, with regard to the names of places, in terms of country, size and rural/urban location. To ensure the coherence of the thesis and multidimensional look at different people and families, I keep my interlocutors’ names fairly consistent throughout all the chapters. Only between some of my interlocutors, the nature of their mutual relatedness is revealed.

I made an attempt to share with my interlocutors the purpose and content of my study, both during the fieldwork and at the writing stage. Language was an important obstacle, as only a few persons could read academic English. I tried to explain the content in Polish, but I also realized that some of my interlocutors had difficulty fully grasping the idea of doing PhD research. Although they were interested in the topic, they did not understand it in a way that would satisfy me. The conventional “Polonia” studies were for everybody easier to come to terms with than an unknown concept of “transnationalism”, which in Polish translation (as *transnarodowy*) sounds awkward and foreign. The ethical pitfalls, I try to compensate with the sensitivity to which information I can ethically reveal in this study, given the amount of trust I was granted and the mutual relationships between my interlocutors.

The final ethical-epistemological dilemma of my research is the consequence of the friendships I have made throughout my fieldwork. In the field, ethnographers are usually bound to empathize with their interlocutors and may be forced to take sides in situations of conflict (Fainzang 2007). In my fieldwork, the above affected my choice of interlocutors most clearly. Some of my interlocutors had an antagonistic relationship

with people whom I potentially considered as my interviewees. I resigned from interviewing them for the sake of loyalty to my interlocutors whom I got to know and befriended first and limited my interactions with their adversaries to intermittent, informal conversations. Similarly, I did not talk to my interlocutors' family members in Poland whom my interlocutors do not like or with whom they are in conflict. My interlocutors from Poland are thus truly *close ones* of my interlocutors from Finland, not just any kin. Noting the ambivalences of transnational family life, I however tried to understand the other side as well, despite my interlocutors' tacit insistence that theirs' is the only valid perspective. Thus, I had to take a step back and suspend our emotional alliance, at least throughout part of the writing stage. "Empathy, inherent in the object and the approach, is [...] something ethnologists have to be able to withdraw from at some point in time", as Fainzang (2007) argues. Nevertheless, the ethics of fieldwork did not allow me to get to know fully and personally the other sides' point of view.

Chapter 3 Poland and Finland: common spaces, intertwined histories

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the Polish-Finnish historical context and open up the space within which the transnational families of my study live. I indicate that by maintaining transnational ties my interlocutors move within a space, which already has a Polish-Finnish history of its own. The mutual entanglement of people residing in Poland and Finland stretches far back beyond contemporary times and has contributed to the making of both nation-states. The mutual entanglement has been marked by periods of cooperation and conflict linked to Poland's and Finland's relative geographical proximity, divergent political location vis-à-vis major European states and the power struggles in the region.

Throughout much of the chapter, I use the terms Poland and Finland from a hindsight perspective. I am aware that both countries only became independent nation-states in the last century. In addition, the history of Finland as an autonomous political unit is much shorter than the history of Poland, given that Finland was part of the Swedish Kingdom until the 19th century whereas Poland was a kingdom itself from the 11th to the 18th century. However, crucial from the perspective of this chapter is that the past relationship between particular territories and people inhabiting them, the post-factum called Poland and Finland, has been part of the history of the emergence of Poland and Finland as they are today. The chapter discusses the monarchical beginnings, the Tsarist period, 20th-century struggles for independence and concludes with the unification under the European Union in the 21st century. In my “factographic” account I draw mainly on the works of Lavery (2006), Later-Chodyłowa (2004), Singleton (1998), Chodubski (1997) and Jutikkala (1962).

Ties of blood

The earliest mutual relationship between Poland and Finland (as part of the Swedish Kingdom) was mediated mostly by monarchical, family ties. Such a basis was linked to the historical importance of geographical mobility along kinship networks in developing alliances and reproducing power in monarchical Europe.²⁴

²⁴ For a discussion of monarchical families as transnational families see Johnson et al. (2011).

The first significant link between Poland and Finland was established in the 14th century by Erik of Pomerania (1381 or 1382-1459). Erik was born as Bogusław (a Slavic name) in Darłowo, nowadays a very popular Polish summer resort located in the Pomerania region from which some of my interlocutors originate.

Erik's father was Vratislaw VII, Duke of Pomerania, from an influential Slavic/Polish lineage. Erik was adopted by the Queen Margaret of Denmark, Norway and Sweden who gave him his Nordic name and appointed him her heir. After Queen Margaret's death, Erik became the first king of the Calmar Union. He ruled over Sweden, Denmark and Norway for the next forty years. He had ambitious plans to unite the Calmar Union with the Kingdom of Poland through the marriage of his cousin, Bogusław IX, with the daughter of the Polish King, but his plans failed. When Erik was dethroned, he came back to Pomerania. He seized power after Bogusław IX – his deceased cousin – and ruled Pomerania for the last ten years of his life. He died and was buried in Darłowo, where his tomb is still located. Considering his tumultuous spatial and cultural biography, retrospectively we can call Erik of Pomerania, a.k.a. Bogusław, the first prominent transnational family actor within the Polish-Scandinavian space.

The second chapter in Polish-Finnish history came with Charles VIII. Throughout the 15th century, Charles VIII reigned over Sweden for three periods (1448–57, 1464–65, 1467–70) and was a feudal lord of the counties Vyborg and Raseborg in Finland. After his first ousting from the Swedish throne, Charles VIII took exile in Danzig (nowadays Gdańsk), a port in the East Pomerania region. With the help of Polish mercenaries, he managed to regain the Swedish throne, only to lose it a year later. He left for Finland and ruled for several years as the feudal lord in the Raseborg castle (Singleton 2005). His closest circle constituted of many Poles, who according to Chodubski (1997) marked the beginning of the process of establishing a Polish community in Finland.

The third stage in Polish-Finnish relationships came with the marriage of the Duke of Finland John III Vasa to Catharine Jagiellonica, the daughter of the Polish King Sigismund I. The kinship alliance between the young dynasty of Vasa and the Jagiellonians – back then a powerful dynasty ruling over vast stretches of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – was made in order to strengthen the Vasas' influence in the Baltic Sea and to weaken Russian power in the region. It coincided with the growing independence of Finland, which during John III's rule became a Grand Duchy.

The royal couple settled in Turku.²⁵ They were soon imprisoned by John III's brother, the King of Sweden Erik XIV, who suspected John of treason. After five years

²⁵ Turku is located on the Western coast of Finland. It has remained one of the largest cities in Finland.

of imprisonment, Erik released John and Catharine. John III in turn imprisoned Erik, becoming the new King of Sweden and Catherine, the new Queen of Sweden.

During her period as queen, Catharine maintained very close contacts with Poland. Most of her court in Turku came from Poland. As an ardent Catholic, she surrounded herself with Polish Catholic clergy and attempted to increase the influence of the Catholic Church in the protestant Swedish Kingdom. Under her auspices, the castle in Turku and the city itself were rebuilt in renaissance style, which was new to Finland. She brought many decorative renaissance objects and architectonic patterns from Poland. Her wish was for Turku to resemble the capital of the Polish Kingdom, Krakow (Chodubski 1997). Ironically, the renaissance style in Poland was introduced to a great extent by her mother Bona Sforza, who originated from Italy. Catharine also introduced the use of the fork to Finland, which nowadays constitutes a powerful anecdote of the Polish-Finnish hierarchy among my interlocutors. Catharine's son, the future King Sigismund III Vasa, although born in the Lutheran Kingdom, was brought up in a Polish spirit as a Catholic. He was educated by Polish priests and eventually sent to the Jesuit order in Poland (ibid.). Later on, he became King of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and for a short time, the King of Sweden. In his battle over the Swedish throne with his uncle, Charles IX, Sigismund was supported by the Finnish nobles for whom pro-Finnish policy was closely linked to the union with Poland (Jutikkala 1962, 79-82). When Sigismund lost the throne and fled to Poland, some Finnish nobles found their refuge in Poland as well.

After Sigismund's dethroning, the Finnish nobles in Finland radically shifted their alliance. They started to support Charles IX and the subsequent Swedish Kings of the Vasa dynasty. As such they played an important role in Sweden's battles against Poland that lasted throughout the 17th and first decades of the 18th century. The wars had a religious and political basis: the Polish lineage of Vasa, starting from Sigismund, hoped to regain the Swedish crown and in principle continued to use the title of the King of Sweden. The Vasa of Sweden wished to broaden their influence over the Baltic Sea and to prevent Russia from doing so. Additionally, the Catholic-Lutheran divide between Poland and Finland was underlined and exacerbated to justify the struggle.

First, the Swedish-Finnish army entered Livonia (nowadays Lithuania), located within the Commonwealth. Around 1609 the fights shifted to the Russian territory. Sweden and Poland supported different candidates for the Russian throne and entered Russia with their respective armies to secure the choice of their own candidate. When the above plan failed, they attempted to size parts of Russia for themselves (Jutikkala 1962, 85-91). The geopolitical divide along kinship lines was accentuated by Catharine Jagiellonica's grandson's participation in the fight as the leader of the Swedish army.

In two subsequent Swedish attacks on Polish territory, in 1626-1629 and 1656-1660 (in Poland called the "Swedish Deluge"), Finnish soldiers significantly contributed to the success of the invasion. The Finnish cavalry, nicknamed "Hakkapelis", gained

particularly notorious fame. During the 1656-1660-attack notoriety was also gained by the Finnish field marshal Arvid Wittenberg, who became the commandant of occupied Warsaw. He was referred to as “the Finn bad and cruel” (Chodubski 1997, 311) and eventually died in a Polish prison.

In the Great Northern War (1700-21) which again involved warfare with the Swedish army throughout Poland, Finns constituted nearly half of the army. This time though the aggressor and defender were inclined towards cooperation.

Importantly for future events, battles between Poland and Sweden were fought with Russia in the background. When the Swedish army was marching through Poland to enlarge its influence in the Baltic Sea basin, Russia took advantage of the defenceless Finnish border of the Swedish Kingdom. In 1656-1660 and 1703-1721 invasions, Russia managed to seize part of Finnish territory and ravage the local population. Simultaneously, Russia fought with or against Poland, accordingly easing or obstructing Sweden’s success in Poland. Jutikkala (1962, 112) referred to the above situation as “the strange triangular drama in eastern Europe”.

Wars provided the most comprehensive experience of foreign lands ordinary men could get at that time. Some of the Finnish soldiers “had never even had a glimpse of any of the drab little towns of their own country before being transported far across strange seas” (Jutikkala 1962, 105). The vastly negative experiences between the attackers and defenders were accompanied by the movement of cultural objects and ideas; sometimes even romantic encounters and marriages (ibid. 106, Chodubski 1997).

Within the Tsarist Empire

The 19th century brought a significant twist to Polish-Finnish relations. As a result of Sweden’s declining power and Russian expansion, Finland and part of partitioned Poland became forcibly incorporated into the same political organism, the Tsarist Empire, for over a century. Within the Tsarist Empire Finland gained the status of an autonomous unit, the Grand Duchy, whereas the Tsarist part of Poland, called the Kingdom of Poland, lost its autonomous status in 1831. Despite having seemingly a common Tsarist oppressor, the relations between Poland and Finland did not develop into supportive cooperation. As Anthony Upton writes:

Although one might think that Finland and Poland had much in common in relation to Russia during the nineteenth century, there is very little sense of affinity – indeed I think you could safely say that, culturally, Poland in Finnish eyes has a negative image. After all, the Poles are Papists and their behaviour in the nineteenth century in Finnish eyes gave good pragmatic grounds for the Finns to be very careful to distance themselves from Poland and not involve themselves in Polish embroilment with tsarist Russia. Now this they quite self-consciously did. (1995, 286)

Upton’s remark also reflects the situation between Poland and Finland 150 years later.

In the Russian Empire, the Finns manifested their loyalty towards the Tsar during two major Polish uprisings against Russia. In the November Uprising of 1830-1, Finnish soldiers actively participated in the pacification of the Polish insurgents. The Guards Finnish Rifle Battalion was awarded for its effort with the Order of St George by Tsar Nicholas I. The order bore the inscription, "For distinction during the pacification of Poland in 1831" (Screen 1995, 269).

During the January Uprising of 1863, Finnish committees collected funds for the insurgents. This was, however, done with the simultaneous public reconfirmation of loyalty to the Tsar (Chodubski 1997, Upton 1995, 286), while the Polish emissaries travelling to Finland to win Finnish support were successfully traced by the Tsar. Accordingly, the defeated Polish insurgents fled to France and Great Britain rather than Finland, contributing thus to the establishing of the first substantial Polish communities in the West. Simultaneously, other types of Polish people were coming to Finland. Most of them were men serving in the Tsarist army, administrative personal, clergy and in individual cases, civil labour migrants. The Tsarist Army served as a prime conduit of mobility. It was a governmental "transnational" institution composed of men of different ethnic and national regions, mixed and scattered across the Empire purposefully to prevent national concentration and rebellion. From the Polish perspective, the inflow to Finland was considered external migration, for despite moving within the common state framework it was an inflow to territories inhabited by non-Polish national populations.

Before World War I, approximately 4000 Polish people lived in Finland. Partially to cater to their religious needs the Catholic Church of Saint Henry was built in Helsinki in the 1860s. In 1917, Poles established their own association in Helsinki. The association still exists today, proclaiming itself as one of the oldest associations of foreign population in Europe and the oldest in Finland. During the Finnish Civil War between the Red and White Armies in 1917, Poles supported the Reds. Two hundred Poles were killed by the White Army in Viipuri (in Swedish, Vyborg) and three Polish officers were killed on the streets of Helsinki (Later-Chodylowa 2004, 12).

The mobility of administrative and military personnel within the Tsarist Empire also contributed to a reverse trend, namely many Finns lived for various length of time in Poland. Among them were two significant protagonists of Finnish national history: Eugen Schauman, the assassin of the infamous leader of the Russification of Finland, governor general Bobrikov; and the Finnish national icon, Marshal Carl Gustav Mannerheim.

Mannerheim was a soldier in the Tsarist Army until the end of World War I. Under the Army's command, Mannerheim was stationed in Poland twice, in 1889-1891 in Kalisz, and in 1911-1914 in Minsk Mazowiecki and Warsaw. Mannerheim was fond of Poland and had many friends among the Polish aristocracy. He had a particularly close relationship with the princess Zofia Lubomirska, with whom he continued to

correspond and meet in person after leaving Poland (Screen 2001, Jägerskiöld 1983). "Mannerhaim was my grandmother's great love. It was a mutual feeling", Lubomirska's grandson recalls (Kause 2009).

In the 19th century, the residence and mobility within a common polity allowed also to reinforce more formal Polish-Finnish cultural contacts. The ideas of national independence and freedom popularized by the Polish romantic poets influenced the Finnish independence movement thanks to Finnish translations of Polish romantic literature (Pullat 1998, 157). Non-accidentally one of the most distinguished Slavists of the period was a Finn, Julius Mikkola, who studied at the Universities in Kharkov (nowadays in Ukraine) and Warsaw. Mikkola was an avid propagator of Polish culture and a future leader of the Polish-Finnish association in Helsinki. He shared his interest in Poland with his wife, the well-known Finnish writer Maila Talvio. Both of them translated various pieces of Polish literature into Finnish and had ample contacts with the Polish intelligentsia residing in Poland and Finland (ibid.).

Independence

The drastic geopolitical shift in the aftermath of World War I ended the Tsarist chapter in Polish-Finnish relationships. In 1917, Finland and in 1918, Poland emerged as independent democratic states. Of 4000 Poles staying in Finland, around 2500-3000 were repatriated. One could regard the poem *For a free Poland* written by Finnish writer Veikko Koskenniemi, as a symbolic closure to the Tsarist chapter in the Polish-Finnish history. It starts with the words: "Free Poland! Today along with you the Finnish nation, free from its chains, makes the same vow. For pain, for tears, for suffering [...] Long live the freedom of our lands".

In the interwar period, although Poland and Finland ceased to belong to a common Russian polity, Russia continued to determine their foreign policy. Both countries perceived the Soviet system introduced to Russia after the World War I as alien and threatening. For the purpose of neutrality and non-aggression with the Soviets, Finland limited itself to verbal declarations, conferences and meetings in political cooperation with Poland and other Baltic states and no official pacts were established (Pullat 1998).

The cultural cooperation continued from the Tsarist period, but as Pullat (1998, 182) observes, it could have developed more intensively. In 1928, the Finnish-Polish association in Helsinki was established and a corresponding one was launched in Warsaw. There were student exchanges and scientific cooperation. Helsinki was the centre of Polish studies in Northern Europe. Official discourse stressed the relationship of friendship between the countries (ibid.).

According to Later-Chodyłowa (1992), 500 to 700 Polish people lived in Finland at the turn of 1920s. Many of them had already arrived before 1914, and due to the developing strong ties to Finland through marriage or work, did not participate in

the repatriation. They quickly advanced in the economic hierarchy (Chodubski 1997, 314). Because Finland did not have a high demand for unskilled foreign labour, Poles living in Finland in the interwar period usually originated from the intelligentsia. In 1930, 23% of Poles in Finland had University education (Later-Chodyłowa 1992). Higher education and good social status continued to be a marked feature of Polish people living in Finland.

The World War II brought an abrupt halt to the peaceful coexistence between the countries. By the 1920s, Finland had already started to politically and culturally move towards other Scandinavian countries and Germany to balance the threat from the East. Poland was in a strained relationship with both Germany and Russia. The political and cultural balancing between the West and the East was thus already more successful for Finland than for Poland at this stage.

During World War II, Finland under the command of the aforementioned Mannerheim managed to oppose the Soviet invasion, whereas Poland was caught by the double invasion, from the West by the Germans, and from the East by the Soviet Union.²⁶ The occupation of Polish territories lasted until the end of the war, whereas Finland remained unoccupied. After 1945, the Eastern territories of Poland stayed in Soviet hands and the Polish political border shifted significantly to the West. The Soviet Military forces only left Polish territory in 1989.

The Cold War

As a consequence of the post-1945 Cold War the division of power in Europe, Poland and Finland again fell under Russian/Soviet influence, although their geopolitical position differed significantly.

After World War II, Poland became a Soviet satellite and adapted the communist ideology as a guiding political economy principle. In contrast, Finland after World War II was close to becoming a Soviet satellite, but finally remained a democratic and capitalist state, by self-definition economically and culturally situated in the West rather than East. Yet until the end of the Cold War Finland had also exceptionally close – for a Western state – economic and political relationships with the USSR. The close ties were formally grounded in the “Agreement of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance”, which Finland and the USSR signed in 1948. The satellite states, including Poland, signed a similar agreement with the USSR, but the agreement signed by Finland differed in several important aspects (Singleton 1998, 138, Häikiö 1992, 32-3). It constituted an expression of “Finland’s desire to remain outside the conflicting interests of the Great Powers”, guaranteed the relationship of friendship

²⁶ In contemporary Polish historiography the Soviet Army’s entry into Poland in September 1939 is recognized as an invasion. I follow this narrative.

and neutrality between the countries, and non-interference into each other's affairs. However, it also obliged Finland to engage (after a mutual agreement) in military cooperation with the USSR if Finland was unable to defend its borders against the invasion of Germany or its allies, as well as preventing Finland from engaging in any coalition against the Soviet Union. Due to this agreement, Finland was heavily limited in the independent foreign policy making throughout the Cold War and until the Soviet Union collapsed, Finnish foreign policy had to be carefully weighted not to appear as anti-Soviet. To balance its economic and political relations with the Soviet Union, Finland gradually built links with Western Europe and followed the path of the other Scandinavian countries in developing a capitalist welfare state system. The economic, political and cultural balancing act between the West and the East helped Finland steadily increase its material prosperity. The development was driven by the metal, pulp and information technology (IT) industry. As a young nation-state with a dangerous neighbour, Finland also pursued the strategy of labour self-sufficiency, drawing on interventionist state policies and technological investments. The strategy proved successful at least until the beginning of the 1990s (Bartram 2007).

Finland's particular status had an important bearing on Finland-Poland relations and mobility between the countries in 1945-1991. Finland continued its interwar stance of friendly relations with Poland. Now, however, friendship with Poland as a communist state was encouraged by the Soviet Union. The friendship unfolded in the economic, political and cultural sphere. The countries signed multiple bilateral agreements. A tripartite treaty between Poland, Finland and the USSR on coal deliveries was also signed in 1951. From 1973, Finland, as the only Western capitalist country, had a co-operant status in the economic organization of the Eastern Block, Comecon (Singleton 1998, 150). Many of the bilateral Polish-Finnish trade agreements were signed on that basis. Finland exported wood and machines to Poland, and built several industrial compounds in Poland, while Poland exported coal to Finland. In 1974, in order to enhance the "closeness and tourist exchange" between the "Polish" and "Finnish nation", the Polish and Finnish governments signed an agreement on visa-free mobility of up to three months (the Polish government signed a similar agreement with only two other Western countries: Austria and Sweden). A year earlier, a tourist ferry connection between Helsinki and Gdańsk was launched. There were numerous student- and scientific exchanges between various Polish and Finnish universities. The Cold War period also marked the beginning of cultural, economic and political cooperation between Polish and Finnish "twin" cities. The partnership cities included the port cities of Turku and Gdańsk (1958), Kotka and Gdynia (1961) Puck and Naantali (1975), and Kołobrzeg and Pori (1987); the textile cities of Tampere and Łódź (1957); and Toruń and Hameenlinna (1959) as the cities of famous persons, Copernicus and Sibelius (Chodubski 1997, 318). In the 1970s, leading Polish and Finnish sociologists launched two large research projects comparing Polish and Finnish

social structures and ways of life, the result of which were two comprehensive monographs (Roos and Siciński 1987, Allardt and Wesolowski 1978). Allardt and Wesolowski wrote in the introduction to their 1978 book as follows: “For over a decade, Finnish and Polish sociologists have maintained lively contacts and pursued fruitful co-operation. So much so that it was mutually agreed that the time was ripe for more concrete and systematic projects in order for the co-operation to continue and to become stronger”. When in 1981 Martial Law erupted in Poland, Finnish researchers sent packages with goods as a means of help to their project colleagues in Poland.

Parallel to all the above, the Finnish government and Finnish elites shunned from supporting the anticommunist movement in Poland. Finland abstained from voting in the United Nations on the human rights situation in Poland (Rosas 1986) and the supporters of the Polish Solidarity movement in Finland were actively suppressed.²⁷ The Soviet KGB and the Finnish Ministry of the Interior participated in the suppression. As Stahlberg argued in 1987, “it would be difficult for Finland to display equal moral outrage at the violations of human rights in the East and in the West” (Stahlberg 1987, 23). Accordingly, when in the 1980s Poland faced an upsurge of illegal emigration to the West, Finland accepted few Polish asylum seekers. To my knowledge, the refugee passport was only granted in individual cases. Similarly, Soviet citizens seeking asylum in Finland were sent back home, even if for the Soviet citizens that meant imprisonment by the Soviet authorities (in between 1959-1982 Amnesty International documented at least twelve such cases, see Amnesty International report, 1988). As a result, mobility from Poland to Finland was usually legal, amounting to 20-40 persons coming to Finland for permanent residence annually (Later-Chodyłowa 2004, 27).

In the 1970s, the Polish community in Finland reached approximately 1000 persons permanently residing in Finland and 600 persons staying temporarily, working mainly in industry (*ibid.*). There were also a considerable number of Polish musicians on temporary contracts, who played in music bands in Finland. Considering that there were at least several dozen Polish bands playing in Finland in the 1970s, the number of Poles staying temporarily in Finland, including musicians, can be estimated at 700-800 persons.

The European integration

The collapse of the Iron Curtain has speeded up the process of political and economic integration between Poland and Finland. With the Soviet Union and the Comecon gone, both countries have started to ground their mutual relationships in other structures, looking to the West rather than to the East. The European Union, which

²⁷ For a more detailed account of “Solidarity” activists in Finland see Laakia (2005).

Finland joined in 1995 and Poland in 2004, has emerged as the most fundamental basis for close cooperation. Already from the early 1990s, Finland has increasingly invested in Poland financially, taking advantage of Poland's vast consumer capitalist market and the open-door policy for foreign capital. After Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, Finnish companies can freely penetrate the Polish market. Likewise, Polish companies and workers have gained free access to Finland, primarily supplying the work-force and materials for Finnish heavy industry.

The Baltic Sea basin has provided another significant arena for integration. In 1991, both countries joined the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the establishment of which was encouraged by the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Polish and Finnish cities, while previously connected by bilateral agreements, have now become part of the multilateral network of the Union of the Baltic Cities. As the Union's President Per Bødker Andersen (2006) states, the Union draws on the "the traditional links binding the Baltic cities in terms of trade, culture and tourism".

These mutually reinforcing spaces of collaboration have contributed to a heightened influx of Poles to Finland. Official 2008-statistics estimate the number of Poles in Finland at 2,493 (Alanen 2009), a figure which is highly undervalued as it does not include persons who are already Finnish citizens and male posted workers, that is workers posted to work in Finland by foreign companies. 2008-statistics estimate the latter's number at roughly 2,700 (*ibid.*).

Concluding remarks

The mutual relationship between Poland and Finland discussed in this chapter, dates back to the 15th century. It has been present at different stages of both countries' political evolution. Until the 18th century, the relationship was mostly mediated by transnational monarchical family ties. Such a basis was linked to the historical importance of geographical mobility along family networks in developing alliances and reproducing power in the monarchical Europe, whereby conflict along blood lines could evolve into full-fledged armed conflict between whole subjected populations. In the last two centuries, the Poland-Finland relationship was mediated through intimate links and various bureaucratic institutions operating within and across European states. The geographical proximity has overlapped with different degrees of political and economic proximity and distance. Looking backwards historically, we can see that mutual transnational contacts have contributed to the emergence of the contemporary Polish and Finnish nation-states.

The relationship between Poland and Finland sketched above may be treated as the transnationalism "from above" (Smith and Guarnizo 1998), from the perspective of states, governmental organizations and legislative bodies. The remaining chapters of this study attempt to complement the picture. They stress transnationalism "from below", looking at it through the prism of intimate personal experience. I start with the

events, which constitute the first step in my interlocutors' transnational lives across Poland and Finland, that is with accounts of how and in what political and socio-economic circumstances my interlocutors have embarked on their mobile paths to Finland.

Chapter 4 Coming to Finland

In this chapter, I discuss how my interlocutors came to Finland. I find it necessary for several reasons. Firstly, coming to Finland marks the beginning of my interlocutors' transnational life across Poland and Finland. Secondly, it constitutes an important part of my interlocutors' biographies, conveying clues about their loyalties, values and cultural location. In our conversations, my interlocutors did not fast-track through how they came to Finland, rather they constructed elaborated narratives on the subject. Finally, my interlocutors' coming to Finland often had a peculiar or at least a legally complicated character, which points to the specific characteristic of the space within which they have moved, changing times and the non-mainstream character of Finland as a destination. The chapter also gives me an opportunity to introduce the biographies and family situations of my interlocutors.

The chapter tries to move away from the push-pull model of migration with its implication of discontinuous national spaces. I stress the political, economic, socio-cultural and legal circumstances of coming to Finland and their embeddedness within the interconnected Polish-Finnish-European space. I tell the stories of discovering Finland as a destination of work and place of temporary and not-so-temporary living. In these stories, the historically changing nation-state structures become more concrete and grounded in particular lived experiences. As I will show, my interlocutors are aware of the political contingencies of their mobility and readily engage in a historical exercise of comparing the circumstances of the past with those offered by the present.

I use the phrase “coming to Finland” rather than “migration” because my interlocutors used it. They came to Finland not necessarily knowing for how long they would stay; many still do not know: persons working temporarily in Finland do not exclude a longer stay, whereas long-term residents to Finland do not exclude (or already have some plans of) moving back to Poland for retirement. Those of my interlocutors who knew from the onset that they would stay permanently in Finland would say that they had “moved” (*przeprowadziłam/łam się*) rather than “emigrated” (*wyemigrowałam/łam*).

I start my account with what prompted my interlocutors to come to Finland and how their mobility was situated in the context of their lives and wider Polish migration politics I discuss my interlocutors' navigation between temporary and permanent exit from Poland and stay in Finland and indicate the emotional, material

and practical role of family in the process. I show that different policies facilitated the development of different practices and institutions. I stress the importance of passport policies and the divergent legal construction of a person eligible for cross-border mobility by the Polish communist and democratic capitalist regime. I contrast the policy of closed doors and strict passport control pursued during the Cold War with the unrestrained possibilities of exit from Poland after 1989. Historical dynamics of Polish transnational mobility indicate that identification through passport policies can be enabling as well as subordinating (Caplan and Torpey 2001), giving different legislative weight to kinship membership.

Routes to Finland

The contemporary world is habitually described as a world “on the move”. Harvey (1989) talks about time-space compression, Katz (2004) about time-space expansion. Urry (2000) proposes a new “mobilities paradigm” for the social sciences. All the above suggest that physical mobility across national borders goes in parallel with the domestic and imagined forms of mobility which do not entail the crossing of physical borders. The omnipresence of mobility disturbs the idea that mobility is an extraordinary phenomenon and international migrations – an abrupt rupture from settled existence. “Movement is an integral aspect of the life trajectories of many individuals and groups of people that does not necessarily entail an abnormal interruption in normal stationary life”, Olwig (2003) argues (see also Malkki 1992). My interlocutors also point to various movements which preceded but which nevertheless contributed to their coming to Finland. I start from the Cold War period.

The Polish communist government had strict laws aimed at controlling people’s movement in space. Yet Polish society was still far from sedentary. It can be argued that as a consequence of various forced and unforced movements throughout and after the World War II by 1970 in statistical terms every person living in Poland had the experience of long-distance mobility or at least was born into a family with such experience (Okólski 1999). As I have already noted, the parents or grandparents of some of my interlocutors were born in places outside of contemporary Poland (Ukraine, Germany, Armenia, Czechoslovakia), travelled abroad for work or resettled within Poland across vast geographical distances (up to 1000 km).

Their parents’ mobility aside, many of my interlocutors changed their place of residence in Poland at least once. They moved for studies and work, from rural to urban areas and between cities. While still living in Poland, some persons led a nomadic lifestyle, moving from place to place, and each relocation deeply engraved on their memories. One of them was Bronislaw, a musician living in Tampere,²⁸ Finland, since

²⁸ Tampere is the third largest city in Finland, with over 200 000 residents.

the 1960s. Bronislaw took me down memory lane every time we met, usually in his favourite café by a lake. He enjoyed talking about his past and how he came to Finland. It was, as he implicitly acknowledged, a way of summing up his life as he had recently turned seventy. His story of mobility started in 1939, when as a child at the beginning of World War II he and his family was forcibly resettled by the occupying German army to the other side of Poland, an area which until the end of the war was included in the Third Reich as the “General Gubernia”. In the space of five years, they changed their place of residence several times. Bronislaw’s mother died and was buried in one of the villages where they lived. After the war, the children and their father returned to their hometown. As a teenager, Bronislaw travelled everyday by steam train to a high school in another town. He travelled “60 km; 1 hour and 40 minutes and 12 stops”. Eventually, Bronislaw went to study at the Music Academy, located 400 km from his hometown. After graduation, he worked in different places across Poland and maintained a long-distance relationship with his girlfriend, who lived in a different city. “Once I even visited her by plane. Back then that was really something!” Bronislaw recalled. In 1964, he seized the first chance of leaving Poland and went to Finland on a contract with PAGART – a Polish state agency sending Polish artist abroad (I refer to PAGART more in the following sections).

Although Finland was Bronislaw’s first actual experience of the West, it was clearly not his first experience of major mobility. Bronislaw himself suggested that explicitly by telling me in detail of all his journeys and places to which he moved. I would therefore argue that in the face of the increased control of Polish state borders, domestic movement constituted for my interlocutors an important possibility of learning how to navigate spatial change and of getting used to shifts in social and cultural landscape that come with mobility.

International travel constituted another significant step in building the mobile trajectory and the momentum for coming to Finland. The citizens of communist Poland could travel most easily within the Eastern Block. Accordingly, several of my interlocutors visited Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia or the USSR, among others, before coming to Finland. They went for tourism and/or for work. Such trips were quasi-international, for they did not demand an actual passport, only a slip in the ID (the so-called *wkładka paszportowa*). Nevertheless, they offered first-hand experience of foreign countries and provided a stimulus for further travel, preferably to more “civilized”, Western countries. Henryk, a well-travelled musician, recalled:

I constantly had contracts to the Soviet Union. We [Henryk’s band] went there non-stop. And if you aren’t willing to drink there, you’re finished. I just didn’t have any strength anymore. My colleague, a bass-player, died. I suspect maybe he became an alcoholic because of all the alcohol, God knows. And then [in 1979] I got a message from my brother that I could start working here, in Finland. I already had a passport with PAGART, so I immediately said yes.

Also for others of my interlocutors, coming to Finland was the end-result of eastbound mobilities. Several men were sent to Finland by their Polish employers owing to the skills they showed during their earlier work in East Germany. For two women, mobility across the Eastern Bloc constituted an actual and symbolic platform to meet their future Finnish spouses: Dagmara met her husband-to-be on an internship in Slovenia in 1986, while Basia – on the train from Leningrad to Stockholm in 1979. Because Basia's future husband had just returned from a work contract in Moscow, they started to chat in Russian. In their case, the stage for encounter was distinctively a common Polish-Finnish-Soviet space. The Soviet experience also disenchanted Basia's husband from the idea of moving to Poland after they got married. "He saw too many negative things in the Soviet Union", Basia remarked.

A noticeable step in the process of coming to Cold War Finland was also travel outside the Iron Curtain. In the popular Polish imagination, the West was believed to offer both authentic cosmopolitan experience and material affluence unattainable in the East. Its imagery often had little to do with a specific Western place or an actual experience of it. As Alexei Yurchak (2006, 159) argues in his study of late socialism in the Soviet Union, the West appeared simultaneously "knowable and unattainable, tangible and abstract, mundane and exotic" for the Soviet people. It was an "imaginary" West, produced locally and detached from actual Western encounters (*ibid.*). Many of my interlocutors, however, educated and from urban areas, managed to convert their imaginary and abstract West into a West which was specific and personally experienced. Benefiting from more lenient migration policies than in the Soviet Union, they went to the West for conferences, temporary work or leisure. Westbound trips stimulated the desire for more experience of a similar Western-capitalist-kind or granted professional or intimate contacts which impelled my interlocutors to come to Finland. Jan's case is worth mentioning. His relatively unrestrained mobility throughout Western Europe facilitated by a well-networked mother was atypical for the period. However, it only reconfirms the privileged position of those Poles who could roam beyond the Iron Curtain more freely:

I went to Finland during the summer holidays. It was in the 1970s and Finland was a comparatively unknown destination. The previous year I was in Germany, beforehand I had been in Sweden and Great Britain [...]. In Sweden I worked on a farm, and in London, in a restaurant. I mainly travelled to look for adventure and to see the world. I was young and foolish. I was about to go to Finland with my friend. I had been with him in Germany the previous year. In Germany we partied so hard we couldn't find any work. We spent all our money. By the end of our stay, drinking a beer in a pub, we started to wonder where to go next: in Germany there was no work. I had already been to Sweden and it was boring, in London the work was hard. So one friend, who was drinking with us, suggested: "Why don't you go to Finland?" He said he had been to Finland and one could find a job there. [We decided] "Oh well, let's go then" [...] My friend was about to go with me, unfortunately he didn't get a passport. These were the times when

it was hard to get a passport, however my mum was well connected, so I got one.
And in the end I went alone.

Jan, who immediately found work in the IT industry in Turku, where he still lives, similarly to my other interlocutors, did not foreground, but neither denied the economic gains of his various westbound travels. Many of my interlocutors who came to Finland during the Cold War lived a relatively good (as for communist conditions were concerned) life in Poland. Search for differences and adventure went hand in hand with the prospect of material profit.

Distinctive international mobility, which directed three of my interlocutors towards Finland during the Cold War, took place at the crossroads of Sweden, Poland and Finland. It suggests the continuity of the common Baltic Sea space²⁹ from the pre-War period, despite the Iron Curtain division. Two persons met their Finnish wives in Sweden. In a slightly different manner, the Polish-Swedish-Finnish triad emerged in Leszek's story. Leszek, a researcher living in Turku, in discovering Finland as a destination followed the intricate transnational social network of professional and personal contacts, which directed him towards a place unknown to him before, but located within the general scope of his interest in opportunities to develop his professional career abroad. As Leszek recalls, the non-mainstream character of Finland on a map of Polish mobility added Finland an attractive "exotic" appeal:

One of my friends, who worked with me at the university [in Gdańsk], went to Sweden to work for a private company. And he and his boss read someday somewhere that some interesting research had been done here, in Turku. They visited Turku to see what they had done. It was 1984. After that my friend wrote me a letter. [...] He wrote: "Listen, I was at a university in Finland, and one of the Professors there told me that they would be expanding the university and they needed people, and one could go to work for them". I had already travelled a lot abroad and thought to myself: "Finland – a totally exotic place!" I decided to write to that professor. The professor replied, saying: "Yes, you can come, we invite you". And around 1 September 1985 I ended up here. This is how my story with Finland started.

Because of the restrictive and ambiguous policies of exit from Poland, some of my interlocutors ended up in Finland after failed attempts to go to other countries. In this sense, their coming to Finland was a consequence of international movement which did not happen. In imaging and planning their possible foreign destinations for work, studies or internship they considered Germany, France, Norway or even wealthier countries of the Eastern Bloc such as Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. Bureaucratic difficulties, lack of sufficiently strong social networks or else unexpected events

²⁹ In the post-Soviet context, only Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are commonly known as the Baltic states. From the historical-geographical perspective of the Baltic Sea basin though, all the states surrounding the Baltic Sea are the Baltic states.

diverted them from their original plan and eventually directed them towards Finland. Coming to Finland was here an accidental opportunity to leave Poland rather than a deliberate choice. It was a destination “by accident” or “by mistake”, not necessarily unattractive but not first on the list. To bring the story of aforementioned Bronisław:

In 1963 it was rumoured that there was the possibility of going abroad through PAGART [...]. So we set up a band. There were five of us. We were all about to go to Hamburg in 1964. At the time, travelling to Hamburg, Germany, ah, it was a paradise, out of this world. In 1963 I applied for a passport. It was a real nightmare to get a passport then. [...] However finally, in spring 1964, I got the telegram that my passport was ready and everything was OK. In June I visited my father in my hometown – it was a piece of strange luck that I went there just at that time. My father said, “It’s good that you’ve come, a telegram from Warsaw has just arrived for you”. I opened it. It said I should immediately call the PAGART office. I went to the post office [to make a phone call]. [...] The PAGART secretary picked up the phone: “Good Morning Mr. Kulesza [M.’s family name], it’s great that you called. We have a proposition for you. Two days ago we got a telegram from our agent in Finland and he said that starting from 1 July, he would need a duo, a guitarist and a pianist to play in night clubs. Do you want to go? [...] I asked, “Why me? Wasn’t I supposed to go with my band at another time, elsewhere?” [...] She said, “Well we already have a guitarist for Finland, we just need a pianist. You are the pianist”. I remarked, “But there are so many other pianists available!” And she said, “But Mr. Kulesza, you’re the only pianist with a passport ready! What do you think? That somebody could get a passport in two days? So, are you going?” “Yes, I’m going”. I went to Poznań to meet the guitarist. After two weeks we were already in Helsinki. A complete blind chance!

Nowadays Bronisław interprets this “blind chance” as faith. “It was meant to be”, he told me. Nevertheless, I would stress that the national structures and policies were there to enable particular mobilities of particular agents. Important factors included the high demand for musicians in the education and entertainment sector in Cold War Finland, the supply of musicians offered by the PAGART agency, positive Poland-Finland relationships and finally, the selective Polish policies of exit. Particularly PAGART, having the monopoly for sending Polish artists abroad, became an important channel of Poland-to-Finland Cold War mobility.

Before embarking on the actual journey to Finland as described above, my interlocutors also mentally travelled to the West. Particularly powerful for stirring the imagination were personal contacts with those who had already travelled or those who had access to the people and languages of a tacit capitalist and bourgeois kind. Jakub, living in Warsaw, pointed to two significant persons in his mobile life:

My father and my English language teacher inspired my desire to see the world. My father put himself through high school before the World War II, but he did not have the money to go to university. [...] After the war he continued to study. He had a teacher who spoke twelve foreign languages. And this was still in the 1950s! The teacher instilled in my father a passion to see the world. My father

passed on some of this passion on to me. So when I was seven years old I started to study English – it was quite an exception at that time. My English teacher also had a flair for languages. [...] He worked in the Foreign Trade Headquarters and in the 1960s visited a large part of Western Africa and all of Western Europe. So he was somebody. His stories about the places he visited worked on my imagination. I was 12-15 years old. So I continued to master foreign languages, in high school and at university. I studied German, French and English. I passed all sorts of language exams. [...] So, as you see, I had that kind of *drive* [word originally in English] in my life, a drive to travel.

Although instead of becoming a diplomat, Jakub pursued a career in academia, he still managed to fulfil his dream, corroborating Appadurai's idea that the imagination is the "staging ground for action not only for escape" (1996, 7).³⁰ Speaking French and English, at the end of the 1980s he went to work in Paris and from there quickly moved to Finland to work at a university in Kuopio, a middle-sized Finnish town. Jakub summed up: "Finland was *nowa mozliwość*, a *new opportunity*" [said originally both in Polish and English]. As we talked at the university, he showed me around his workplace, including his office, filled with books in different languages. His professional identification with Finland permeated our meeting.

The presence of the West in Poland was not only imagined but also personal and embodied. It helped my interlocutors acquire relevant cultural capital (foreign language skills, cosmopolitan outlook) and enter personal relationships which would constitute a bridge to Finland. Many contacts between Poles and Finns developed in architecture and technology fields in academia, in line with the economic and cultural development of Finland. Danuta, possessing a family-stimulated, cultural capital predisposing her to foreign contacts, met her husband-to-be when he came to Poland as an exchange student under the cooperation agreement between his and hers Department of Architecture at the Poznań University. Danuta herself had already visited Finland as an exchange student before. Danuta recalled:

The Department of Architecture, where I worked, had a student exchange with a Finnish university. The exchange was organized by the late Professor Jesion. Alvar Aalto, the most famous Finnish architect in the world, was very trendy at that time; everybody loved him. When Finnish students were about to come to Poland, Professor Jesion asked me to be a translator. He spoke fluent German, one of his students spoke French, but nobody spoke English. He was a friend of my dad's from mountain excursions, from Zakopane³¹, so I unwillingly said "Yes". [...] I was supposed to meet with the Finns at 8 a.m. in front of the university building. We were supposed to travel around Poland. I really didn't want to go, but since I promised, I had to. The next morning I went to the agreed spot. There was already a bus full of Finns waiting. The professor was waiting,

³⁰ For the importance of imagination in stimulating mobility see also Katz's (2004) study of children growing up in Sudan and the global embeddedness of the villages in which they lived.

³¹ The winter capital of Poland.

and that colleague who spoke French was also waiting. He exclaimed, “It’s great that you’re finally here, we can’t get a word out of them. They don’t speak French, some only speak a little bit of German”. I got on the bus and the first thing I saw was a curly-haired guy, sitting and drinking whisky, [he exclaimed in Russian] “*Ja lubliu polskie lud?*” [“I love Polish people”]. That was my future husband [laughs].”

Nonetheless, Danuta insists that her coming to Finland was completely accidental. “Equally well I could have married a Polish person and lived somewhere in Poland; equally well I could have married an Italian. It was a blind chance”, she said, echoing Bronisław’s words.

The same could be said by others of my interlocutors who met their Finnish spouses “accidentally”, as the latter came to Poland as tourists, students or workers. Again though, I would like to point to the entanglement of these encounters in wider national and transnational structures. Danuta’s story itself conveys physical and symbolic links between Poland and Finland which, refracted by socioeconomic status, channelled the intimate encounters. English and Russian, as the common languages of communication, indicate that such connections stretched further beyond Poland and Finland, reflecting the Cold War dominance of the Anglo-Saxon countries and the Soviet Union (which here culturally complemented each other in facilitating the contact). The experience of Rafał,³² who considered Finland as his desired destination because of architecture, substantiates the connections hinted at in Danuta’s account:

I came to Finland as a student in 1972 with my friend, also a student of architecture at Warsaw University. We had a chance to come here for several months for an internship at an architecture company [in Helsinki]. We got the internship thanks to our Finnish friends, also students of architecture. We met them through an exchange program between our Departments. We organized a trip around Poland for them, and then we came to Finland on our own. [...] Back then, Finnish architecture was shining in the international arena, and that’s why we came to Finland – due to the glory of Finnish architecture. Only for architecture. We were fascinated by this country.

Later on Rafał talked about Finnish students he had met during these exchanges:

In the 1960s and the 1970s the Finnish youth was very leftist. They were joining the Communist Party and travelling to the Soviet Union for organized trips. When we came to Finland, my friend told them: “Come on! Don’t you see that Communism is one big nonsense and a hoax?” They disagreed: “But it’s such a beautiful ideal!” And so on. They were naïve. For instance, when we were complaining about the situation in Poland, the assistant at the university was telling us quite the contrary, “You have such a beautiful system”. What’s more,

³² I conducted a recorded interview with Rafał on Skype when he was in France – Rafał travels extensively for business and is often outside of Finland. In Finland he lives in Lahti, a middle-sized town in the centre of the country.

when the forces of the Warsaw Pact entered Czechoslovakia she told us: “It had to happen”.

The leftist ideology was an interesting and rather ironic link between the Cold War Poland and Finland. My interlocutors coming from Poland not only did not share the enthusiasm, but also generally appreciated Finland for what Poland was regrettably not: ordered, clean, capitalist and democratic. That the journey to Finland was often made through the Soviet Union emphasized the material differences and ideological continuity.

Since the Iron Curtain’s collapse, the mobile trajectories and contexts of interpersonal encounters directing my interlocutors towards Finland have changed significantly. Domestic mobilities are still present and matter, but trips to the West feature more prominently in my interlocutors’ stories. After the “exodus” from Poland in the aftermath of accession to the EU, “migration” has also become an ever-present theme in public discourse in Poland, creating the atmosphere of feasible and easy mobility to the West. I was told: “It is enough to open a newspaper and the doors of the world stand wide open”, by a post-accession temporary worker, Janek from Włocławek.³³ We sat in the company of other workers in a cafe in Porvoo. They nodded in agreement with Janek’s remark. Unsurprisingly, thus, the more recently my interlocutors arrived in Finland the more diversified and hectic are their stories of previous movements. Simultaneously, differences in the socioeconomic background among Polish people in Finland have become more visible.

While contemporary highly skilled and educated persons build their capacity for mobility before coming to Finland during trips for leisure as much as for work, both related to the desire to explore the world, manual workers mostly go abroad to work and improve their own and their families’ economic status: to earn money for consumer goods or to pay off the bank loans, which they begun accumulating after Poland shifted to a capitalist economy. The gathering of cosmopolitan experience is a side effect rather than the aim of their international movement. Fairly representative post-Cold War examples can be found in the contrasting stories of Kamila, an engineer born in the 1980s, and Damian, a manual worker born in the 1970s. Both Kamila and Damian moved to Finland as the end result of series of mobilities which built up their readiness to leave Poland.

Kamila, now living in Turku, originates from a relatively well-off and educated family from Toruń.³⁴ She started to travel abroad when she was ten years old, going to summer camps (*kolonie*) with her sister. “We wanted to see something [new], experience different food and different languages. This is what the summer camps were all for”.

³³ A middle-sized town (less than 100 000 residents) near Warsaw in Poland.

³⁴ A large town in northern Poland with nearly 200 000 residents.

After graduating from high-school, Kamila eagerly left her hometown (“I have never wanted to live there”) to study in another city. During her studies, she travelled abroad for summer jobs. She went to the United States several times, where she worked in a bank and as a baby sitter. She wanted to get the experience of a multicultural environment. Her travels quickly gained a momentum of their own:

I constantly had a desire to travel. I have never been able to stay put. I remember that when I was returning home from the United States, already after two or three months I planned where I would go next. I had an itch [to travel]. I was already planning my holidays in December. Because I couldn't stay in one place. Seriously.

One year before graduation, in 2004, she went to Finland as an Erasmus student. She was supposed to stay one academic term, but decided to stay for longer. She began a relationship with a Finnish man and found a good job. Although previously she had not thought about living abroad more permanently, her decision did not come as a surprise neither to her nor to her family.

Damian's life story is similar, but also very different. Soon after graduation from a technical school Damian started work, got married and became a father. The family lived in the coastal Polish city of Szczecin. As the only breadwinner in the family, Damian spent one to three months per year on contracts abroad from the beginning of his marriage. He did heavy manual labour. “Often we worked twelve hours per day non-stop during a three-month-period”. For ten years he only declined an offer to go abroad once, when his wife was about to give birth. He worked in Finland several times. When Poland joined the EU, Damian and his wife started to think about moving abroad permanently for the sake of the children's future and a “normal” and dignified living.³⁵ Damian was hired by the Finnish company for which he had previously worked as a subcontracted worker. He quit his job in Poland although his boss offered him a promotion. This however would still mean only 2-3 euro per hour. Damian turned it down and came to Tampere, Finland, with his wife and children in 2006.

The stories of Kamila and Damian are firmly grounded in the differentiated experience of the Polish capitalist democracy, and as such have many common points with the stories of others of my interlocutors who have recently come to Finland. Visibly, open state borders offer Poles more options where to go and in what capacity (as students, workers, family members etc.) In this sense, people coming to Finland can make more deliberate choices of destination places than their predecessors. From the Polish perspective, contemporary Finland offers well-paid jobs, a high level of education and extensive social welfare. The burgeoning number of formal institutions operating nowadays across Polish-Finnish-European space, notably employment

³⁵ For a similar discourse of “normality” as the reasons for Poles' migration to the UK see Gałańska and Kozłowska (2009).

agencies, student organizations (for instance AIESEC), universities and international companies, are there to channel those desires. The institution of PAGART disappeared along with the system it represented.

Poles also continue to come to Finland following their romantic partners, whom they meet in Poland or different countries of Western Europe. I noted distinctively new contexts of meetings like couch surfing or studies within the Socrates-Erasmus or the Baltic-states programs. The perfect manifestation of new times and reintegrated spaces is the way Ida, a woman in her thirties, gradually came to Turku, Finland:

After seven years of studying at university [in Gdańsk] I decided I was a hopeless case: everybody was going on about some scholarships, I was doing a second degree and was still in Poland. So I found a small scholarship programme which I got accepted for. And it turned my world upside down. The scholarship was for Baltic state citizens. [...] We were in Gdańsk, at the Kashubian Folk University [...]. The group was twenty persons; we spent twenty great days together. I met my partner (*mojego mężczyzny*³⁶) there and became enchanted with Scandinavia. And so it went.

Ida did not immediately move to Finland. Thinking about reuniting with her partner, she signed up for postgraduate studies at the University of Turku, Finland. They were put to a halt when she found a job in a Finnish project based in Poland:

At the moment when I already had my PhD studies arranged, and started to come [to Finland] more often, my partner advised me, “Go, ask around, maybe you will find some job, so when you come you will already have some project to work on”. And I started to look into the Baltic Institute of Finland. It turned out they were launching a new project with Poland and they needed a coordinator. So before I came here, I worked for the Finns in Poland for a year. And throughout that year I met my future Finnish boss, who right before my coming to Finland asked me whether I would like to work for him in Finland. And I said “Yes”.

In Ida’s story, the key institutional elements that accompanied her coming to Finland are the product of post-Cold War European and Polish reality. This includes the Kashubian University established on the wave of the re-emergence of “ethnic minorities” in Poland and a business project within the Baltic region. What remains unchanged is the culture of international mobility. As later on Ida remarked, her father is a retired sailor and like “many sailor families at the turn of the 1990s” her family almost moved to Greece. “Luckily it did not happen...because then I would have not been here, I would have not met my partner (*mojego mężczyzny*)”, Ida reflected.

³⁶In Polish language there is no socially acceptable term for partners in the informal romantic relationship. Consequently, the popular term for describing such partner is *moja kobieta* or *mój mężczyzna*, which literally means “my woman” or “my man”.

Between temporary and permanent mobility: disciplining the citizen

In the previous section, I discussed the imagined and actual mobilities and transnational encounters which directed my interlocutors towards Finland. The next two sections address my interlocutors' negotiation between the categories of temporary and permanent mobility and the reasons for staying/leaving Finland interrelated with them. I re-emphasize the importance of state politics in shaping personal biography and people's agency to navigate among the state constrains.

In this section, I use the terms "temporary" and "permanent" cautiously, as an intersection of people's self-definitions and the categories produced and imposed upon people's mobility by the state system. They by no means imply the finality of people's movement. In the studied context, they are a necessary point of departure to the discussion on the transnational processes present in the subsequent chapters (and already to some extent hinted at here). Such processes, in the end, entail thinking beyond the categories of permanent and temporary movement altogether.

As I have already suggested, the essential element of Polish policies during the Cold War was an attempt at all-encompassing bureaucratic control of who, how, where and for how long people left the country. Ideally, as long as people held Polish citizenship, the state controlled their travel and stay abroad. Polish people abroad were supposed to be a branch of the Polish nation, not unlike in the pre-war decades. "[The communist authorities] considered Polonia a spatially detached part of Poland which should serve the country's interests, or to put it more humbly, which should respond to all its needs and appeals" (Heydenkorn, cited in Ziolkowska-Boehm 1992, 9). Communist Poland, thus continuing Poland's pre-war tradition in the new political context, imagined itself a deterritorialized state where "wherever its people go, their state goes too" (Basch et al. 1994, 269).

The control over Polish citizens "on the move" was exercised by the Polish authorities in Poland and by Poland's representatives in the destination country. Their main means of control were passport policies, including different types of passport which categorized and defined people's mobility in a bureaucratic manner. The introduction of passports throughout the world has been closely linked to the emergence of the modern state and its enclosing within territorial borders. Passports make people's movement intelligible and susceptible to state control, but also allow people to make claims to the right to mobility (Caplan and Torpey 2001). Consequently, harsh passport policies were the hallmark of the Polish communist state's attempts at disciplining its citizens and establishing a top-down distribution of privileges (Romaniszyn 1994, 17). The communist passport policies created, on the one hand, passport "haves" and "have-nots", and on the other, a situation where those who had passports enjoyed diversified access to travel and transnational contact. From the perspective of Poland-to-Finland mobility, an important factor is the division into passports allowing for temporary exit from Poland and obliging people to come back

on a specified date, and passports for permanent exit which assumed that people would not come back except for short visits. The temporary passport, including the so-called tourist passport (*paszport turystyczny*) and the business passport (*paszport służbowy*), was usually issued for a single trip, although in privileged cases it also allowed for multiple trips. The passport for a permanent exit – an “emigration” passport – was only given for exit from Poland and was replaced by the consular passport (*paszport konsularny*) in the country of destination, which was specified beforehand. The consular passport legalized a Polish citizen's stay abroad and permitted their movement in other parts of the world. In terms of movement to Finland, after 1974 a Finnish visa was required only for visits over three months.

Practically all my male interlocutors (and one female interlocutor) who came to Finland during the Cold War, came with the idea of temporary stay of up to several months and with the relevant passport in hand. They came for work or internship and had no family ties to Finland. The predominance of men in an individual mode of mobility followed the general pattern of outflow from Poland. Additionally, engineers and musicians which were in-demand occupations in Finland, were male-dominated in Poland.

Although the aforementioned persons planned to stay in Finland temporarily, their personal and thus legal relationship to Finland changed as time went by. Throughout their stay, they established new professional contacts and/or met their future Finnish spouse. “We didn’t come here as parachutists, in one day” Leszek told me. His words reflect the experience of others who came to Finland gradually. Leszek’s words, I suggest, were meant to contrast with the illegal emigration from Poland common throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which precluded circular mobility. My interlocutors in Finland, on the other hand, returned to Poland up to several times, continuing their work or studies in Poland. Four men upon meeting their Finnish spouses in Finland moved with them back to Poland just to return to Finland later on. The aforementioned Jan and Leszek after the series of individual stays in Finland eventually came to Finland with their Polish spouses and children.

Since my interlocutors were returning and leaving Poland legally with their temporary passports, they had to re-apply for a new passport every trip. Only Jan had a temporary passport allowing for multiple border crossings. Some persons were interrogated by the Secret Service. There was also no certainty whether one would be granted a passport. The unpredictability of passport politics both complicated my interlocutors’ planned trajectory of movement and reconfirmed its temporary character from a legal viewpoint.

Musicians were in a special situation. They were coming to Finland via the PAGART agency, which, acting as an extension of the Polish state, “owned” their passports and got a percentage of every contract. Therefore, it was in the general interests of the Polish state as well as in the interests of PAGART and its particular employees, that the musicians’ temporary stay in Finland would not

change into a permanent one. The contract was short-term and musicians had to renew it along with the passport, if they wanted to extend their stay in Finland. The unpredictable passport politics created fertile ground for obstructive actions aimed to block the opportunity to work abroad for fellow musicians. The competition to go abroad was high and the information (helpful or destructive) passed through the social networks was sometimes crucial. Henryk, a musician from Radom, experienced both sides of the process. When we talked at his home in Helsinki, Finland, Henryk pointed at an American flag spread on the wall and remarked that it was a gift from his fellow musicians who also went to America via PAGART and encouraged him to join them. Henryk refused, wanting to stay in Finland. This time though one of his PAGART colleagues attempted to sabotage rather than facilitate his movement: When I went the second time [to Finland] I decided to stay. [...] already on the ferry [to Finland] I told my friend, who was also my boss at the time, that I wasn't coming back. Of course later on, when he was returning to Poland, he threatened that he would screw up my situation with PAGART (*zrobi mi kolo dupy*). Because he had already been coming to Finland for ten or fifteen years [he knew the right people]. However, I also personally knew the head of PAGART [...]. So when this "friend" of mine was on the ferry, travelling to Poland, I went to a telephone booth and called PAGART. They connected me with the director. I said, "Henryk Michalowski here. I'm calling from Finland. I'm with a band here. The thing is I met a woman here, we're getting married and I'm staying for good. My boss from here, however, is planning to come to PAGART and spread some bullshit about me". The director said, "Oh, it's good you're calling me then. Give me his name". So I gave him the name. When my friend arrived in Poland he went straight to the director of PAGART. And the director told him, "Please leave your passport. For one year and a half you are banned from travelling abroad". So for a year and a half they didn't let him out of Poland, and I stayed here [in Finland]. He was so pissed off. [laugh] You know, because he wanted to screw it up for me, and in the end I screwed it up for him.

Thinking about settling down in Finland and considering the problems with the temporary passport, several men, including Henryk above, started attempts at legalizing their stay in Finland as "permanent". Their Finnish visas were relatively secured (although had to be repeatedly renewed) due to their jobs in Finland. What was challenging was the bureaucratic battle with the Polish Embassy to acquire a consular passport.

The consular passport had important advantages: it could be used up to five years without regular validation from the Consulate, it was valid for all countries and did not have to be returned to the Polish authorities after every trip abroad. Crucially thus it allowed for visits to Poland (and other parts of the world) without legal difficulties and without the necessity of giving up Polish citizenship, the danger of which always existed if one overstayed the temporary passport. From this viewpoint, the status of legally permanent emigrant was thus more convenient than of the temporary one.

Nevertheless, the Polish state disapproved of those who wished to leave Poland permanently. The unwillingness to let the citizens out of the country was reflected in the way the consular passport could be obtained: only if having a justifiable reason; although what was “justifiable” was a matter of subjective interpretation (for example a foreign spouse was not always sufficient), paying a considerable fee and meeting the plethora of bureaucratic and practical requirements. An excellent example of the difficulties involved in the process of legal shifting from temporary to permanent emigration status was Wincenty’s case. Wincenty came to Helsinki, Finland, for the first time in 1969 for an internship and in the 1970s was recurrently coming to Finland as a researcher, simultaneously working in Poland, at the University of Poznań. During one of his stays in Finland, he met his Finnish wife, who followed him to Poland:

In 1973 I was working in Finland with my colleague. [...] We were spending the evenings in student clubs. Around November I met Mia, my future wife. [...] I returned to Poland to [my regular] work. Mia offered to join me in Poland. She arrived for Christmas the same year. We got married [...] At the time I didn’t think about leaving Poland. I saw my future life in Poland. I thought we would settle there, make our careers etc. The beginning of the 1970s were good years in Poland. Gierek came to power. He borrowed loads of money from the West and flooded the market with commodities bought with the loans.³⁷ [...] While we were living in Poland, I was working in Finland several months a year. I could travel to Finland rather freely, that is as freely as the system allowed. So every trip I had to go [to the Police/Passport Office], apply for the passport, pick it up and return after the trip was finished. But I didn’t have any problems. However, our plans started to change as time went by. 1975 and 1976 came and very quickly the situation [in Poland] became dreary. [...] We started to plan to come to Finland. First we came to Finland in 1977 to organize our stuff here. I still had a tourist passport though so I thought it was a good idea to get a consular passport for the permanent stay. And I did a stupid thing, namely I came back to Poland. I came back because they [the Consulate officials] told me that I couldn’t get a consular passport in Finland, I had to apply for it from Poland. I went to Poland and I submitted my application. It was rejected. This delayed us for almost one year. That is, we were in Poland almost one year longer [than we planned] because I applied for the consular passport and I didn’t get it. I didn’t get it because of my education. They told me that I didn’t work my education off. [...] Luckily they gave me a tourist passport. So in 1978 I went to Finland on this tourist passport.[...] Of course the [tourist] passport caused me a lot of problems. The passport was only valid for a year, thus firstly, I couldn’t have Finnish residence or a work permit longer than a year. So when the passport was about to finish there was always great anxiety about what would happen next. I had to go to the Consulate and try to prolong it. In the end I always succeeded, although they

³⁷ Edward Gierek was the First Secretary of the Communist party in 1970-1980. The first half of his term was marked by relative economic affluence based on increased investments, consumption and indebtedness to the West. The second half of the 1970s brought about an economic crisis and a decline in social optimism.

always tried to oppose. Sometimes I only got it prolonged for six months. [...] This hassle lasted a couple of years. Finally, I managed to get a consular passport.

Yet, despite many benefits, the consular passport also had its disadvantages, for it required financial and formal sacrifices: applicants for a consular passport were forced to give up their apartment, end the work contract, pay all their financial dues to the Polish state and in the case of a male applicant, settle the military service status.³⁸ University graduates like Wincenty had to “return” to the state the money the state invested in them by providing free education with the expectation that the student would work in Poland after graduation. Since the university graduates who were leaving Poland were not about to work in Poland the state expected a financial retribution from them. Thus, free visits to Poland and the keeping of Polish citizenship enabled by the consular passport, were linked to the cessation of other formal ties to Poland.

In consequence, getting a consular passport seemed like an unpatriotic and immoral act towards Poland and gave the impression of the finality and definitiveness of movement, especially if compared with the present. Krzysztof, who now lives in Espoo near Helsinki, came to Finland on a consular passport in the 1970s. He reflected:

Back then it was of course different than it is now, because then when one was leaving Poland, it was almost treason, it was something so [serious]. Now the world is open, it is just small, it has shrunk. You leave and come back. You don't make choices for life. Whereas then it [leaving] was really something very serious.

For those who applied for a consular passport while still living in Poland, the impression of irrevocability of their decision was additionally accentuated by receiving a one-way exit passport which only upon the arrival in the destination country was to be replaced with the official, consular passport. As Krzysztof suggested, being granted the right to replacement passport and thus the right to remain part of the Polish nation-state, was the only thing that differentiated a Polish person leaving Poland legally from a Polish Jew ejected from Poland in 1968.³⁹

Nonetheless, one can already see from the above that the Polish communist politics were contradictory. On the one hand, permanent emigration from Poland was highly unwelcome. On the other hand, as long as people left legally and did not engage in anti-communist activity they were encouraged to remain Polish citizens. A good indication of this contradictory policy was provided by the aforementioned Wincenty. Wincenty, living in Finland in uncertainty on a temporary passport, had to exercise a

³⁸ Military service was obligatory.

³⁹ In 1968 as a consequence of an anti-Semitic campaign launched by the communist party, many Poles of Jewish origin lost their employment in state institutions and were forced to leave the country with a one-way passport; that is they were granted permission to leave Poland without coming back.

form of moral blackmail on the Polish embassy to get his passport prolonged. He repeatedly threatened the Consul that he would give up his Polish citizenship and take up Finnish citizenship.⁴⁰ As Wincenty said, his “threats” succeeded: his temporary passport was repeatedly prolonged and after several years, he was finally granted a consular one.

Certainly, the most harmful for future contacts with Poland was an illegal stay abroad, which meant overstaying the date allowed by the temporary passport and often, the relinquishing of Polish citizenship. As I noted in Chapter Two, this type of coming to Finland was rarely an option due to Finland's political ties to the Soviet Union and the reluctance to recognize asylum seekers from the Eastern Bloc. However, few of my interlocutors had legally ambiguous status towards Poland either. Bronislaw's story fits here well for it retells, albeit with a different finale, Wincenty's tribulations of changing his legal status of stay in Finland:

My contract [with PAGART] was prolonged every three months. It was combined with getting a new stamp in a passport giving me residence and work permit in Finland. The passport was only valid for a year. At some point I realized my passport [...] was about to expire. I went to the Consulate. I told the consul that my passport was about to expire, but that I had received a telegram from PAGART stating that they had sent the papers to the Consulate to prolong my passport. The consul said: “No, no, we got nothing, there's nothing here”. I insisted the documents had to be there. [...] He insisted nothing had arrived. I insisted he checked it again. Finally he found the documents. [...] He stamped my passport, took another look at the passport and insinuated that I had not paid some fees. He told me, “You earned enough money here, now it's time you leg it back home”. I responded, “Hey mister, you've no right telling me how long I can be here. I'm not freeloading here. I pay taxes. Part of the money I earn here goes to cover your salary. So don't you tell me how long I can be here”. Everything settled fine. But later on, when I had already been in Finland over two years, I decided to apply for a consular passport. The consul was still the same. I went to him and told him that I'd like to get a consular passport. He told me there was no way I would get a consular passport. My situation was pretty dire then, because my passport was about to expire again. Also I had already met my future [Finnish] wife and had a stable workplace. And he told me that I wouldn't get a passport. So then what? I had to do something. A friend told me he would help me fix things. He took me to the police. [...] We went and I got a refugee passport! It was an exceptional thing in Finland. In Finnish it was a *muukalaispassi*. I got it. It was something totally impossible.

At the time, Bronislaw, like many other Poles who applied for asylum in the West, did not engage in political activity. He treated his refugee status purely instrumentally.

⁴⁰ Until 2003 Finland did not permit dual citizenship, whereas Poland had accepted it to a degree since the 1960s: Polish citizens can have another citizenship, but from the Polish state's perspective they are only considered Polish citizens.

Getting a refugee passport was, in his view, a “lucky coincidence” which finally secured his “escape from the Polish People Republic's vale of tears (*ucieczka z PRLowskiego padolu*)”, as he put it. The escape though was only a legal one – it was an escape from the state, not from the *close ones* who inhabited it.

Another distinct way through which the Polish state indirectly (and surely unwillingly) contributed to my interlocutors’ “accidental” shift from temporary to permanent stay in Finland was the introduction in Poland of Martial Law on 13th December 1981.⁴¹ In reaction to the events in Poland, several men decided to abandon their plans to return and focus on building their life in Finland. Martial Law also seemed to bring some Finnish authorities over to the Poles’ side in their struggle for the residency in Finland, even if it would go against the previous decision of Finnish officials. When Henryk was forced to go back to Poland due to his passport expiring, he accidentally missed his return ferry and planned to take the next one. On December, 13, however, his Finnish friends woke him up with the shocking news “There is a war in Poland!” The next day Henryk went to the police:

I said that Poland was in a state of war, that the police had taken my passport and they wanted to send me back there by force, to put me on the ferry to Poland against my will. And that no way was I going back. So the chief of police got terribly pissed off. He said, “No! that’s not right, you cannot go there, I’ll fix it”. He made a couple of phone calls and after a week I got a passport with all the necessary permission for staying in Finland.

Different variations on the above stories, although with consistently more positive attitude from the receiving state, were documented also for Poles going to other Western countries (see for instance Kaczorowska 2011). At the turn of the 1980s the Polish economic situation deteriorated and people were leaving en masse. Arguably, not all of them had definite migration plans, but the historical events helped to clarify them. My research shows though, that from today’s perspective even people who initially wanted to return to Poland, considered the Martial Law-coincidence, just like unfavourable Polish politics on other occasions, a stroke of luck.

Because until now all the examples in this section have involved men, a few words should be said about women’s negotiation of coming to Finland. Since all my female interlocutors who came to Cold War Finland came to reunify with a Finnish spouse, their movement could be seen as more straightforward, immediately involving permanent relocation. Nevertheless, their movement was also gradual and carried problems of its own, underpinned by different gender ideologies and gendered life situations.

⁴¹ In 1980-1981 the oppositional “Solidarity” movement emerged, gaining nationwide support and legalization from the Polish government. Martial Law was introduced to de-legalize Solidarity and to tighten the regime’s grip on society.

A Polish woman marrying a Western man and moving to his country of origin is a popular theme of Polish migration culture. In particular, the Cold War Eastern-Western hierarchy, accompanied by persistent gender ideologies, foregrounded potential economic and instrumental reasons for marrying a Westerner. Women ran the risk that their marriage would be perceived as an opportunistic business contract, not a love affair, thereby transgressing the European marriage ideal. The persistence of the image of Polish migrant women as materialist husband seekers is evoked by Ida who, coming to Finland in the 2000s, told me in a self-defensive manner: "Everybody asks me if I left [Poland] for a guy and it gets my goat. For, these aren't the times when girls flew after guys to have a better life anymore. These are not the 1970s anymore".

Unsurprisingly, thus, women who joined their Finnish husbands in Finland during the Cold War stressed (not unlike women after the Cold War) the gradual character of their movement and their own agency in it, indicating that they were movers "in their own right" (Sørensen 1994). All except one woman told me that they had no urgent need to leave Poland, that they were professionally active and had a place to live. Some already had failed marriages behind them; two women were single mothers (like three women from the post-Cold War period) with fathers absent from their children's lives. Given their life situations, they approached their new relationship cautiously and usually preceded their – legally speaking – permanent migration to Finland with short-term reconnaissance visits on a tourist passport. Additionally, three women visited Finland on their own before meeting their Finnish husbands.

Despite being married to a Finn, women also had problems with the unwillingness of the communist authorities' to legalize their permanent exit from Poland. They were obliged to go through the same bureaucratic procedure as men, only the demand for resolving the issue of military service did not apply. Teresa, for instance remembered the whole application period as a "horrible experience". She was married, pregnant and determined to leave Poland, but even a substantial bribe offered to the Polish authorities did not help. She was recurrently travelling over 150 km from her hometown Piotrków to Warsaw to inquire about the application progress, just to be sent back with a promise that she would get a passport "maybe in a month; in a half of a month; in several weeks". "However, nothing was happening". As Teresa suggested, her being a pregnant woman played a significant part here, for her baby was treated as a potential citizen whom Teresa was taking away.

In two cases, the same Martial Law which kept men in Finland, kept women in Poland. Basia was additionally frustrated because several months before she had been to Finland with her daughter, but the Polish Embassy forced them to return for formal reasons. When the Martial Law regulations relaxed Basia was finally permitted to go to Finland, but this time her daughter was held back in Poland. She stayed with Basia's grandparents in Warsaw. Basia recalled:

When I came here my child stayed in Poland. My mum cried, “We’ll never meet again”. She remembered the War. She remembered when her mother – my grandmother – was sent to Germany during the War. My mum stayed with her godmother. She knew how long it had taken them to reunite. She was very close to not seeing her mother again. So you know for her the Martial Law was like a War. She was terrified, [she told me] “My child, will we ever see each other again, will you see your child again?” And I was already packed, tickets bought, I am about to go, and here, you know, tears, lament. You can imagine how hard it was for me to leave. I didn’t know what would happen, nobody knew. After all I had never experienced *sota* [“war” in Finnish], Martial Law, I had no idea what would happen.

The parallels between different forms of mobility and different historical contexts made by Basia’s mother point to the continuous role of past experiences of mobility in interpreting the present. Fortunately, the fear of definite separation expressed by Basia’s mother just like during the World War II did not come to pass.

Looking at women’s tribulations in the process of coming to Finland, one can therefore argue that the bureaucratic difficulties of the Cold War made the agency of women more salient. They paradoxically helped women to argue against the gendered image of women as passive actors in the family reunification migration, whereby the only active agents are husbands and the wives simply follow (or in a more derogatory language regarding the Western partner, “sell themselves out”).

Temporary and permanent mobility in the context of unrestricted exit

The 1989-political transition ended the legal uncertainty of movement from Poland. Passports became private documents allowing for unrestricted exit, likewise ceasing to divide Polish citizens into people leaving Poland temporarily or permanently. Nevertheless, my interlocutors faced new uncertainties of movement, underlined by the clash between the suddenly liberal passport policy of the Polish state on the one hand, and the Finnish state’s reluctance to accept immigrants on the other. The least fortunate were persons who came to Finland on the wave of liberalization of migration politics, right before or right after the political breakthrough in Poland, especially people coming to Finland for work and their Polish spouses.

In the first half of the 1990s, the Polish political-economic system was undergoing fundamental reorganization whereas Finland was hit by a severe economic crisis (*lama* in Finnish), brought about by the collapse of the Finnish banking system and export trading with the Soviet Union. Both Poland and Finland faced an unstable situation. The economic crisis, which lasted in Finland until 1995, put the Finnish jobs and work permits of the Polish newcomers to Finland in jeopardy. Finnish visas and work permits were difficult to obtain, the labour market was shrinking and foreigners were the first to be laid off. Some Polish friends of my interlocutors left Finland. They “gave up” or their visas were not prolonged. Thanks to the post-communist Polish passport politics, my interlocutors could return to Poland any time, at least legally

speaking. However, changes in Poland gradually made the return more difficult. Old work places disappeared and new capitalist conditions appeared extremely competitive.

As a result, some of my interlocutors lived in Finland from permit to permit, from salary to salary and waited until the crisis was over. Kazimierz, who came to Toijala, a small town in central Finland, for work in 1989, planned his stay as temporary. His wife and children remained in their village near Krakow in Poland. Soon his old workplace in Poland was shut down and his Finnish salary started to lose its purchase power in Poland. His wife only joined him in Finland seventeen years later. Now, they are planning at least to spend their retirement together in Poland. Similar to Kazimierz's, is a story of a married couple Hanna and Tadeusz. They reflect, "We got stuck here [in Finland]". They moved to a small town, Virrat, in central Finland in 1988. Tadeusz worked as a musician and his visa was secure, but with the Finnish crisis his salary dropped three times. Hanna was laid off from a factory job, for which she had just got a work permit. In the meantime, their work placements in Poland disappeared. "We got so poor that there was no way we could return to Poland. We would have got into debt up to the hilt".

Since the second half of the 1990s, the gradual economic and political stabilization in both Poland and Finland, the mutual integration of their markets and the synchronization of their passport policies have reduced the legal uncertainty of mobility. Comings and goings are nowadays easier and smoother, and the role of the state in crossing the borders hardly visible (but not absent). This is particularly manifested in the lives of post-accession posted workers who by the rule of law only occupy the Finnish economic and political space on the margins. They are usually employed by Polish companies or manpower agencies (some also by non-Finnish manpower agencies recruiting Polish workers). Up until six months, they do not have to pay taxes in Finland. They are unconstrained by visa requirements and work permits, moving within the transnational space of their companies.

The increased possibility for ever-lasting, non-definite returns is accompanied by the increased legal feasibility of permanent stay in Finland, a strategy desirable by many young newcomers (a similar trend is observed for Polish migrants to other Western countries, see e.g. Burrell 2009, Frieberg 2012). This usually means reuniting with a spouse and/or children and finding of secure employment in Finland. Permanency is supported by the relative ease of settling down in material terms. Whereas the couples who came to Finland at the turn of 1990s did not make any significant purchases in the first few years, uncertain of what would happen the following month, I observed how post-accession newcomers quickly purchase cars, leather couches, TV sets and other expensive equipment in Finland. Simultaneously, "permanency" is still not for everybody, as Finland remains very competitive for the foreign labour force. The manual workers who have decided to stay in Finland long-term told me proudly that many Polish workers with whom they had worked in Finland

had been laid off and returned to Poland. According to my interlocutors, they did not have enough work ethic and skills to stay in Finland.

Finally, in the face of new political possibilities a more indefinite approach to mobility can be considered by persons who come to Finland to reunite with a Finnish partner. Until recently, marriage was legally necessary if a Polish person wanted to stay in Finland on the basis of family reunification. Marriage, in the Catholic faith a “holy sacrament”, was a powerful symbolic and legal bond with a Finnish partner, which also bounded my interlocutors more to Finland. After Poland joined the EU, cohabitation with a Finnish partner has become sufficient legal reason for Poles to stay in Finland for over three months and be eligible for social security benefits. The informal ties of cohabitation, less culturally and legally obliging, thus allow for easier and faster return if the relationship fails to work. A quote from Kinga, who came to Finland from a small town, Pila, Poland, in 2004, is fairly representative of the above trend:

When it came to moving here I even thought about getting married, but honestly the first thing which came to my mind was, “OK, we’ve known each other for some time now, [...] but I don’t want to come to Finland as a wife. If something goes wrong, if the guy suddenly turns out to be crazy, I won’t have a choice because I already have a ring. Sorry, you are bound for the rest of your life and you don’t have a choice. You are a Catholic and you can’t just get a divorce. Maybe you could try to get a [Church] divorce but it demands a lot of effort. [...] Therefore I came here with the idea that first I want to see how everything would work out. It wasn’t only the relationship. I also wanted to see whether I would like Finland. As a matter of fact, I never even wanted to live outside my hometown, not to mention living abroad.

In coming to Finland, there is thus a continuous importance of the possibility of going back, even if one does not plan to. It is important to have the doors to Poland open. From my interlocutors’ perspective, the ideal movement always involves the potentiality for return mobility and the maintenance of transnational ties, as much as it ideally involves the possibility of unenforced permanent stay in Finland. The possibility for transnationalism weighs heavily on one’s decision on the trajectory of mobility.

The role of the Polish family in enabling mobility

The social embeddedness of my interlocutors’ movement in family ties is intimately linked with the importance of the option of return and contacts with Poland. All my interlocutors, including those who at first sight seem very independent “movers”, enacted their coming to Finland in conjunction with other people, at the most intimate level with the family members who often stayed behind. Polish family support in enabling my interlocutors’ mobility to Finland marks the onset of transnational family ties.

During the Cold War, the family’s role in facilitating international mobility was the most fundamental. The very application for the exit from Poland constructed the

person as inherently relational,⁴² existing in a strict relationship with the lives and mobilities of others. The applicant had to provide in writing, and sometimes during a personal interrogation by the Secret Service, detailed biographical information about their spouse, children, parents, siblings, as well as any other family members who at the same time were applying for an exit or were living temporarily or permanently abroad. The misdeeds of family members, whether it was the “wrong” nationality (Zofia, for instance, had problems with her “Prussian” grandfather), place of birth, wrong occupation or other biographical flaw could complicate or block the exit. Similarly, the circumstances of people’s decision to stay abroad affected the lives of those who stayed in Poland. The underpinnings of such a decision could easily be overlooked if mobility was legal and went smoothly. They became evident when people decided to overstay the legally permitted period abroad. When I asked Basia whether she had thought about staying in Finland without a valid passport, she told me:

No, no. I didn’t want to endanger my family [...] I had to consider what my family would have to go through. [...] We lived in a country in which you would say that Gierek or another of his kind was stupid and you would go to jail for the rest of your life. I am over exaggerating now, but ... as I say, the times were such that it could have repercussions for my family.

This otherwise tacit element of Basia’s (and others) is easily ignored in Polish literature, which gives the morally uncomplicated account of people leaving communist Poland, even when they were leaving Poland illegally (see for instance Dyczewski 1992). It was also important what happened upon the border crossing. Mariusz, for instance, forgot to take out Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* from his backpack. The Secret Service immediately searched his parents’ home. Similarly, any unsettled formalities with the Polish state were regarded as the responsibility of the family members who stayed in Poland. Regardless of people’s desires and the actual involvement in family life, moving to Finland had not ceased the family ties from the state’s perspective. Those who stayed were the representatives of those who left, linked by the virtue of blood or in-law relationships. In this sense, the family was narrowed to relationships stemming from legalized sexual intercourse. Other types of family relationships or actual family participation were considered secondary. Notably though, a formal invitation from a close friend in Finland was considered acceptable for the Polish state in applying for a passport, unless the friend was staying in Finland illegally. Family ties only ceased to matter in a passport application procedure after the political transition, when a passport became a private document given on the basis of one’s personal biography. One still has to state one’s parents’ names in the application form, but this is aimed to specify the identity of the applicant, not to decide on their right to move. In Western-type

⁴² For the anthropological concept of the relational person see Carsten (2004), Strathern (1988).

capitalist democracies, which Poland has followed since 1989, citizens of a given state are constructed as autonomous individuals, equal before the law. Poles are still recognized as a part of national and family collectivity, but the Polish state grants them the right to move as equals and not as interdependents. The democratic rule of law regarding the crossing of Polish borders is selective, of course, as it only applies to holders of Polish (or European Union) citizenship. Many foreigners who wish to enter Poland do not enjoy the same privilege of being equal, and their entry to Poland is limited. This duality of Polish democratic legislation can be paralleled with the Finnish case. Finland, granting its own citizens freedom of movement, until recently gave privileged entry rights to Finland if one was married to a Finnish citizen or if one was married to a person with established Finnish residency. Many of my interlocutors who came to Finland under family reunification, but without a job contract, would most likely have been refused the stay in Finland if not for their spouses. They would have had to have a legitimate reason to stay in Finland, and the family member had a high chance of being associated with such a reason. Therefore, the Finnish state also recognizes some individuals as more equal and autonomous in their right to move than others, whose kinship embeddedness matters.

My interlocutors' Polish families have also supported their coming to Finland at the practical level. During the Cold War that included having family members with the right "connections" (*dojścia*) in Poland who could guarantee acquiring a passport through informal channels, standing in a queue for a passport and a visa and tending to other formalities indispensable for securing the exit. Historically unchanging contributions have been help with transportation and/or accommodation on the way to Finland and taking care of home affairs so that the person can leave Poland freely.

Men whose coming to Finland, regardless of the period, is a part of the household strategy of economic reproduction and who have left wives and children in Poland, receive the most comprehensive practical support in the form of managing the household and childcare. The help is provided by wives and the extended family. Without their support, married men would most likely have stayed in Poland. Also several women upon coming to Finland to reunite with a Finnish spouse left their children under the temporary (and in one case permanent) care of grandparents. In the previous section, I mentioned the dramatic martial-law circumstances in which Basia left her daughter under grandparental supervision.

Migration literature typically mentions arranging work and accommodation as a central means of family assistance in migration. Due to until recently weakly developed migration networks, this form of support appears of relatively little importance in my study. Nonetheless, I also noted it on several occasions. Some educated persons though, in a sense true to their sociocultural background, stressed that finding a job in Finland, and thus coming to Finland itself, was to a great extent of their "own" doing. They were tired of the omnipresent "connections" in Poland and avoided using them

when finding a job abroad – it was thus a strategy against the “migration networks” and reliance on one’s fellow countrymen, tacitly perceived as denigrating.

Finally, the role of family members in enabling mobility is emotional and symbolic. It ranges from providing my interlocutors with the relevant cultural capital, through silent support to open encouragement to go abroad. Kazimierz, whose coming to Finland could be otherwise regarded as a form of strategic nuclear family reproduction, suggested that it was actually his father who gave him the idea to search for family subsistence abroad:

I think I left thanks to my dad. Because he always said, “You are such a great specialist, everybody’s going abroad and you’re just sitting here. Damn, maybe you could also go somewhere”. So I told him, “Hold on, hold on! I’ll find something for myself, I’ll also go”. So this is how he motivated me. And I [foolishly] listened to him.

The “license to leave” (Baldassar 2001) given by those who stayed is sometimes crucial in making the decision. Nevertheless, some temporary workers came to Finland despite their wives’ only mild acceptance, likewise indicating that the interpretation of migration as a “household strategy” should be approached cautiously. The “household” often speaks with different voices, being an internally differentiated rather than a monolithic unit.

Family support is also important if mobility becomes unexpectedly complicated by historical or personal events and turns from temporary to the more permanent mobility. In such cases, the “license to leave” is complemented by the equally important “license to stay”. When Henryk made his first phone call home after being held in Finland due to Martial Law, his parents told him, “Sonny, don’t come back here. Forget about Poland. It is a miserable hell here (*tu jest taki syf że koniec*)”. On the other hand, for instance Tadeusz’s wife, approving of his initial plan of temporary stay in Finland, accepted his prolonged stay in Finland with dissatisfaction.

Concluding remarks

Galasińska and Kozłowska (2009, 90) in their recent article on migration discourses of the highly educated post-accession migrants to the United Kingdom notes how their interviewees “tend to use a non-narrative mode of discourse and therefore present the event of migration as something not worth dwelling on but rather as something that is normal/common. [...] Both the decision and journey are presented as relatively straightforward steps and the passage between old and new countries is blurred”. The authors emphasized that the above is related to Poles’ legally unrestrained movement within the EU. In contrast, coming to Finland always seems to be a story, although in the past legally much more complicated than in the present. Mobility from the contemporary Poland may be something normal and common, but, as I showed in this chapter, Finland as a destination has never been self-evident.

When discussing migration histories, it is tempting to present them as a matter of push-pull factors: something “pushes” people from one country and “pulls” them to another. This popular model, omnipresent in migration studies, runs the risk of portraying international mobility in definite opposition to sedentary life, of taking nation-states as enclosed containers and of obscuring various elements of individual and family agency. Instead, I argue that we should see people’s international migrations in the contexts of their movement across life, their social embeddedness and the interconnectedness of national spaces in a particular historical and geopolitical context, here of the Cold War and post-Cold War Poland and Finland within the European, Baltic Sea region.

In this chapter, my interlocutors have emerged as agents navigating amidst various historical conditions to carve their own way to Finland, shifting between the plans of temporary and permanent stay if necessary or desired. Through my interlocutors’ stories, we can see how Polish and Finnish states worked together or cancelled each other out in encouraging or inhabiting Poland-to-Finland mobility: Finland sending the “illegal” Polish emigrants back to Poland, but sometimes accepting them as political refugees; Finland refusing residence and working permits for Poles when the Polish state has started to allow for unrestrained mobility, and most recently, both states working together to enable the Polish mobility within the European Union’s Schengen area. The stories of my interlocutors are also indicative of their more intimate desires and values: the importance of family ties and conjugal relationships, of economic welfare and Catholic values; distrust or sometimes the overt opposition towards the communist state. Women in particular explicitly stressed their personal agency in coming to Finland, likewise opposing the derogatory gender ideologies of mobility.

Finally, this chapter indicates that at the stage of coming to Finland looking back towards Poland is already important. Country of “origin” and the family members who live there do not disappear in the process of transnational mobility. They participate in it as emotional, practical and financial supporters. They help to make the decision or inhibit it. Similarly, the legal assurance that one will be able to return to Poland affects how the movement is experienced. The most amiable movement is the one that does not have to entail a total rupture and moving unequivocally “forever”. Ideally, doors to both countries should be opened, even if at a given moment one is not planning to return to Poland permanently. The above reflection can be best understood from the view point of transnational theory, which emphasizes the continuity of ties across borders and the open-ended character of mobility. The relationship with Poland and family members living there do not cease, but continues in a transnational context.

Chapter 5 Transnational communication rituals

My interlocutors often recalled their lives in Poland before coming to Finland as marked by intensive family socializing. Living in Poland, they would spend weekdays, weekends, holiday breaks and celebrations with their family. In the course of face-to-face meetings, they would build a common history, exchange support as well as endure family conflicts. If they cared for their family members, they would try to meet and even if they did not care, they were often expected to meet. Frequent meetings particularly characterized the communist period, when withdrawal into the private sphere was ubiquitous. Nevertheless, my interlocutors also recall frequent family meetings after the political transition. In post-communist Poland, face-to-face meetings remain the core of family life and continue to be culturally valued or even idealized as the main way to build family relationships.

In the view of the above, this and following chapter ask how families maintain contact across borders. I indicate that in the transnational setting family meetings in their previous form become disrupted and have to be redefined. On the most daily basis they shift into space which is less tangible, concentrated around “social visiting” (to borrow a term from Fischer’s classical study on telephones in the United States, 1992) through verbal and written, technologically mediated communication. Visiting through communications media is intertwined with physical visits to Poland and Finland. Both activities constitute a continuum of disembodied-embodied contact and are part of the wider, historically changing, transnational “communicative ecology” (Tacchi et al. 2009) – all the ways of communicating, including local interactions and access to media, which matter for the transnational engagement.

In this chapter, I address transnational communication maintained through letters, postcards, emails, phone calls and social networking sites. Although the above means of contact also connect family members locally, I indicate that in a transnational space technologically-mediated communication acquires heightened meaning and value. It becomes the core way of maintaining everyday transnational ties, arising into an informal transnational family ritual. Repetition and form constitute “tiny bits of formality” (Rothenbuhler 2008) of this new ritual while information and communication technology (from now on ICT) constitute its working tools.

I argue that transnational communication in its ritualized form is a culturally “instinctive” response to separation. Drawing on critical ritual analysis by Bell (1991), I

see it as a politically, economically and culturally structured and structuring power strategy, which allows family members separated by national borders to exercise influence and get what they want from others, whether it is affective or material support, sense of safety and belonging or acknowledgement of significance and moral worth. As such, transnational communication rituals are auxiliary to people's transition from a local to a transnational family, simultaneously re-producing and re-shaping the latter. At the larger level, the link between the access to ICT and the (geo)political environment indicates that even the most intimate practices are not innocent politically as they reproduce or challenge particular political economy order. The literature often indicates the importance of technology for transnational family maintenance, but it fails to analyse it thoroughly enough or link it to specific state interests and political regimes.⁴³

The chapter guides through different political economy contexts of communication and indicates the gradual decrease of constraining state surveillance and the expansion of ICT-mediated meetings in the transnational space. In the chapter, I try to capture different shades of family contact and avoid talking about technological "progress" which automatically results in emotionally rewarding transnational communication ritual. Particularly in the last section, I show that the above ritual can be meaningful without being satisfactory to all the sides involved.

Across the media curtain

An inevitable aspect of thinking about the past is recreating it from the perspective of the present. When my interlocutors were telling me of their transnational communication stretching back to the 1970s and further, they did it from the perspective of their immersion within the contemporary technological environment. They recalled the communication of the past decades for what it was not: easy, fast, sensually rich and politically neutral. Up until the 1990s, a phone call was the biggest communication gift one could enjoy. Its value was exacerbated by selective access and problems with connections, a reminder that there is a political, economic and cultural contingency behind every technological innovation and its distribution (Horst and Miller 2006, Saco 2002). To elaborate on the above, I shall start with the example of one of my interlocutors from Poland, Lucyna, whose close friend Alina moved to Finland in the 1970s.

⁴³ On the use of ICT in transnational intimate space see e.g. Baldassar et al. 2007; Wilding 2006, Viruell-Fuentes 2006, Vargas 2006, Horst 2006, Haiming 2005, Vertovec 2004, 2003, Pribilsky 2004, Tamagno 2002, Mahler 2001, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 2001. For Polish migration see for instance Bąk 2009, Burrell 2008b.

Lucyna led a relatively comfortable life in communist Poland. She and her husband lived in Łódź and considered themselves members of an elite. When Alina moved to Finland in 1979, Alina frequently wrote and telephoned to Lucyna. In Lucyna's words, "Alina called because apparently she lived a better life there [in Finland] than we here [in Poland]". In Finland Alina had a landline phone at home, likewise representing the average Finnish standard. Lucyna, on the other hand, was atypical in Poland. Statistically speaking, she belonged to a group of 82 per 1000 urbanities who had a telephone at home in 1980s Poland. In 1985 this number merely increased to 90 per 1000 persons (in the countryside the ratio of telephone owners was 18 out of 1000 persons) (Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 1980-1985).

When in 2008 I called Lucyna on a landline phone to arrange a meeting, I noticed in passing that her phone number was easy to remember. Later on, I realized that her telephone and her number had a story of their own. We met in her old apartment, a typical socialist high-rise building with over 300 flats and several entrances. The flat has not changed much since the old times, because Lucyna visited it only on weekends, now also owing a bigger house in the suburbs. The apartment was quite small. In the living room there was the wall unit (*meblościanka*) from the communist period, few other items of furniture and the landline phone on the side of the table. Lucyna, embedded in her old surroundings, recalled with excitement:

We had a second telephone line in our apartment block, can you imagine? Those were the days! Some big shot lived in our block and he was the first one to have a telephone, we were second. My husband had a good friend (*koleżanka*) who he was at high school with. Her husband was a director in the telephone department and at that time, oh my God, you had to wait ages to get a telephone! So my husband asked the friend if could she help him get a telephone. She arranged a meeting with her husband. When my husband went to talk to him, he exclaimed, "You're the last person from the class to come! I've already arranged (*złatawiłem*) a telephone for everybody else from the class!" So this is how we got a telephone. We really were bigwigs in our block (*byliśmy och i ach*). On top of that we could choose a telephone number for ourselves! That's why we have such a wonderful number [laughs].

Lucyna pondered on the irony of the situation. Her husband was an esteemed professional and yet his high position had nothing to do with them getting phone so quickly. By law, it was the state that had a monopoly over distributing telecommunication services in Poland. In this fortunate case, the state was represented by a school friend of Lucyna's husband. Owing to "connections" (*dojścia*), the couple could jump a queue lasting from ten to fifteen years for a telephone and overtake approximately 70,000 private applicants (Lewandowski 2009). Nevertheless, many other persons in my study were less fortunate.

Stain and Sinha (2002) indicate that information and communication systems are pivotal to political processes in democracies and non-democracies alike. In communist Poland, the state monopoly over the distribution of information and

communications technology and services was a way of controlling the citizen and maintaining the political status quo (Lewandowski 2009, 16).

Firstly, there was the ideological disfavour of the private communications system and light industry (the low-labour intensive industry producing for end consumers) over heavy industry and the public communication system (Lewandowski 2009, Rantanen 2001). In the 1970s, Edward Gierek became famous for his plans for the technological modernization of Poland based on old licenses from the West. Gierek's plan failed as the organization and management of a centrally-planned economy effectively hindered innovation and the widespread diffusion of technological novelties (Andreski 1986). By 1989, Poland had the poorest telephone network in Europe, excluding Albania (Kubasik 2004).

In the meantime, the Soviet threat and the capitalist logic favouring competitiveness and innovation accelerated ICT development in the West. When the Solidarity movement emerged, Reagan's administration supported it by sending a range of "soft" ICT unavailable in Poland (Collins 2006, 210). The official flow of technological novelties to the Eastern Bloc was inhibited by the Coordination Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM) embargo (Feltham 1997), exacerbating Poland's poor technological development.

Finland, by contrast, following the Western pattern, became a pioneer in the development of telecommunication technologies and services. By the 1950s-1960s Finland already had more telephones per 100 persons than Poland in the 1980s. In the 1970s, Finland joined a transnational project of developing the first-in-the-world cellular telecommunications network (Korhonen 2003, 2). This effective telecommunication strategy helped Finland become "a prototype of a high-tech society" two decades later (Lavery 2005, 160). Nevertheless, from the transnational perspective, Finland's technological development made little difference if it was not matched by the conditions in Poland, or at least if the international infrastructure between Poland and Finland was not good and affordable enough to make a telephone a worthy piece of technology.

This brings me to a second constraint of the Polish telecommunications system, namely deliberate limits on connections with the West. The international telecommunication infrastructure, apart from being heavily underinvested, was built along ideological lines. Connections within the Eastern Bloc were given priority, followed by connections with the key capital cities of Western Europe and finally with the rest of the world (Gołębiowski 2009). By the end of the Cold War, there was only one switch-exchange centre for international phone calls in Poland. In 1985, over 30 per cent of international phone calls were dealt with manually and up to six people were needed to operate a call through switching it from local, to long-distance to international lines (*ibid.*). Communist policy also affected the pricing. According to government policy, local connections in Poland were some of the cheapest in the

world, whereas long-distance and international ones were among the world's most expensive in absolute and relative terms (Kubasik 2004). The strategy was to let callers from abroad pay for the infrastructure and provide Poland with necessary foreign currency (Jajszczyk and Kubasik 1993).⁴⁴ My interlocutors in Finland were little aware of the double-edged nature of their actions, focusing instead on the repercussion of the telecommunications policies in their intimate transnational lives.

Struggling for a connection

In the political context described above, a transnational phone call between Poland and Finland became a ritual, made up of a series of mundane and annoying routines. Once people got connected, a phone call diminished the friction of space but it did not erase the sense of being physically in quite separate national and political locations. To hear each other's voices often demanded physical effort and time incomparable with contemporary experience. People had difficulty calling, even if the phone call was made in the intimacy of one's home. For instance Rafal, who has lived in Lahti, Finland, since the 1970s, recalled:

In the 1970s contacts with Poland were made very difficult for us. For example, it was hard getting a telephone connection with Poland. There were few international lines, you had to order a phone and wait for hours to get connected or try, try, just try, fifty times try before you got connected and whoever was lucky got connected. And this was on purpose, to make the telephone lines with the West as few as possible, so people wouldn't call, wouldn't be in contact.

The temporal extension of a phone call was doubled if attempts at getting connected took place outside one's home, at a neighbour's place or at the post-office. They entailed a bothersome presence of various gatekeepers, starting from the person who was enabling the access to a private telephone to the telecommunications company's employees who were essential for the realization of the connection. Furthermore, there was no guarantee that the telephone meeting would eventually take place. For instance Bogna, whose husband Leszek worked in Finland and with whom she reunited in Turku, Finland in the 1990s, recalled the uncertain success of the monthly ritual she devised to communicate with her husband, in the face of lack of a telephone at home. Similarly to Lucyna, they lived in a city (Gdańsk), in a block of flats, and drew on communal support to maintain contact:

I was using [the help of] friends who lived in the same building, in the next entrance. She was my friend, a doctor. I would order a phone call. I ordered it, came back [home], put the kids to bed, went to them and waited for hours to talk for a couple of minutes. And not always – sometimes there was no connection at all.

⁴⁴ I elaborate in Chapter Eight on communist Poland's dependency upon foreign currency .

As a result, the phone call evolved into a repetitive but relatively rare practice happening once or twice per month, or only on special occasions. It was a ritual given its special character, expectation, repetitiveness and bundling of small-time routines, but for the very reason of unpredictability of various factors it had less structure than people wished it to have. One might have agreed upon talking on a given day and hour, only to become disappointed when the phone call did not go through. At the same time, what the Polish state wanted to preclude became even more valuable.

Practices of dialling up and waiting for a connection were in themselves instrumental. As a part of the calling ritual however, they symbolized the strength and importance of family ties. The phone call was most explicitly significant for the person who initiated it, denoting the importance of particular people in his/hers life. Ties enacted through a phone call did not have to be equally important for both sides, but once the call recipients picked up the phone and engaged in talk, it suggested that they both had stakes in the relationship as well. I found no evidences of negation of the communication ritual during this period, rather emotional upheaval and mutual effervescence.⁴⁵

The meaning of caller's effort was exacerbated by its financial aspect. The phone call was a gift⁴⁶ and like a tangible gift it affected the household budget. Mostly for that reason, those in Finland were usually the call's gift-givers, that is the callers. "Phone calls were expensive, but they didn't consume the whole salary", Jan recalled. My interlocutors in Finland could also find ways to call cheaper, having cheaper deals with the telecommunication company or calling from work. Henryk recalled with amusement when during one of his work trips across Finland a public phone located near his hotel malfunctioned and allowed calling Poland for free. Quickly, a long queue of Polish people eager to call home formed in front of the phone booth. The above anecdote suggests people's willingness for spontaneous reaction if a suitable occasion arose. The engagement in regular tangible transnational activities may not always be possible, but people's readiness to do so suggests their continuous dwelling in the transnational space and flexibility rather than the rigidity of a transnational communication ritual.

Absence or limited reciprocal calling from Poland was an expected consequence of material inequalities across the Iron Curtain. Lack of straightforward "phone call" reciprocity did not practically bother anybody but Mariusz. Mariusz was disappointed that his parents – who lived in Warsaw and had a telephone – neither called him, nor sent him letters, whereas he would call them regularly. Sometimes

⁴⁵ On effervescence as a constitutive part of ritual, see the interaction theory of ritual by sociologist Randall Collins (2004).

⁴⁶ Miller and Slater (2000) similarly interpret e-mail exchanges in their ethnography of Internet in Trinidad.

though those in Poland would call more often, diminishing the apparently privileged position of those residing in Finland. Also, due to its high price, each phone call made from Poland was especially appreciated and softened the aforementioned imbalance. It was imagined that the more money you spent on communicating, the more weight it had for you and the more weight it should have in evaluating your engagement in the relationship.

Conversations on the phone were usually brief and remained so at least until the first half of the 1990s. When people got connected, they rarely talked for more than ten-fifteen minutes. A phone call served less for a casual talk and more for greetings and brief information exchange. It was about “pinpointing” the most important life events and asking the most vital questions: “Is everything all right”, “Is everybody OK?” Emotional excitement was reaching its peak. To paraphrase the family ritual scholars, Wolin and Bennett (1984, 410), even if not all the senses were engaged in a phone call, its participants were “in a hyperactive state”. It was a discharge of energy accumulated throughout the period of transnational silence, in reaction to hearing the *close ones’* voice and the faint possibility of tuning each others’ nervous systems in synchronous interaction. For those in Finland, the emotional experience was the greater, the less contact with “Polishness” they had in Finland. Every phone call to Poland meant the opportunity for speaking and hearing Polish, which had not been spoken nor heard perhaps for months. It was “taking in” family life and Polishness at the same time. To quote Basia, who has moved to Kuhmoinen, a small town in central Finland, from Warsaw:

Apart from me, there was only one other Polish person in Kuhmoinen: Me and my close friend. [...] As I say, if only my parents had had a telephone. You could call, you could talk. Sometimes, when they called, I was like ‘err, err’ [Basia acts as if she were out of breath]. I didn’t know how to start, how to start, what to say, and you know when somebody calls and you don’t have much time, you only ask if everybody’s OK, if everything’s all right. It’s hard to come up with other stuff when there’s no time.

Limited access to Polish mass media and Polish people placed additional stress on telecommunications. The news about the everyday lives of various family members, economic conditions and political events as well as a chance to speak Polish had to be compressed into a few minutes of interaction. Judyta, another of my female interlocutors, represents the most extreme instance of the above as she melted into tears every time she called Poland. Judyta was thrown into a Finnish social world and was overwhelmed by Finnish language. Similarly to Basia, she lived in a small Finnish town with few Poles nearby. She looked for emotional and cultural relief in a phone call communication, but often had difficulty achieving it. “I was just not able to talk”, she recalled. “It was a problem. Because I was not able to talk on the phone. I cried on the phone”. This evokes the degree of physical interaction involved in a telephone conversation, a voice representing the entire body of the other speaker, but also

indicates how the transnational context may totally reformulate what in a local, national-bound setting may appear as the simple act of a phone call.

In the face of phone-call tribulations, the means of transnational communication which offered more reflexivity and peace in shaping the words and could complement information exchange in a predictable and rhythmic manner was written correspondence. For centuries, letters and postcards – the letter's shorter form (Barton and Hall 2000, 6), have been a common way of connecting people living apart. Also many of my interlocutors wrote intensively. Letters allowed one to create a “thicker” picture of Polish and Finnish reality than short and voice-bound telephone conversations. A “thick” picture was important, for it was easier to imagine somebody's presence having at least some knowledge of his or hers immediate surroundings. To enrich simple epistolary experience adult family members attached photos and newspaper clippings, and children made drawings. Women exchanged culinary recipes.⁴⁷ Finland's cultural and political “exoticness” (as a little-known, distant country) evoked curiosity in Poland. “I wrote to my family not because we were far from each other geographically, but because we were far politically”, Bronisław said. In contrast to phone calls, written correspondence could be also stored and displayed as a memento of the relationship and a tangible proof of various acts of support, which could be very useful in the moments of future family conflicts. Through material tangibility, the correspondence evoked what Baldassar (2008) studying Italian transnational families called a “co-presence by proxy”, and long-lastingly confirmed that transnational family members were present in each other's lives if somebody tried to prove otherwise.

Furthermore, epistolary practice helped initiate communication and thus empower those who in communist Poland had few resources to initiate a phone-call. Wincenty acknowledged that it was his mother who started their regular monthly or even bi-weekly letter exchange in the 1970s: “She wrote to me. I responded. One can say that in this way it was her initiative”. Bronisław still keeps the letters in which his brother and sister-in-law asked him and thanked him for the remittances. For Bronisław, the letters are a confirmation of his gracious support during the Cold War period, about which they forgot. The “unseen” (Bell 1991) remains for him the way his family managed to exercise influence over him from afar.

Certainly, communication via letters had its well-known drawbacks. These included substantial asynchrony and the necessity of having health and the cultural capabilities to write. Not everybody saw themselves in the role of letter writers. Mariusz recalled how his mother had spent three years writing him a letter and had never

⁴⁷ The exchange of culinary recipes and crying on the phone (men did not admit doing it, and I suppose they have rarely if ever done it given Polish cultural norms of masculinity) are among two gender-divergent elements of transnational communication I documented.

finished it. Furthermore, letter writing might have been good as a means of emotional relief, but it was insufficient to deal with urgent matters. During the Cold War, the postal service in Poland was part of the same organizational unit as the telecommunications and like the latter was technologically underdeveloped and understaffed. Demand for the services exceeded supply (Lewandowski 2009), prolonging the time lag between letter sending and receipt. Finally, and particularly for the Cold War period, epistolary practice posed a problem of suspected or actual loss of privacy due to state surveillance.

State-monitored rituals

A tacit aspect of a family ritual is a sense of intimacy related to the participation in the ritual only by people who are intended to participate in it. Ritual is meant to bond family members through the processes of inclusion and exclusion. As mentioned in the previous section, unwelcome third parties were already present in the transnational communication ritual when one had to use the public spaces or other people's homes to talk. By monitoring private communication through censoring letters and recording phone calls, the Polish state encroached on an intimate transnational sphere with unprecedented totality. The state transformed from an invisible actor into an overt participant in transnational family life, with whose authority family members had to count.

The Polish authorities monitored postal correspondence unofficially and with varied intensity throughout the entire communist period. As a result, my interlocutors could never be sure whether their letters were checked or not. Explaining why in the 1980s she preferred to call her husband rather than write, Bogna said:

Of course there was letter correspondence but obviously there was censorship and letters took a month to arrive. I have heard that our city was the only city in Poland where [the authorities] checked 100 per cent of the correspondence; they were opening and checking them. So there was no other choice, only the telephone was left.

The only period when the authorities made mass surveillance official was the Martial Law. During Martial Law, the authorities officially monitored and censored both postal communications and telecommunications. According to Majchrzak (2004), the Martial Law surveillance mostly worked psychologically. The aim of the authorities was to terrorize people and let them feel that all their communicative activities were being diligently observed. In practice, technological limitations precluded mass surveillance. For this reason not all my interlocutors experienced what Basia did, “that when the letters arrived, they had a big stamp on the envelope: ‘censored’. They were being opened and closed again”.

Callers were informed of the fact of having their conversations tapped by the message “monitored conversation” appearing throughout the call. “It was just like in

the movies”, Henryk told me, tacitly suggesting that despite our age difference (Henryk came to Finland in his twenties, in 1979) we share common images of communism and its transnational workings.⁴⁸ The movie to which Henryk referred, reinforced the “monitored-conversation” phrase’s iconic symbolism. Although the message did not appear upon calling all Polish destinations, people expected phone-tapping. Bogdan, for instance, always heard a suggestive “echo” in the telephone receiver. Mariusz was sure his family home in Poland was bugged due to his sister’s oppositionist activity.

Generally, the idea of the state’s overt interference was disliked but there was little one could do. People limited themselves to discussing grand politics and focused on their intimate lives. Jan said that “at best [the censors] would read I went with my pals for a beer. I wrote about what was going on here [in Finland], about everyday life and where we went for our holidays”. Transnational family members had to derive the macropolitical context of each other’s lives from other sources. Bogdan, for instance, living in Turku – a city with a substantial Swedish community – complemented information exchanged with his sister with the news broadcasted on Finnish and Swedish TV. He considered himself rather well informed, as Poland during Martial Law was prominently present in the foreign media. His sister “hinted” to him that she did not want to discuss political issues. Although in my study, censorship was mainly Poland’s domain, Bogdan indicated the peculiarity of Finnish media space as well:

I mainly got news about Poland from the newspapers, because telephone conversations were monitored during Martial Law. There was a lot of news about Poland in the Finnish media, despite Finland being pro-Russian. I was also getting a lot of news from the Swedish media. In Finland the news in Swedish and in Finnish do not correspond. There are two different reports. Finland, on the other hand, was in a state of dependency [on the Soviet Union], well not as much dependency as it tried to maintain good relations with the Soviet Union.⁴⁹

It should be mentioned that domestic communications in Poland were monitored as well. In the transnational context though, the state undermined the sense of intimacy of the core family ritual and potentially limited the possibility of joining together the Polish and Finnish habitats⁵⁰ – which were already curtailed by other aspects of the transnational environment – in their fuller context. It was harder to imagine the presence of others transnationally if the background was unknown.

In telephone conversations, my interlocutors sometimes explicitly acknowledged the presence of unwelcomed third parties by addressing them openly. Henryk upon hearing the message of “monitored conversation” for the first time, responded to the

⁴⁸ Henryk referred to the Polish comedy *Monitored Conversations* (1991) directed by Sylwester Chęciński.

⁴⁹ Bogdan’s reflection corresponds to Laakia’s (2009) observation of the Finnish media at that time.

⁵⁰ I use the term “habitat” rather than “world”, seeing the latter as too bounded (cf. Hannerz 1996).

supposed censors blatantly, “if you want to monitor [the conversation] than you can kiss my a...” Bronislaw told them, “Monitored conversation? Let it be monitored! You don’t have to write down or record anything, because the stuff I’m discussing is apolitical – I am talking to my brother [after all]!” The above attitude carried a symbolic defiance, reflecting the overall atmosphere of the period: the Polish nation against the state, the politically-personal lives against the politics of the communist authorities. Only here it was a transnationally stretched Polish nation against the Polish de-territorialized state.

13 December 1981: contact interrupted

Official censorship was among the more extreme forms of state intervention into transnational communication. The most radical measure was shutting down all communication. By law (1955, 1961, 1984) the communist government was entitled to “suspend or limit” the functioning of the entire communications infrastructure if “the state’s interest” would demand it. My interlocutors were totally cut off from transnational contact only once, during the initial period of Martial Law. On 13 December 1981, the Polish borders were closed and the external and domestic communication via post and telephone was blocked.

The disruption undermined the sense of stability and security brought by transnational communication. Letters did not arrive. The telephone on the Polish side was silent. The sudden silence caught people by surprise. Moreover, it was accompanied by the dramatic news on the events in Poland broadcasted by the Finnish media and limited news about the outside world in Poland. Again, the entire communicative ecology of the transnational mattered for the personal experiences of the lack of contact. For instance, Mariusz recalled:

I first got to know about Martial Law from the TV news, then from the radio, than we watched it on the TV, oh Jesus! What will happen? My family, what will happen to them? They’ll kill everybody! Because you didn’t know what would happen, how it would be. I didn’t have any contacts with Poland then.

When Mariusz finally managed to telephone his parents, he discovered that his sister had been arrested for oppositionist activity and her house was set on fire by the Secret Service. “There was nothing I could do”, Mariusz reflected. Another of my interlocutors, Bronislaw, after four months of failed attempts to contact his family, found a way to go to Warsaw under business pretences. Only from there did he manage to make an inter-city phone call to his brother, notifying him about his arrival in Poland.

A particularly gripping situation was recalled by Henryk’s mother Aldona, and Henryk himself, who for the first time in their lives were not in contact with each other (“Since he was a little boy, Henryk has always reported to me of his whereabouts”, Aldona told me during our meeting at her home in Radom, Poland). Their experiences

were the more dramatic considering that, as I noted in Chapter Four, Henryk was about to return to Poland in December 1981:

Aldona: Yes. The Martial Law period was the worst. Henryk was supposed to return for Christmas. [...] But Martial Law came and he stayed and it was a real nightmare for us. I only sat and listened to Radio Free Europe. I wanted to know if they would say something about the Poles abroad, I wanted to know what was going on there. Later on Henryk told me that he even thought about sending us a message through Radio Free Europe that he was OK, [...] but his friends advised him not to. They told him if he'd done it, he would have endangered his parents, that they could have been harassed on account of him being [in Finland]. Only later on, when his friend came back from Finland to Wloclawek [a town in northern Poland] we got to know more. The friend called us, and since it was risky to talk on the phone, he only told us he had news from Henryk and told us to come to Wloclawek. He gave us his address. My husband went with my older son to see him and only then did we find out Henryk was fine, he had survived, he had a job and so on. But those months without contact were really terrible. It was totally different [than it is now].

For Henryk, on the other hand, the impending transnational contact ended up having serious physical consequences for him. He recalled:

At some point, due to all this stress, a nerve in my face got damaged and I was struck with facial paralysis. Everything from the face down was fine; just my face was like cut in half. On one side nothing moved, one eye was constantly open, my tongue was in half. When I drank a beer, I experienced two tastes. [...] So I think it was because of what was happening in Poland. I am sure of that. All the nerves, when one did not know what was going on. One could not go. Well, nothing was known.

Martial Law showed to what extent regular and continuous enactment of contact is important for the well-being of individuals, their cultural identifications and moral self-worth, linked closely to the possibility of the functioning of the family as an effective – that is mutually supportive – collectivity. The transnational communication ritual is not only a tangible way of maintaining and building family relationships but also provides a trace of proof that the other person is well or at least alive, likewise providing a trace of ontological security. Martial Law is also engraved in people's minds as a particularly unpleasant and politicized period of communication.

Telestroika

The process of “telestroika” accompanying the dismantling of the Media-Iron Curtain (Tarjanne, cited in Sitaram 1999) have spurred the liberalization of transnational communication across Poland and Finland. The reinforcement of Poland's position on the post-Cold War global market was the key goal of a new Polish government, the achievement of which could only be reached with the development and improvement of the Polish telecommunication infrastructure (Kubasik 2004). Under new capitalist regulations the installation of landline phones became much easier and waiting periods

decreased to two-three months. Within 1990-2003 the number of fixed telephone lines quadrupled (Kubasik 2006, 58). Mobile telephones gained increased consumer appeal. By 2002 mobile penetration rates in Poland exceeded the fixed ones (Kubasik 2006, 56) and by 2008 83.5% of Polish households had a mobile phone (Central Statistical Office of Poland 2008). The access to broadband lines increased rapidly, contributing to the popularization of the Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephones and IM services in Poland. Lason et al. (2008) consider the high number of Poles living abroad who wish to maintain contact with Poland as a significant factor in the further development of affordable Internet-based communication in Poland.

For my interlocutors all the above technological shifts are important ways through which to capture changes in their transnational family life. They also constitute a convenient metaphor for capturing wider cultural changes in Poland. The perspective presented by Waclaw and Slawka, an elderly couple from Strzelin, a small town in southern Poland, whose daughter lives in Finland, is a good example here. The story was told me by the couple on the phone (I was in Finland), during a conversation lasting several hours. The main narrator was Waclaw. Slawka sat beside him and commented from the background.

When Waclaw's and Slawka's daughter Helena left with her husband and children to Finland, they did not see each other for nearly three years, although they remained in intensive letter contact. Additionally, Helena called them every week. Waclaw and Slawka felt "huge remorse" that their children (for they consider Helena's husband as their son) spent so much money on telecommunicating with them. They themselves called Finland very rarely. They could hardly afford making international phone calls, even if Waclaw was a respected local official. Waclaw and Slawka only felt relief when they came to Finland and discovered the kind of life their children enjoyed. Helena and her family lived in a semi-detached house in Hyvinkää, near Helsinki. Waclaw recalled:

When we entered the house, and we saw the interior, when we saw a good quality TV, when we saw a VCR recorder, which in Poland was already possible but not for us as yet, not for that time. In relation to us, to our chances they were far, far ahead of us. Because they went very fast, they went in a fast-forward. The TV, VCR, camera. They had modernity, which was here [in Poland] to a much smaller degree, at the very least not achievable so quickly.

Nonetheless, Waclaw and Slawka with Helena's and Wiktor's help have gradually reached the degree of "modernity" achievable in Finland, although Finland still seems to be one step ahead. Throughout the 1990s, they got a VCR, a camera, a mobile phone and a new TV. The technology present in both households has been important in maintaining continuous transnational contact. In recent years, Waclaw and Slawka's technological equipment has been quickly upgraded. Recently, Wiktor and Helena bought their parents a flat screen TV which replaced their old tube TV. The VCR was

replaced by a DVD player, and the old VCR recordings from Finland transferred to DVD. Buying the flat screen TV has been in a sense necessary, because the old TV was incompatible with the DVD player. Now Waclaw and Slawka also have a computer at their home. It is a second-hand item given to them by their grandson, who was upgrading his equipment. He lives nearby and promised to come twice a week to teach Waclaw basic computer skills so that “they can talk with Helena, Wiktor and their family easily”. “You’ll talk as much as you want to, you’ll see each other and it will be great”, the grandson told them.

For Waclaw and Slawka, who experienced transnational separation after the Cold War, the ICT development amounts to a temporal and spatial allegory about changes in Poland, Finland remaining somewhere in the future but with the distance between the countries shrinking gradually. Changing technology evokes Poland’s “progress” from the parochial and disconnected Soviet modernity towards the positively charged, “true” modernity of the West. Waclaw’s and Slawka’s reaction implies that communist Poland was not so much “unmodern” and completely lacked technological innovations, than that its possessions faded in comparison with the ideological enemy. One might have “cheated” oneself of Cold War Poland’s “modern” outlook, if one solely made the comparison with Poland’s pre-communist past and never looked towards the capitalist West. Therefore, by coming to Finland family members from Poland could become more acutely aware of their technological inferiority, which they interpreted – in terms of the well-known narrative of capitalist progress – as their own spatio-temporal backwardness.

Nowadays Poland – my interlocutors would suggest – is finally catching up with the “developed” parts of the world, reclaiming its rightful position there. During the Cold War, there was little possibility for the evening out of technological inequalities across the Iron Curtain and according to various scholars (Castells 1998, Rantanen 2001, among others) technological inertia was an important reason for the Eastern Bloc’s collapse. The transition brought about a new political atmosphere for transnational communication. Under the communist regime, transnational actors were ideologically suspicious and their contact was enacted against the state’s infrastructural design. In the capitalist economy, on the other hand, they are important and valuable consumers to whom the newest, faster, and cheaper technological innovations can be addressed and the more they communicate the better (cf. Guarnizo 2003).

The above logic is noticed more readily by persons who, like Waclaw and Slawka, have lived transnationally for some time. Persons who have started their transnational lives already with the Internet and mobile telephones tend to take the favourable environment of transnational communication for granted. The smoothness of contact can easily take away attention from the external regulations and the powers of nation-states on the telecommunication market. If anything, the significance of political governance is tacitly noted when the family members in Poland still do not use

advanced technologies for financial or infrastructural reason. Such reasons are associated with the different capitalist systems of Finland and Poland. Finnish capitalism is seen as effective and high-tech, and Polish capitalism as bureaucratic and sluggish.

Meetings expanded

Changes in the technological environment are met with excitement, amazement, and especially among the older generation like Waclaw and Slawka, total disbelief. Waclaw told me: “When I saw it [an online video conversation] for the first time I told my wife ‘Heavens! Let’s go from here!’ The things which happen now have exceeded our boldest expectations”. However, I would argue that the thrill does not mean that the new ICTs have changed transnational family members’ lives in some extraordinary new ways. Rather, they allow desires to be addressed which have been culturally well established, but previously unfulfilled or fulfilled only partially. Daniel Miller and Don Slater, describing the rapid development of the Internet in Trinidad and its ready adoption by the Trinidadians, call this phenomenon an “expansive realization”. They argue:

[In expansive realization] identity in relation to the Internet is not best understood as novel or unprecedented but rather as helping people to deliver on pledges that they have already made to themselves about themselves. In some cases this was a state that had been realized but then lost; in other cases it was projected but never yet attained. (2000, 11)

Their argumentation can be regarded as a follow-up to what was documented by Claude Fischer (1992) on the implementation of landline telephones in America. Fischer indicated that Americans used the telephone to pursue more vigorously their existing way of life rather than dramatically alter it. Similarly Ulla Vuorela (2009c) shows how mobile telephones in Tanzania comes in the succour of tradition rather than totally undermining it. My observations corroborate the above. In the 1990s and particularly in the last decade, intimate transnational communication has increased manifold, and increasingly those in Poland have been in a position to initiate it. The need among family members for intimate and casual conversation, which was realized when family lived together in Poland, can finally be realized in the transnational space as well. Simultaneously, the notion of family as based on sharing and support, and of Polishness as built upon sociability, “talking things out” and Polish language is being (re)produced.

Contemporary voice visiting has two forms. Firstly, transnational family members call each other with the purpose of exchanging specific information, in the situation of emergencies or extraordinary events. Here the mobile phone as a “mobile” device comes in handy, making people accessible outside of fixed locations and at any time. As practically all the *close ones* living in Poland have a phone, if they want to talk

they either call by themselves or in a nuanced way suggest it by sending a short text message or make a short call to which those in Finland respond by calling back.

Secondly, there are systematic, ritualized calls to chat about “everything and nothing”. In this case, people use various ICTs akin to a classic landline telephone.⁵¹ They talk in fixed locations, sitting on a couch, lying in bed or doing mundane activities as smoking or eating. These voice meetings are often more time-specific, for instance people talk every Friday at seven p.m., Monday morning, Sunday afternoon, on weekend evenings. Schedules of some of the above develop “naturally” (“my mother has got used to the fact that I call her on Friday”) or are openly agreed upon, reserved for times when people have space and energy for longer and focused conversations and when intensive emotional entrainment can be more readily accomplished. Additionally, text messages are used to soften transnational schedules and micro-coordinate the event. This is similar to the use of the mobile in a local setting (see for instance Ling 2004, Ling and Yttri 2002 on mobile telephones in Norway) only here the micro-coordination regards meetings mediated by yet another communications technology. If the family’s situation changes, communication rituals can shift from weekly to daily calls, from thirty minutes to one-hour talks.

The meetings often take place via Voice-over-Internet-Protocol telephony (VoIP), mainly Skype free of charge. Otherwise, ordinary landline or mobile telephones are used and the family members in Finland are usually the ones to call. The presumption is that they are continuously better located to initiate a longer and more frequent call. It is however a matter of subtler understanding than in the past, since the relative differences between people’s economic and infrastructural positions in Poland and Finland diminishes. The capitalist systems, particularly within the European Union, are more difficult to contrast with each other than capitalism with communism. For the same reasons, calls made from Finland (or from Poland) are a less significant gift than before, which diminishes the gift-giving imbalance between the caller and recipient.

The type of phone technology used to maintain transnational contact is dependent upon given situation and personal preference. For some, using Internet to call is easy and effortless. For others, it emerges as too time-consuming: it takes more time than the preferred “taking the phone, dialling up and getting connected”. On the other hand, the Voice-over-Internet technology offers the possibility of the “Face”-over-Internet interaction, which means the simultaneous involvement of the senses of sight and hearing. “Now you can talk for almost free, set up a camera and be close, see the face of your *close one*”, Bogna remarked. It is now possible to talk, see each other and share a meal together, a situation closely mimicking face-to-face interaction.

⁵¹ See also Horst and Miller (2006) on cell-phone use in Jamaica.

Wireless internet and built-in webcams on laptops enhance the experience of co-presence even further. During a meeting with one of my interlocutors, Marta, while we were eating and drinking, her cousin from Poland called via Skype. For the next hour, I was “entrained” (to use Collins’s term) into the family conversation. First, it took place by the table. Then we switched to the balcony where my host smoked several cigarettes. Wherever we went, the cousin “went” with us. While discussing life in Finland and in Poland, and the cousin’s recent work experience in France, we had our drinks and the cousin had his. We raised our glasses to each other a couple of times. I had the impression that the cousin had just made a causal visit and I happened to be there to meet him. Portable computer-camera was a significant addition to the Skype conversations. Our interaction had a natural physical rhythm; we did not stay glued to one place all the time. Of course, I have been a witness numerous times when my interlocutors talked on the ordinary phone with Poland. Nevertheless, it was a very different experience. I did not participate in the interaction; at best, I could hear the voice of one party. The talk was also much shorter. Even if it was the “visit” to Finland and to the apartment I was currently sitting in, I was cut out of the picture. The ritual and emotional entrainment was theirs, not mine.

Finally, my interlocutors appropriate new technologies to maintain more asynchronous interactions. I have already indicated how the exchange of text messages gives people power to initiate voice communication if they themselves do not want to pay for it, or how the SMS is used to micro-coordinate the virtual meeting. The text message also functions as a form of stand-alone communication. To illustrate, Alina and Lucyna mentioned before have almost totally substituted letters and postcards with text messages. Husbands in Finland exchange SMSs with their spouses who stayed behind. Particularly in transnational marriages, the SMS constitutes more than the “lightweight awareness of connection with others” as Ito and Okabe (2006, 264) describes text messaging in Japan. Through text messaging with their spouses, men can find meaning in the loneliness and tribulations of their life in Finland, and address longing and jealousy. SMSs, akin to epistolary correspondence, are less ephemeral than chatting or phone calls and thus can be stored and read repeatedly (to oneself and to others, like me). Unlike letters though, they allow a fast response, constituting therefore a concrete “proof” that the romantic relationship exists as for today or yesterday, not a month ago. I asked a temporary worker Janek:

Anna: So are you [and your wife] still together?

Janek: Well yes, at least until yesterday. Because yesterday I still got an SMS [Laughs] [...]. They wrote they love me, they’re missing me, they’re waiting.

Against the ubiquity of voice communication and no problems with time zones,⁵² I did not note an intensive email exchange. My interlocutors mostly reserve emails for special occasions, to pursue less important relationships or when they do not have the energy or possibility to call.

Email writing has become a particularly pronounced ritual for Aleksandra, who has lived in Salo, southern Finland, since 1991. Aleksandra treats emails as the continuation of letter writing she used to enjoy and the valuable opportunity for mastering Polish literary language. She considers language an important determinant of her “Polishness”, which she arduously tries to maintain. Aleksandra told me:

In the past, when phone calls were expensive, I wrote a lot of letters. Now I practically don't send any. [...] I only call. And I write an email to my close friends if I don't feel like calling them. [...] So I sit and write. I write for an hour or so. Besides, emails are very good for developing your language skills. You have to think about the structure and the order of sentences. I should read more books in Polish – I think they would help me to write better. We have a whole library at home, but I just don't have time. I see that my friends have no problem with writing long emails, that they have the easiness of writing [...] So emails are good. They exercise the brain more than simple speaking. When you speak, you may even speak ungrammatically, convey some unstructured forms [laughs].

Aleksandra's consideration of emails' linguistic dimension is a significant counter-point to why some of my interlocutors do not like writing. Aleksandra laughed at her Polish friend living in the United States who sends her emails so ungrammatical and misspelled that they are “embarrassing” to read. My second generation interlocutors are particularly afraid of the embarrassment. When they decide to write, it often takes them time and effort to compose even a short text message and the effect can be dissatisfying anyhow. One of my interlocutors in Poland told me with amusement: “When my nephew [from Finland] recently sent me an SMS I couldn't make it out at all”, thus confirming that the senders' fear of judgment was justified. I myself received ungrammatical messages from my second-generation interlocutors. One of the girls told me, “My God, you do write fast [in Polish]!”, when she saw me typing a message. The necessity to write well is one of the reasons why face-to-face contact is the easiest for the above group.

Social Networking Sites

One of the research difficulties with technologically-mediated communication is how ephemeral and short-lived its technological medium can be (Beer and Burrows 2007,

⁵² There is a one-hour difference between Poland and Finland. Significantly different time-zones as the factor impeding transnational telephone communication was noted for instance by Baldassar et al. (2007).

Wilson and Peterson 2002). Throughout my fieldwork, I have witnessed people's growing use of certain Internet technologies which were a non-issue when I started the fieldwork. Around 2008, to transnational telephony, chatting, emailing and the SMS exchange, my interlocutors added communication via social networking site Nasza-Klasa and later on, Facebook.

Nasza-Klasa ("Our-class", in short NK) is a Polish social networking site, which was designed for reconnecting with old schoolmates. Its full title states meaningfully "Nasza-Klasa: the place of meetings". Nasza-Klasa has a lot of parallels with Facebook which is nowadays NK's main rival in Poland. However, as Facebook has been established in a particular, Harvard and elitist environment, so Nasza-Klasa is a product of a particular cultural space. It was created by a few Polish students who, as they say, wanted to stay in touch with people from their high school class (Konikowski 2008). The company's "headquarters" were in a small apartment in a block of flats. Nasza-Klasa draws upon a well-established phenomenon in Polish culture. Even before the site became popular, Hanna and Tadeusz, a Polish couple living in Finland, told me:

We have a small family but we have many very close friends who are like family. We still keep in touch with close friends (*przyjaciele*) from high school. We both had class reunions. The division into classes, for instance in high school, is very important. The biggest friendships (*przyjaźnie*) are made then.

The phrase "Nasza-Klasa" also reverberates in Polish culture through a song with the same title written in the 1980s by Jacek Kaczmarski, a bard of the Solidarity movement. The song describes the globally dispersed schoolmates from one class, which stands as the metaphor of the Polish nation scattered around the world after the political/economic "exodus" of the 1980s. Likewise, people's networks build on Nasza-Klasa exceed the class environment and go well beyond the Polish state border.

The following story of Basia, complemented by the account of her brother, Edward, and his wife, Joanna, is a good example of Nasza-Klasa's role in the intimate transnational life of my interlocutors. It says a great deal about new modes of transnational communication, the intricate webs of Polish relatedness and cultural borders of the apparently borderless Internet. It is also an indication of the evening out of Polish-Finnish infrastructural differences, whereby Poland may sometimes occur as a privileged location.

I met Basia through a friend of my mother, who was Basia's primary classmate. He reconnected with Basia through Nasza-Klasa and discovered she had moved to Finland. My mother's friend told me she would gladly meet me. We met at her home in Kuhmoinen, a Finnish town where she lives with her Finnish husband and daughter. Several years ago, Basia's young son died tragically. Her life fell apart. One day Basia's brother living in Poland, Edward, told her about Nasza-Klasa and their old friends he

had found through the site. I talked to Edward and his wife at their home in Skierniewice.⁵³ Edward recalled:

I signed up to Basia's "class" because Ewa, Basia's friend who was already signed to their class, was a very good friend of mine. We lived very close to each other. Ewa was Basia's age and Ewa's brother was my age so we always went to school together, the four of us. So when I joined their class on NK and I saw Ewa there, I added her as my friend and she added me as her friend and then I wrote to her. She was asking me about Basia. I told her that Basia did not use the Internet, she did not even have a computer. Ewa told me to "do something [about it]". I said "OK, I will figure something out". I told Basia to buy herself a computer - "it is not so expensive after all", I told her. She told me, "It is not about the money. I just have no idea how to operate it". So I told her, "No problem, I'll teach you!"

On Edward's instigation Basia eventually decided to buy herself a computer and install the Internet. She asked a Finnish neighbour in Kuhmoinen for help:

When Edward told me about Nasza-Klasa I bought myself a small laptop which had *mokkula* ["wireless Internet" in Finnish], but I didn't even know how to use it! Only my neighbour taught me a bit, although I used to attend computer classes. But I forgot everything. So he helped me.

Basia's Finnish neighbour was helpful in teaching her computer basics, but he was unable to navigate Basia through Nasza-Klasa, a Polish-only site. It was an area of the Internet and a sociocultural dimension of Basia's life to which he had limited access. At this point, Edward took over the role of technological guide. Basia quickly learnt how to navigate the site. It was her "wake up call"; an emotional breakthrough and the beginning of active Internet use to maintain intimate ties with Poland:

I told you I buy [technological] toys which I don't play with. You just buy stuff to find a new amusement. That's why Nasza-Klasa is a great thing. You asked me whether I'd ever been *masentunut*, depressed. Ania, for three years since my daughter died ... I have no recollection of these three years. None whatsoever. I went to work, I shopped, I cooked, I ate, I slept. For three years I had no dreams.[...] That's why meeting my old friends (*koleżanki i koledzy*) after so many years, forty years at least, was something that sparked my interest. I woke up and realized that some other life is possible. Because really after these three years it seemed that I have to look for something new, pressure myself, otherwise I'll drive myself to death.

Several months after Basia's class had reunited virtually, they held a face-to-face class reunion in Poland. Again, Basia's brother was of assistance, going to the reunion as a cameraman. His role also continued later on when Basia, reinvigorated by the site, decided to further refresh her youthful friendships:

⁵³ A town in central Poland.

Edward: Basia asked me to contact her high school friend, Marzena, who she couldn't find on Nasza-Klasa. I also knew Marzena very well. [...] But later on I lost contact with her. I tried to find her, later on she told me she also tried to find me. Finally, Basia really mobilized me to look for Marzena and I found her [...].

Joanna [Edward's wife]: And now once in a while Basia asks you to find somebody else.

Edward: Yes, and that's great because finally something is happening in her life. [...]

Joanna: She's livened up, thanks to the contacts.

Like most of my interlocutors, Basia showed me the location of her transnational virtual meetings, that is where her computer is. It was in the room of her departed son – a telling location, which although not deliberately, points to the void her new transnational ritual helps to fill.

Basia's story is evocative of the dynamics of transnational communication and people's readiness to appropriate new technologies to maintain contact and socially expand their transnational life. Before Basia discovered the Internet, she used ordinary telephones and letters to communicate. From today's perspective, she deems it totally insufficient. "I wish such possibilities existed when my parents were still alive", she told me. Nowadays Basia uses both Nasza-Klasa and Skype regularly. She talks much more than before with her two closest persons in Poland, her brother and her best friend – a goddaughter to Basia's daughter. As shown above, Basia also significantly re-expanded her social networks. Many people who had disappeared from her life well before she came to Finland have reappeared in it forty years later, thanks to the mutual intersection of family and non-family ties accompanying Basia's use of new communication technologies.

Apart from Basia, many of my interlocutors started to include entries on Nasza-Klasa into their ritual transnational activities. Significantly, Nasza-Klasa sparked the interest of many middle-age persons who have lived in Finland for fifteen years and more. Via the site, they regularly send messages, post comments and pictures, and participate in class forums. As Basia's example indicates, although the site was created to maintain school friendships, it has also quickly become a transnational family space. On Nasza-Klasa, various types of relationships intersect, complexifying the web of transnational relatedness. To my surprise, second-generation persons are also involved in the site. Since they grew up in Finland, there are no Polish classes to which they can belong and thus their link to the site runs mainly through family: parents, uncles, aunts and cousins.

My interlocutors' accounts and my own observation of the website indicate that Nasza-Klasa helps celebrating transnational togetherness. An important part of Nasza-Klasa activity is picture posting. The anthropologist of kinship, Mary Bouquet (2001) conceives of pictures as "cultural rhetoric" through which particular kinship forms are (re)produced. Many of the pictures posted by my interlocutors portray transnational

family members reunited in Poland or Finland. They help remember and perpetuate family reunions in a symbolic “place of meeting”. Through pictures, transnational family members erase distance and separation, and construct their family as if spatially united; that is as if the separation never took place. In addition, on the pictures taken in Finland the Finnish landscape is transnationalized by inserting people who are “out of place” (Edensor 2002), the guests from Poland. On the other hand, those in Finland can reclaim the Polish landscape as one’s own through taking pictures of themselves in Poland, a message reinforced by being surrounded by their *close ones* who stayed.

Comments posted under the pictures (practically always in Polish) allow for the clarification and the negotiation of their meaning. Comments involve the appraisal of family, personal appearances, Finnish landscape and activities associated with it, like skiing or fishing, as well as their comparison with the Polish context. Some of the comments have an explicitly patriotic tone and give Poland and the family an explicitly positive value. Poles living in Finland, their *close ones* from Finland, from Poland, as well as Poles living elsewhere, all participate in the exchange of comments, creating a transnational multivocal dialogue. This mixture of actors gives an impression of the social space inhabited by people who share Poland as a cultural and symbolic point of departure, but are not bound to it.

As a Polish person and a researcher, I also opened a profile on Nasza-Klasa. Ironically, I found out about the site from one of my interlocutors in Finland, before the site became popular in Poland. Here my research affected my intimate life, as I immediately contacted my best friend (and a former classmate) and we initiated a class webpage together. Simultaneously, I started to realize that my second generation interlocutors and Finns use Facebook in general. To be up to date with “Finnish” things I created a Facebook profile. At that time, none of my *close ones* in Poland belonged to the site. Throughout 2008 and 2009, Nasza-Klasa with 13 million users was a decisive winner on the Polish market, also having the most active users among the biggest social networking sites in the world (Koryszewski 2009). Polish people, like my interlocutors, visited Nasza-Klasa up to several times per week. However, by the end of my fieldwork, Facebook had gained increased popularity as well. In October 2009, Poland was already the fastest growing country of Facebook users in the world and as Bartnik (2009) wrote, “the Polish people caught the Facebook-disease”.

When the core of my research was conducted, transnational families of my interlocutors were mainly represented on Facebook by children and newcomers to Finland. Family members from Poland did not personally participate in the site. At the end of 2009 the tables were turned. Some initial comments can be made about this shift. Firstly, in Poland Facebook has started to attract mainly young people. Secondly, Facebook even given its very name has a more cosmopolitan outlook than Nasza-Klasa. Nasza-Klasa offers a specific national intimacy related to the cultural background of the site, its language and its users’ nationality. Nasza-Klasa is “Polish”, even if in

2008 it was bought by a South African company. Facebook, on the other hand, is popular globally. It can also have a Finnish interface, which means that people can connect with their family members in Poland via technologies localized in different cultural spaces. Facebook contacts have a far more diversified national background than Nasza-Klasa and anchor transnational family members more firmly in multiple locations across the globe.

The value of “old” communication rituals

Although the previous sections showed how transnational family members quickly become avid users of mobiles, cheap phone calls and the Internet, not everybody commits themselves to using exclusively new communication developments. A good example is Kazimierz’s elderly aunt. Kazimierz’s aunt started to write to Kazimierz several years ago. She was lonely and destitute, living by herself at home in a village nearby Kazimierz’s village in Poland. Kazimierz picked up on his aunt’s initiative and started to write her back regularly:

She’s 87 now. We [Kazimierz and his wife] constantly send her money because she writes openly: Send me some money. So we have been sending her money. Sometimes for medicines, other times for something else. And she continuously writes to me and begs me to take her home when I return to Poland. She says she wants to die where my mother died, that is in our hometown.

Kazimierz eventually convinced his brother living in Poland to take their aunt to live with him until Kazimierz himself returns to Poland for retirement. Kazimierz’s aunt is one of the persons for whom the “old” communication means continue to have social and cultural sense. Amidst fervent technological changes she persistently uses letters to exercise influence over Kazimierz and to get support not only from him, but also via Kazimierz from Kazimierz’s brother living in Poland. Kazimierz understands that she writes letters because “this is what she knows”, and has limited skills and material capacities to use newer technologies to communicate. Low-tech epistolary practices survive also for other reasons, suggesting that the new ICTs are an expansion of the communication possibilities rather than the straightforward substitution of old ones.

For those who on occasion choose to write a letter rather than to make a phone call, a letter acquires new meaning. It becomes a sign of special effort and reflection. People often told me of the “laziness” brought about by new ICTs, as their use demands little physical investment. Thus when they write a letter, they consider it an extraordinary gift. It is the extra mile they take in order to achieve what they cannot achieve through a simple phone call. A letter is meant to heal relationships, to convey a significant moral message or to create new relationships. It is a powerful device construed to make people stop, reflect and listen. An evocative instance of the above is a letter which Wacław sent to Hanna, his daughter’s friend in Finland. When Wacław

and his wife visited their daughter in Finland, Hanna asked them if they would like to “adopt” them. After returning to Poland, Waclaw sent Hanna a letter:

When we returned here [to Poland] I wrote a letter to Hania. I told her I was very flattered with the proposition and I thanked her for the nice time we spent with them in Finland, because we treat them as family. And if they just wished to, I saw no problem in becoming [her father]. I could even take on [*przybrać*, similar to “adopt”] three more daughters. And if she wanted us to come and visit them, no problem.

After receiving the letter, Hania called Waclaw:

Hania called me and told me that she was speechless because she had never received such a letter in her life. She sent the letter to her mom, and her mom expressed a desire...she said that since you had already become a daughter, I would have a great desire to see the father. [laughs]

When we talked, the meeting between Waclaw and Hanna’s mother had not yet taken place. Nonetheless the symbolic – and what Waclaw called the “unexpected” – kinship link had been made. The words of the letter served as the “deeds” (Butler 2000) bringing to life a meaningful transnational relationship.

Postcard writing is another epistolary ritual which has survived. Considering the availability of other communication means postcards thrive surprisingly well in the new reality. Many of my interlocutors indicate that sending a postcard for special occasions is “a must”. Postcards continue to be appropriate when a phone call is too much. In this context, they are the “social tokens” of a relationship (Rogan 2005) rather than the means of information exchange. They remind people of their shared ties: “you are in our world, we are in yours”, as the aforementioned Waclaw put it.

Given its minimalistic, asynchronous and concise (non-redundant) character, a postcard can easily be compared with a mobile text message (ibid.). In my study, however, a postcard is distinctive in its own right. It represents a material tangibility and effort, which phone-mediated communication does not. Sending a postcard means that people have to go to the shop, choose an appropriate card and write it. Sometimes they put in extra effort to make the postcard themselves. Also, despite the unification of the Finnish and Polish commercial markets it is still a culturally divergent artefact. I heard complaints that in Finland it is nearly impossible (if possible at all) to find postcards with religious themes for Christmas or Easter. The postcards available evoke little of the religious aspect of Polish holidays. On the other hand, at the home of one my interlocutors in Poland I spotted a type of “do-it-yourself” Christmas postcard that I immediately associated with Finnish rather than Polish commercial culture. It was a postcard photo portraying my interlocutor’s niece’s son living in Finland. The postcard was decorated with various small items, which can be bought all over Finland as a part of a handicraft craze. We talked with my interlocutor about the effort and time the niece had to put into preparing the postcard. Visibly such a postcard may give more

enjoyment to the sender and receiver than sending an SMS, for the very fact of being tangible, personalized and thought-through.

Conflicts and negotiated consent

Up to this point, I have talked about transnational communication mainly in affirmative tones. Indeed, talking about phone calls or sending letters as a ritual may give the erroneous impression that they always have consensual character and a common mood, and in this sense are effective.

My fieldwork indicates that many transnational communication rituals are mutually satisfying to its participants. The unequal power relations they create often pass unnoticed or at least do not bring significant dissatisfaction. The rituals unfold as they should, emotionally and normatively. Nonetheless, there are examples pointing to the contrary. Not all the family members participate enthusiastically in communication rituals; not everybody “believes” in them to the same extent. The social cohesion scholars would call them “empty” or “failed” rituals (Baxter et al. 2009, Collins 2004). From the perspective of ritual as an exercise in power, however, a ritual succeeds when people follow its form (Bell 1991). If people manage to influence others to follow at least the fundamental order of the communication ritual: to pick up the phone, to be there at the agreed time to talk or to respond to a message, one can say that they have achieved a minimal success. I shall start with the quote from Natalia and Jarek who recently reunited in Finland after a period of transnational separation. Natalia and Jarek told me about their past marital tribulations almost immediately after I visited them at their home in Tampere for the first time. We were drinking together in the living room and the couple sat beside each other. The atmosphere was jovial, despite the coercive character of events they discussed.

Anna: So did you have some fixed times when you talked on Skype?

Natalia: He would send me an SMS asking whether I was at home. Of course in the evenings he used to call immediately. I had to be home. It was a problem if I wasn't.

Jarek: And where were you supposed to wander by night?

Natalia: If he called during the daytime, then he sent a message to see whether I was at home, but after 10.00 p.m. it was a curfew hour, over and done with.

Jarek: Over and done with. It is a curfew hour (*godzina policyjna*, literally “the police hour”) to date.

Natalia: I'm supposed to be at home already.

Jarek: If she so much as walks out, I'll take the gun and shoot [her] like a duck [laughs].

Natalia: So you see [laughs].

As is apparent from the above, the couple in a joking-serious manner recalled their transnational communication rituals. The ritual gave most power to Jarek, but he was also the most engaged in it. He was jealous and lonely and by ritualizing communication attempted to exercise control over his wife as if they lived under one roof. His

dominant position as the orchestrator of the communication was reinforced by his position as the family breadwinner. Natalia usually participated in the ritual, but her heart was not always in it.

I noted similar experiences to Natalia's and Jarek's among other transnational couples. Tensions also permeate the transnational communication in other types of family relationships. I noted friction between adult children and parents, children-in-law and parents-in-law and between siblings. One should not be surprised. Limited face-to-face meetings are not necessarily always a cost of separation. They may also be a benefit. As some people had limited enthusiasm for certain face-to-face family rituals before coming to Finland, so they remain moderately enthusiastic about their technologically-mediated form, especially if communication is frequent. For instance, while living in Poland, Marta had a strained relationship with her in-laws, especially her mother-in-law. Serious arguments and verbal assaults continued after she moved with her children and husband to Finland in the post-accession period. She faces them during direct phone-call conversation or when her mother-in-law talks with Marta's husband on the Internet with the loudspeakers switched on. "So many thousands of kilometres and she still harasses me. When she says something about me, I jump with anger. I walk nervously around the apartment", Marta told me after one of the incidents.

New ICTs, or more precisely, the ways people use them, play their part in the emergence of tensions. The once-in-a-while short phone call in the past was longed for and welcomed. Contemporary phone calls three times a day and tens of messages with the expectation of an immediate response can be annoying and disturbing. Technology, coming to the aid of tradition and personal desires, thus allows for the continuity of ambivalent family interactions. Abuse and control can thrive with the use of new ICT, undermining the wellbeing of the recipients of communication. The expectation for the exceedingly (from the recipient's perspective) frequent communication also disregards the recipient's more locally oriented needs and obligations. Focus on one's own negative experiences and their desired alleviation through frequent transnational communication may lead the callers to forget that their *close ones* on the other side of transnational space also live *within* national borders, not only *across* them, working, taking care of children and socializing with other people. The difference in the local conditions in which transnational family members are enmeshed may therefore affect their unequal satisfaction from the ritual participation, one side being more content and interested in it than the other. As Wanda, now a woman in her sixties, told me of the constant phone calls made by her husband, Kazimierz, (with Kazimierz sitting next to us and grinning), prior to their reunification in Finland: "[In Poland] I was at the end of my tether! Because how long can you talk about the same thing? I was overworked, short of sleep, with millions of problems, overwhelmed, and here, on top, complaints from far away".

Yet, even the most dissatisfied family members are never totally constrained by the transnational communication ritual. Compliance to participation is negotiated. People play by the rules, although they bend and resist them at the same time. Bell (1991, 215) writes, “Negotiated compliance offers manifold opportunities for strategic appropriation, depending on one’s mastery of ritual schemes, even to the point of subversion”. Resistance and defiance are part of ritualized action. The very fact that women like Natalia or Wanda could tell me of their frustration in front of their husbands, in a relaxed tone and with few inhibitions, indicates that their husbands’ power is limited. Post-factum, the husbands also seemed to agree that their desire for control and jealousy was excessive. Their limitation is also visible in the ways the communication ritual is enacted.

One of the common forms of defiance to the transnational communication ritual is to appropriate the ritual scheme to one’s own advantage by mocking it or affecting its content while still participating in it and thus staying true to its form, a “small order of things”. For instance, the aforementioned Natalia, in the flow of text messages from her husband (“350 a day”) and the expectation of a response, began writing back to him: “come on, stop drinking”, “you are stupid”, “get lost you idiot”, and, as she says, “even worse stuff”. Sometimes she reacted in a similar way to unbearably long telephone conversations:

Jarek: When I sat with my buddies on Saturday and we started to drink, pardon my French, and when I was already a bit tipsy, I grabbed the phone and we talked and talked. She told me, “Oh damn, stop, you’re talking bullshit!” And I shouted, “What? Don’t you want to talk to me?”

Natalia: “Don’t you love me anymore?” [laughs]

Jarek: So we talked for an hour or two on the phone and I didn’t look at the bill. But you know... there has to be contact after all, doesn’t there?

Another of my female interlocutors, in response to her husband’s wish to text him right after she gets up, started to send him sarcastic messages describing in detail her morning physical routines (“I wrote to him ‘Now I’m going to the toilet’”).

Another way of defying is simply to lie or not to pay particular attention. These practices carry less risk than open defiance and the potential aggravation of the relationship. They also point to the limits of new ICTs. Although some husbands half-jokingly fantasize about pushing the border of their wives’ control further by installing a camera in every room and a tracking mobile device, they are also aware that their power will always have its limits. On his ability to monitor his wife, Jarek concluded: “aah what it gives you... I can write 500 messages, so what.. she can write [back] and do something else”.

The more rudimentary forms of communication such as letters is also negotiated. One should not forget that rituals mediated through “old” technologies can also be a nuisance. For instance, Kazimierz, whose aunt started to write to him, wrote her back, but he disliked the practice. Writing letters takes him too much time and is

too difficult. Hence, when his wife reunited with him in Finland, she started to write to Kazimierz's aunt as if she was Kazimierz. The aunt disregarded the unexplainable change of handwriting and continued to address letters to him.

Thus, despite the negotiated character of ritual participation, one cannot dismiss its impact on the shaping of the self, the schooling of the body and the relationship's power dynamics. Natalia might have resented the curfew hour and the two hours on the phone with her semi-sober husband, but once she was there to wait and listen she gave the ritual validation. The only means to invalidate it would be to abandon it altogether, likewise putting the relationship at risk.

In transnational communication, people sometimes deliberately fail to respond to messages, fail to pick up the phone or turn it off. It shows that informal rituals as a way of enforcing the given relationship are relatively fragile. Usually though, after a period of silence, rituals are brought back to life. Bell (1991, 214) argues, "Those seen as controlled by the ritual authority are not simply able to resist or limit this power; they are also empowered by virtue of being participants in a relationship of power". By returning to the hierarchical "small order of things" people have something to gain, materially, emotionally and practically. The aforementioned Kazimierz, for instance, once accidentally interrupted the correspondence with his aunt. The aunt, however, managed to get him back on track and additionally made him feel guilty for not complying with the informal order they had established:

Kazimierz: When we were recently on holidays abroad, my aunt wrote us a letter and nobody responded, because we were away. So now she complains that we have probably abandoned her, that we have forgotten about her, that she is old and nobody wants her. But that's not true. [...] one has to go on holidays once in a while, don't you think?

I see the resuming of the communication ritual as the resuming of power-embedded transnational relationships and as the validation of marriage and family as significant organizational forms of social life, which are worth maintaining despite ambivalent feelings and transnational separation.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have argued that in the situation of transnational separation people attempt to continue "meeting" their *close ones* through the technologically mediated communication of verbal, written and visual type. Certainly, the use of information and communications technology is not unique to transnational families as family members living within a single nation state also amply use ICTs to communicate. Nevertheless, I would argue that these are not synonymous. First of all, transnational communication is central rather than auxiliary to the transnational family making. In the situation when you cannot just "hang up the phone and go and see for yourself what everything looks like", to quote one of my interlocutors, and with national borders bringing a great deal

of uncertainty (see also Chapter Seven), technologically-mediated communication acquires a heightened meaning and value. It becomes the central means through which people are kinned into transnational family. The small-scale formalization of transnational communication introduces a trace of continuity and reassurance into transnational family life as well as allowing family members to exercise power and influence over others.

Secondly, transnational communication is enacted across national borders and with the national borders come particular political and legal regulations and multiple state embeddedness. In my study, the transnational aspect of communication entails a gradual shift from the difficulties of crossing the Iron-Media Curtain to the relative ease of communication within the European Union. The ostensibly innocent and politically inconsequential, transnational communication rituals during the Cold War brought about the consciousness of political location and made transnational families a political and public affair. The systemic change engendered the improvement and liberalization of the telecommunications infrastructure, facilitating communication across borders. Transnational family members have become valuable consumers to whom new products can be addressed.

The transnational family members' desire to maintain contact and appropriate new ICT at first sight gives credibility to the neoliberal technological fetish and encourages the celebration of capitalist conditions. As Dave Harvey aptly writes, the neoliberal theory of technological change

relies upon the coercive powers of competition to drive the search for new products, new production methods, and new organizational forms. This drive becomes so deeply embedded in entrepreneurial common sense, however, that it becomes a fetish belief: that there is a technological fix for each and every problem. (2007, 68)

“Problem” which the ICT promises to resolve here is a transnational separation. Nevertheless, as this chapter has to some extent shown, and the next chapter will show more thoroughly, technology has still not managed to make national borders and geographical distance disappear. It has not even managed to completely annihilate old means of communication. It is true that through the employment of new ICT, transnational family members can achieve a sense of proximity more easily and in a manner which modifies our understanding of face-to-face interaction. However, changes are neither linear nor eradicate the need for embodied contact.

One can say that through technologically mediated, ritualized communication people try to “normalize” their family situation, eliminate distance and national borders.⁵⁴ However, the ICT used during virtual meetings simultaneously explicate to

⁵⁴One can make here a parallel with the way people “naturalize” new reproductive technology and treat them as a support in constructing “normal” families. At the same time, though, the very

family members that they are not in a “normal” local family. After all, they usually meet on the phone or on the Internet because they are not able to meet physically. This is not necessarily a drawback if one wishes to keep distance from certain family members. For interaction with truly *close ones*, however, disembodied contact seems to be insufficient. This brings me to the topic of the next chapter, physical meetings through visits.

presence of reproductive technology upsets the conventional family model (see for instance Thompson 2002, Strathern 1992).

Chapter 6 Visits: families on the move

The insufficiency of disembodied communication for satisfactory transnational family life is well conveyed by Iwona, who has lived with her Finnish husband in Finland since 1991. We met at her home in Turku. Iwona recalled her initial contact with Poland in gloomy terms. “I could afford to call Poland once or twice a month at best. I just missed my *close ones* so much”. Now she enjoys being able to talk freely to her family on the phone and online. “There is no problem calling [Poland]. I can call whenever and for how long I want. But it is not the same [as physical meetings]”, she stressed. “Every time I call my sister-in-law and ask her ‘What are you doing?’ she tells me: ‘Oh, your dad just came to visit us’, or ‘We’re sitting in the garden, sipping beer and recalling the summer’. And I, what can I say? I’m here”. Instead of talking on the phone to her sister-in-law, Iwona would prefer to be with her in Poland.

Iwona’s mixed feelings indicate that despite the possibilities offered by the ICT, close physical interaction has qualities which technologically mediate interaction still cannot ensure. That includes the feeling of the others’ embodied presence and immersion within a common physical milieu, ensuring the satisfaction of all the senses. Consequently, family meetings by means of corporeal mobility remain an important way of building transnational families.

If we consider communication across borders as a relatively ordinary ritual of transnational family living, visits would be its ritual highlight. Because visits are structurally more complex and demand more material, temporal and practical investment than technologically mediated communication, one can talk about visits as not merely work but the labour of transnational kinning, labour emphasizing the physical effort and strain associated with movement across space and physical socializing. At the same time, visits also promise more rewards, offering a profound possibility for individual and collective transformation, and the tangible sensation of dwelling in a particular cultural and political space. Transnational communication entails what may be called symbolic transnational mobility: the mobility of images and thoughts. Visits are an elaboration on the above, entailing the transnational flow of both images and bodies and all-round immersion in different localities.

Since visits are always contingent upon people’s material resources, political conditions and personal capabilities, their frequency and content differs for different transnational families. The transnational families of my study have met relatively often

not only after the political transition, but also in the Cold War era, as the Polish communist government did not block visits altogether; rather, it tried to make them as difficult as possible. In the past, meetings took place at least every three to four years. Nowadays people often meet once or twice per year, in Finland or in Poland. In comparison to many other cases documented by the literature, especially those of overseas migrants, one can consider this a relatively “decent” rate of transnational mobility. The frequency of visits is partially related to the geopolitical and geographical locations of Poland and Finland, countries that may seem mutually close or distant depending upon who is travelling, when and by what transportation means.

The majority of transnational studies focus on visits to the country of origin and discuss what happens when transnational family members meet (see for instance Baldassar 2001, Basch et al. 1994, Lessinger 1992). In this chapter, I consider the visit at all its stages and different geographical directions. I discuss the planning and interaction with the “immobile” Cold War and post-Cold War political and technological infrastructure which accompanies mobility, the journey itself, as well as stays in the various place(s) of destination in Poland, Finland, and sporadically other countries. I notice that visits have a certain specific rhythm of smaller rituals and routines, similarly to transnational communication. In comparison to the latter, however, visits are far less segmented into separate sets of activities. Sheller and Urry (2006, 214) indicate that once mobility is taken as a vantage point, it not only leads us “to discard our usual notions of spatiality and scale, but it also undermined existing linear assumptions about temporality and timing, which often assumes that actors are able to do only one thing at a time, and that events follow others in a linear order”. Simultaneity of different activities and experiences is visible at all the stages of the visit.

In this chapter, I indicate that visits are usually a matter of mutual scheduling and anticipation. In the last section, however, I discuss visits “of opportunity”, done spontaneously or without announcement – a deviation from the established transnational practice that people make willingly or are forced to make by political circumstances.

The journey

From my fieldnotes, October 2008:

I was supposed to meet with Zofia at 12.00 for lunch at her place in Helsinki. I was already on my way there, when Zofia called and told me to come to Stockmann [a Finnish department store] instead. It was *Hullut Päivät* – Stockmann’s Crazy Days.⁵⁵ She was at Stockmann yesterday trying to buy tickets to Warsaw but they still didn’t have them so she went today. She wanted to buy the tickets for November to be in Poland for All Saints Day. She had plenty of

⁵⁵ Large-scale sales lasting five days organized by a major Finnish Department Store.

graves to visit. When I came to Stockman she was still waiting in the queue. Her number was 147. She came early in the morning. She told me that Henryk [Zofia's Polish friend whom I also knew] had already left. He came earlier, waited three hours and had bought his ticket just a moment before. He had bought it for the son of his partner who lived in Poland. The son was currently working in Finland. Henryk bought him the ticket so he could go home for Christmas. [...] Zofia always buys tickets during *Hullut Päivät*. [...] During last *Hullut Päivät* she bought a ticket for eighty euro. Now the price was 155 euro. We started to discuss the airlines. I remarked that I had heard that Blue1 was having financial problems. They cancelled the route to Poland. She said she had heard about it too. [...] After two hours of waiting, Zofia's turn finally came. [...] Because there was no time for lunch at Zofia's place, we went to eat in her favourite Chinese restaurant. We ordered fried rice and seafood. Zofia commented, "I call this risotto. When my family (*moi* – literally "my people") arrives in Tallin⁵⁶ to visit me, I always bring them exactly this sort of risotto. I have a special thermos for storing food. Ah, how they like it!"

Unlike Zofia, I do not buy tickets to Poland at *Hullut Päivät*. I am discouraged by the crowd, the queue and the still relatively high ticket price. It is, however, one among many of Zofia's small-time rituals on her way to and from Poland. Ever since she came to Finland in the 1980s (Zofia is now over sixty), she visits Poland regularly. She knows people and practices which facilitate her travel, and has her favourite routes and means of transport. She used to love to travel by ferry and train. Recently, however, she has started travelling by plane more often. Her close ones from Poland, including her son, sister and nephew, also regularly come to Finland. It is for them she always prepares the aforementioned risotto they eat on the way to her place. She has mastered their travel as well.

Transnational scholarship usually glosses over the above practices. People appear at the place of destination or at the very best at the destination airport, and from there the story continues. I find it surprising, considering the importance given to movement in building transnational space. In contrast, my fieldwork indicates that meaningful insights can already be produced from looking into the process of reaching the destination itself. For my interlocutors travel is an integral part of the visiting experience. It talks about the political and socioeconomic contingencies of their transnational position as well as their individual and collective identifications. Rather than being merely instrumental movement in space, it is the consciously practiced and perfected "art of travel" (Adler 1989), enacted with a significant amount of imagination, creativity and sensual experience, and navigated within the constraints of what the world of travel has to offer. Any travel is a combination of movement and its

⁵⁶ One of the routes to Finland runs through Tallinn in Estonia, from where a ferry operates to Turku and Helsinki.

limitations. As Adler (1989, 1371) writes, the “possibilities and limitations of even the least self-conscious travels are to a great extent determined by the state of the travel art itself: its norms, technologies, institutional arrangements, and mythologies”. In the transnational space stretched across the Iron Curtain, the most salient aspects of travel were the legal limitations of border crossings.

As I discussed in Chapter Four, the Polish communist state tried to keep its national borders relatively sealed, while the capitalist Finnish state also had its own requirements regarding letting people in. Visits to Cold War Finland offered the benefit of visiting the capitalist West, and thus family members tried to meet in Finland as much as in Poland. In the process, the formal task for those in Finland was relatively uncomplicated, although indispensable: they had to arrange the invitation from the police for their guests, specifying the time of the visit and promising to cover the guests’ living expenses. For the family members in Poland, the invitation was the prerequisite to be issued a temporary passport from the Polish authorities and a visa from the Finnish authorities in the case of a longer stay. Family members in Finland also had to make sure that their formal relationship with the Polish state was in order. If their stay in Finland was illegal from the Polish perspective, the Polish state not only did not recognize their invitation, but also penalized their family members in Poland by legally forbidding them from travelling outside the Eastern Bloc. Visits to Finland, thus, are yet another way through which the spatial reach of the Polish state and its legal foregrounding of family ties are revealed. Rafał, who overstayed his legal stay in Finland and for five years was put on a “black list” by Polish authorities, recalled:

My family couldn’t get a passport to Finland because the Polish authorities created problems with the passports. The families of those who stayed in the West illegally were particularly punished. They only started letting people out of Poland in the 1980s. My brother scolded me: “How is it possible, that I, an adult man, have to be punished for you leaving? Why should I be banned from travelling to the West for such a long time?” Later on my brother continued: “And when Martial Law came they only let people go to visit their close family abroad; I could go only as a “prize” for having a brother abroad!”

Rafał’s brother explicitly pointed to his dissatisfaction with the amount of symbolic and practical significance the Polish state gave to the family members residing abroad. He could not agree to what extent a mere genealogy was translated into a tangible force defining the mobilities of his adult life: where he could go and for how long. Even if Rafał’s brother was eventually able to visit Finland, he had to have Rafał’s written confirmation that he had agreed to invite him and materially support during the stay. In this regard, the legal power of Rafał seemed unjustified.

Despite various problems mentioned above, it were nevertheless those in Poland who went through particular bureaucratic difficulties to visit Finland. Whereas Zofia, for instance, remembers the procedure of applying for an invitation in Finland as relatively straightforward, even pleasurable (“A very nice lady worked at the police. She

knew me well. She always advised me how to proceed”), she commented on her family’s efforts in Poland: “I felt particularly sorry for my family in Poland. How long they had to queue”. They were the ones who had to go through a myriad of tiring and complicating routines, all of them involving waiting in queues, filling out documents and meeting officials. With time, many family members who recurrently visited Finland acquired the fluency in dealing with the application procedure, including which paper to bring, where to go and to whom, but the procedure remained similarly tiresome and its success was never certain. As we sat one warm Saturday afternoon in her garden in Turku, Bogna recalled – from the perspective of her peaceful matrimonial life in Finland – the reunifications with her husband in Finland in the 1980s:

Meeting in Finland was a goal. It was really something we’d been waiting for: me, my husband and our children. But there were different stages to our meetings, as I had to start arranging everything far in advance. When I started coming to Finland it was the 1980s – times of harsh communism (*za głębokiej komuny*). Because our son was of school-age I had to go through the whole procedure so that they would let him go for what was merely a month of a school year. First, I had to go to his teacher to get her permission; then to the head teacher; then back to the teacher. Then I had to write an official letter to the Chief Education Officer, meet him personally, and after he signed the application, I would have to go back to the school head teacher. I also had to make a formal statement that I would be teaching my son the curriculum he would miss during his absence. [...] I also had to go to the university [where Bogna’s husband was still employed part-time] so that the administration staff would issue me a document that my husband was currently working abroad. They had to write in what capacity he was there, where and for how long. They also had to approve in writing my going for holidays to visit him. In addition, I also had to get unpaid holiday from my work and an appropriate document confirming that. The above procedure lasted two months or so. Finally, when I had all the papers in order I could go to the Police to apply for a passport. The decision to grant my passport could last up to three months and one never knew whether they would issue it or not. Once I had a decision on the passport, I could travel to the Finnish Embassy in Warsaw to get a visa. This again took some waiting. [...] But the motivation was strong. One just had to go through it all. The system was like that.

Thus, family meetings in Finland demanded the approval of all the bureaucratic Polish institutions in which one was involved. Ideally, no transnational family making of a physical kind should exit without the official purview and approval of the state. Physical reunifications were a public as much as a private affair, an affair of which family members should not forget as being against the official ideology of the communist state.

Legally speaking, problems emerged also during visits in the reverse direction, when those in Finland wanted to visit Poland. Some persons faced few legal obstacles. Others faced plenty of them. For instance, the aforementioned Rafal, not being able to invite his family to Finland, was also not able to come to Poland, despite already holding only Finnish citizenship. Selected persons reported problems with prolonging

consular passports without which they had problems entering Poland (see Chapter Four). Poles holding Finnish citizenship had to make an obligatory currency exchange at the Polish Embassy before coming to Finland. In this instance, they were treated as ordinary foreigners, regardless of their Polish origin. This created problems if the visit had to be made unexpectedly, for instance for a funeral. My interlocutors remember it as an upsetting legal obligation imposed by the Polish state in the most inappropriate moment. Bronisław, however, recalls how in his desire to attend his father's funeral he managed to outsmart the system:

In Poland, people are buried very quickly after their deaths. So after I got a telegram that my dad had died, I quickly bought a ticket to Warsaw with all my savings. It was 1973. [...] There was still an obligatory currency exchange, but because I spent all my money on the ticket I had no money left to exchange. I thought to myself, "Maybe the immigration control will let me through anyhow". But once I arrived at the Warsaw airport they didn't want to let me out. I didn't exchange currency; I had no money. They told me, "Well, in that case you'll have to return to Helsinki on the next plane". But I knew my cousin was waiting for me in the arrivals hall, so I told the guard, "Please sir, I can't return. I came for my father's funeral. If you let me out for a second, I'll get legal dollars from my cousin, who's waiting for me in the arrivals hall". The guard said, "No, you can't go through". Finally, though, my begging moved one of the guards. I showed him the telegram and managed to convince him that I was telling the truth. They gave me an escort of two soldiers, who I went out to the arrivals hall with. I got the dollars and we went back. I made the exchange and only then I could go to my dad's funeral.

The above quote suggests that the moment of crossing the border with Poland was another distinct experience of travel to meet. The experience of border crossing depended on how people travelled to Poland. Geographically speaking, during the Cold War they had at least three options: through the Baltic Soviet republics by train (few people would attempt the journey by car), through Sweden (by car and by ferry) or directly from Finland to Poland by ferry or plane. Depending on the chosen route, the state borders materialized in harbours, airports or on the road. The Cold War borders represented particularly tangible spaces of control and spaces of possibility (Hiebert 2002) where the Polish state's ability to control could be subjected to the ultimate test. Like Bronisław, people might have consciously forgone some obligatory formalities, counting on the border guards resolving their issue positively. They hoped that the personalized character of the communist state and unpredictable law interpretations would work to their advantage. Frequently, however, negative experiences at the border undermined any positive identification (if such has existed before) with the Polish state. Polish border guards, along with the police and embassy employees, helped to dismantle the image of Poland as a favourable country to be in and associate with for people who strived to maintain transnational ties. "And you, sir? Why are you coming here?" Krzysztof heard on the Polish border. Bronisław was recurrently strip searched,

although he also had an occasional drink with the custom guards and, as was seen from the quote, once the airport guard turned out to be sympathetic. Travelling by car, Rafał once tried to cross the Polish border to check if maybe they would let him through, disregarding his “black list”-status. His Finnish fiancé was admitted; he was not.

After 1989, visits in both directions became easier. Until 2004, a visa and an invitation were needed to visit Finland for over three months, but the formal power of those in Finland to enable their family members’ transnational mobility has significantly diminished. Since Poland joined the European Union, Poles can use their national ID for travelling to Finland. After Poland joined the Schengen Area in 2007, showing the ID has become unnecessary. One of my interlocutors from Poland, Waclaw, recalled his disbelief when upon visiting Finland in 1993 the guard did not stamp his passport. Having in mind past experiences, he was certain something was wrong. “When we arrived, I told my daughter, ‘Holy Mother of God! We didn’t get our passport stamped!’ But my daughter told me, ‘Calm down daddy, no need to worry. Relax and enjoy your stay here’”. A decade later, he was again astonished when he did not have to show his national identification at the border. “I couldn’t believe it”. Waclaw’s reaction suggests that travelling without having your passport stamped is already a meaningful experience. At the border, one can personally feel Poland’s integration with the other – “developed” – European countries and belonging to an exclusive club which facilitates one’s movement while simultaneously leaving a number of others outside.

The only route between Poland and Finland the travelling of which posed noticeable formal problems until the 2000s – and this is also read very symbolically by my interlocutors – was the route through the post-Soviet territories. It involved crossing four state borders, from Finland through Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to Poland. When the direct ferry connection between Finland and Poland was closed in the first half of the 1990s, travel through the post-Soviet territories by car gained in popularity. Nevertheless, the route was conceived as unpleasant, even dangerous. My interlocutors considered it as a journey *przez Roskich* or *ruskie granice* (in English: “across the Russian territories” or “the Russian borders”). *Ruski* is a contemptuous Polish term for the Russians. It evokes the historically problematic relationship between Poland and Russia, and used in this particular geographical context, disregards the re-emergence of the independent Baltic states, stressing the Soviet legacies in the region.

The corruptible and inefficient border guards and the “backward” infrastructure encountered in the post-Soviet territory, reconfirmed for my interlocutors that Russia and Poland, albeit close culturally and historically, represent different “civilizational” standards, diverging from the superior Poland and Finland. Following that, my interlocutors considered the unfolding, post-1989 space between Poland and Finland as positioned within the ideological Western Europe rather than across the Western and Eastern divide as in the Cold War past. The problematic post-Soviet route connecting the two countries could nonetheless be mastered by a skilful

and imaginative transnational actor, whose tools of trade have evolved with the experience of circulatory travel. Kazimierz and Wanda, both recalled with a mixture of dread and amusement:

Kazimierz: When there were Russian borders (*ruskie granice*) to cross...

Wanda: It was scary to stop over. Dangerous.

Kazimierz: Dangerous. When I went, I always wore a waistcoat with a lot of pockets. At that time they still had Finnish Markka in Finland. [So I changed the money into dollars] and always had five dollars in one pocket, and ten dollars in another. I kept the money in different pockets so that I could take them out separately.

Wanda: Terrible. But there was no choice. [...]

Kazimierz: It was still the same in 1996, 97, even 2000. [...] It was enough for them to spot the [Finnish registration] plates. They were immediately prepared [to take money].

Anna: Just like that?

Kazimierz: Yes. Because there were four borders to cross, the journey was always gradual. When I travelled the first time, I was conned. He [the guard] lifted up the toll-barrier and indicate for me to pass through. So I did. I worked my arse off to reach the next border. And there, at the toll-barrier another guard asked me, "Where's the yellow card?⁵⁷ Do you have it?" "No. I don't". "You'll have to go back then". So I went back. The guards were standing there, leaning against the wall. One of them approached me, "You wanted to run away! You aren't going anywhere. Give me your passport and documents!" They wanted money of course. After a moment, another guy came and told me, "Give me fifty dollars and I'll fix your problem. You'll have the documents in order". I had no choice but to hand over the money.

In the context of the above, a significant milestone was the Baltic States' accession (along with Poland) to the European Union in 2004. It was followed by the construction of a 970 km-long route via Baltica between Warsaw and Tallinn. My interlocutors deem it as a symbolic sign of the unification of the previously disjunctive spaces between Poland and Finland. The establishment of the EU-border has formally confirmed the Russian "otherness" and wiped out its legacies in the Baltic states, which have become part of the common space with Poland and Finland – a "corridor" of cultural and political exclusivity along the Baltic coast.

The integration processes notwithstanding, the national borders between Poland and Finland have not completely disappeared. Piotr, an old-timer to Finland, told me that since the expansion of the European Union, travelling by car to his mother's home in Warsaw takes him the same amount of time as travelling to his cottage in Lapland. "No difference". Yet the symbolic and cultural weight of these two

⁵⁷ Payment for car insurance for using roads.

journeys has remained different, indicating that the journey between Poland and Finland is still trans-national, not merely trans-local experience.

Within the European Union context, my interlocutors from Finland still consider the crossing of the Polish border as the entry into a different cultural, material and affective space. They mark it with different rituals as a form of emphasizing a positive feeling: “in Poland at last!” The rituals involve stopping for a favourite Polish meal, tuning the car radio to a Polish station or buying a Polish newspaper. Travelling to Poland by car, Tadeusz and Hanna always sleep in the same motel in Budzisko located right by the Polish border with Lithuania. “We are already a part of the interior”, Hanna said laughingly. Upon their arrival at the motel, they have Polish beer and in a nearby town they eat *flaki* (tripe) for dinner. “We have already conquered the route”. Another couple, Helena and Wiktor, usually sleep in Suwalki on their way to Poland. Helena recalled how upon one of their journeys, they went to a restaurant right after crossing the border. “I started to kiss and eat try Polish bread which the waitress brought us as a side dish. She was taken aback by my behaviour. I told her, “Don’t be surprised, please. If you lived abroad, you would also miss bread like that. Really, there isn’t any bread like that [abroad]”.⁵⁸

Family members from Poland visiting Finland, less fluent in moving between the two habitats than their *close ones* from Finland for the reason of language alone, have even a stronger impression of the continuity of national borders. Among others, airports, despite their cosmopolitan and transient character, are seen as particular, nationally grounded places. For instance, at the Helsinki airport one is immediately faced with the oddly sounding Finnish language and as Basia’s brother noticed, “silence” and “emptiness”. The countries on the geographical route between Poland and Finland, where the transnational family members are faced with foreign languages, places, material culture and people, also remain nationally distinctive.

An excellent example illustrating the above is a story of the first trip to Finland by Waclaw, Slawka and their youngest daughter made in 1993 to meet their other daughter, Helena, in Finland. The story stresses challenges but also cooperation and understanding across cultural difference which accompany transnational movement. In the determination to meet there are cultural contrasts successfully tackled. The story was told to me independently by both family sides, although I only quote Waclaw’s version below. The dual narrative suggests the potential of travel stories to constitute the shared symbolic heritage of transnational family and its self-identification through the acts of border crossing and mobility:

⁵⁸ In Finland, as opposed to the UK or the United States, there are still only a few shops with Polish food.

Waclaw: The first time when we went to Finland, we went by car. My youngest daughter was already at secondary school and spoke some English. [...] She was supposed to help us so that we wouldn't get lost on the way. The plan was to travel by ferry to Sweden, then to drive across Sweden to catch a ferry to Turku and then drive through Finland to my daughter's place. I was very brave. Because of my daughter's "knowledge" of English, it took us three days to get there - a day longer than expected. [When we arrived in Sweden] my daughter was supposed to check the time of ferry departure and buy us a ticket to Turku. As it turned out, perhaps she could quote Shakespeare and so on, but she when it came to ordinary conversation, including buying tickets, she was unable to do it. And without tickets we weren't able to go anywhere. So what then? We decided to sleep in the car overnight and wait for the next ferry to come. In the morning, I decided to drive the car to the queue and see what would happen. We were first in line. A harbour employee approached us and told us to drive off. But he quickly realized something was not right. I told my daughter to tell him I would sooner die than go away! [...] I said, "I'll sooner die than go away! I was here first and I'll stay first [in the queue]. I'm not leaving. I'm travelling to see my daughter. End of story". He reflected for a second, wrote the number "one" on the card, put it behind my car window and said we were waiting in a line for the wrong ferry. The ferry in our direction would come next. So I thanked him and warmly shook his hand. He was stunned. I think though he was happy that we had understood each other. In the end, for three days there was no contact with us. Our children were panicking.

Considering all the above, one can notice that travel is an activity meaningful on its own terms, aside from the experience of actual family reunification at the places of destination. It shows the determination to meet, and is the stage for establishing the family borders and national subjectification of family members. Families on the move become trans-national families, constituted by border regimes and constituting border regimes in the process. The national borders are performed by people even if they are not always performed by the political powers. Despite political changes and regardless of the means of transportation, travel between Poland and Finland still demands skills and creativity, and is a constant learning process. In navigating amidst choices and mastering different routes, transnational family members show their determination and evolve as transnational subjects, forging relationships and creating families on the move.

Finally, transnational journeys are not only about interactions between human beings. They are also a trans-species experience. Companion animals, if people have them, are sometimes taken along on transnational journeys. On the one hand, people want their animals to accompany them, but on the other, it is hard to find satisfactory care in Finland. Companion animals are considered as cherished family members who should not be left unattended or under poor supervision. State and transportation companies, however, operate with more ambiguous definitions, constructing companion animals which cross the state borders as personified semi-objects: they are

not state citizens, but travelling across European Union member states they should have a personalized “pet” passport⁵⁹; they can travel with people in the passenger cabin by plane, but they cannot get a separate seat; one has to pay for them, but they do not get a ticket; they are treated as complete beings, but they are paid for by weight when they travel by plane. Because within European Union companion animals are required to have a passport only upon crossing the border, only then do they become quasi national-European Union subjects. Thus only with the transnational journeys are they officially inserted into the “national order of things” (Malkki 1992) within transnational families. Furthermore, state legislation sees the relationship between companion animals and their human travel companions as a relationship of ownership (in the pet passport the pet is “owned” by a designated person), but for the “owners” they are bonded with their animals by kinship and see the animals as individual beings with identity.

The border guards themselves seem to have problems with categorizing the animals along a straightforward “human-non-human” divide and controlling their cross-border movement thereof. Waclaw recalled: “I usually travelled to Poland with my cat. Once a guard looked at the passport, at the cat and to check if the cat was really the cat on the passport, he called the cat [by his name] “Papu”. Papu responded ‘miaou’, and we were let through”. By being asked for and vocalizing his identity, Papu (and the guard) thus gave credit to the ambiguous and performative character of what it means to be a person and a family member in a politically and culturally constructed trans-national order. The irony of animals as transnational movers is not lost on my interlocutors. Waclaw told me the Papu-story with amusement, while Hanna and Tadeusz, another of my interlocutors, showing me the photo of their dog, whom they always took to Poland, said half-amusingly, half-seriously “Pusia was the first European Union citizen in our family”. I myself experience puzzlement when travelling with my cat, as no guard has ever checked her passport, whereas mine always, yet by law we are both codified and nationalized.

In their article on the multifaceted function and cultural-political ramifications of animal passports, Birke, Holmberg, and Thompson (2013) argue:

One story passports tell is about border-crossings — not only in the obvious sense of moving across geographic borders of nations, but also in the sense of who one is. Latour argued that modernity is characterized by a preoccupation with “purification” — of society from nature and the human from the nonhuman. Yet at the same time (indeed, precisely because of purification), it is a society in which hybridization proliferates (Modern 10-11). Animal passports specify species in

⁵⁹ The passport has the European Union logo and the name of country where the passport was issued on the cover, thereby mimicking an ordinary human passport. The passport number is tied to the pet’s microchip.

ways that reinforce separations — this passport belongs to a horse, that to a dog. In that sense, their existence operates to purify species boundaries, and to maintain the separation of humans from other animals. Yet passports also signify a kind of hybridization, a documentary indication of companion animals' place in a human-animal social world.

The type of hybridization that proliferates through transnational journey with companion animals, is the hybridization of transnational families. The passport identification upon crossing the border strengthens the animals' belonging to the transnational family, and vice versa — shows how animals are constituted through transnational kinship as dependent transnational movers and quasi-national subjects.

Not quite a return

For Polish transnational family members visiting Poland from Finland, the stay in Poland is supposed to be the ultimate gratification of the emotional, physical and material efforts they have invested in the travel. The awareness that the stay will be temporary (usually lasting from two to four weeks) and that soon there will be a departure brings intensity and importance to many otherwise ordinary activities.

Visits to the country of origin are often considered “return visits” in the transnational literature (see for instance Dunn and Ip 2008, Duval 2004, Baldassar 2001). The term “return”, however, as implying the act of going or coming back and accordingly, leaving something or somebody behind, should be used with caution. Many of my interlocutors, by visiting Poland, are indeed making a “return”. They want to meet with persons they know, see the places they have already been to and consume what they know and like. A direct personal contact with the old and familiar is perceived as a way of “recharging one’s batteries” and has an integrative function in their lives (cf. Baldassar 2001). “Meetingness” (Urry 2004) in Poland involves a conscious and sentimental “journey back to ones roots”, when familiar faces, smells, sounds, tastes and sights are recalled and reactivated, reinforcing each other and giving people the sense of self anchored in Polish family and Polish national space. Some of visits of this kind are literally about retracing steps from the past. They remind people about the inseparability of their intimate family history with Poland’s historical events, which adds a temporal and symbolic depth (Huttunen 2007, 178) to their ties with the country. As in Bronislaw’s account below, despite significant political and geographical changes in Poland, there are places and people, even from a deep past, to whom return is possible:

Bronislaw: During the only visit I made [to Poland] by car, I made a trip with my wife and brother: we drove from our family hometown to Zamość — the town to which we were resettled [by the Germans during World War II]. On the way there we visited Nadarzyn near Warsaw, where we had lived at the end of the War. Nadarzyn is now part of Warsaw. I remember the red glow over Warsaw and the burnt papers blowing in our direction during the Warsaw Uprising. In Nadarzyn,

we found the farmhouse in which we had lived. I only remembered the house entrance. I still have a photo of a woman carrying buckets of water. We found her as well. She remembered us. “So you are that little Lasota?” [she asked me]. She remembered our father. Afterwards we went to Zamość. Our mother died and was buried there.

In Bronisław’s case, even the detailed aspects of his childhood remained the same sixty years later:

When my brother from Wrocław was still alive, we decided to go from Wrocław to our hometown by regional train. In my childhood, I used to travel by steam train to school in Wrocław several times a week. The journey took one hour and forty minutes – sixty km and twelve stops. [...] My brother and I decided to go by train to recall all those twelve stops. We went in the morning. The train still took one hour and forty minutes.

John Urry (2002), discussing the importance of face-to-face meetings for the maintenance of social networks in times of persistent mobility, distinguishes between “facing” people and “facing” places. Considering this categorical distinction, I would suggest that nowadays due to the denser transnational communicative ecology the term “return” visits is more applicable to “facing” places than people. In the era of poor communication infrastructure, practically only during visits did transnational family members have the opportunity to exchange information about each other’s lives. The events of the past had to be retold before the relationships could go on. Letters and telephone calls did not make up for the richness of everyday life and all the stories were accumulating, waiting to be absorbed in a intense form during the visits. With the advent of a cheaper and faster telecommunications infrastructure, most important relationships can continue intensively in an disembodied form. The presence of the Polish mass media in Finland adds to the intensity and profoundness of the experience. Therefore, transnational family members have a sense of carrying on rather than coming back to at least some relationships, while physical meetings allow relationship to be deepened. To quote my conversation with a Polish middle-aged couple living in Finland, Bogusia and Krzysztof:

Anna: So you call [your mum] every week?

Bogusia: Yes. [...]

Anna: And what do you talk to her about?

Bogusia: About everything that has happened. So when we meet we don’t have to fill each other in about what has happened but we’re up to date. Simple as that.

Krzysztof: Yes, they don’t talk to each other [about that]. It always comes as a surprise to me.

Bogusia: He’s surprised because he thinks we’ll be terribly anxious [to talk] and she knows everything. So, you know, it’s as if we’re moving forward with everything.

A sense of continuity of certain relationships is noticed, particularly in comparison to examples of meetings with people with whom transnational communication is sporadic

or even absent. In reference to them, the category of “left behind” is particularly meaningful. On the one hand, there are family members with whom technologically mediated co-presence is highly ineffective or impossible: small children, frail family members and companion animals. From the perspective of such relationships, the situation of physical separation produces an abrupt rupture, a void subsequently filled by physical reunion. On the other hand, there are distant kin to whom returning solely during visits to Poland, every one, two or even ten years, is fine.

Finally, an experience challenging the return metaphor is evoked by persons who travel to Poland three to six times per year or more. Most of them, on top of family, also have business or academic ties to Poland. The aforementioned Bogusia, for instance, recently started doing an additional university degree in Poland, due to which she visits Poland every month. Paradoxically, she found it more convenient than doing the same degree in a distant Finnish city, to which she would have to travel anyhow. For well-travelled persons, physical contact with Poland is so frequent that in their minds it borders on constant. This feeling is supported by intensive transnational communication. A young woman, Ida, with business and family contacts with Poland told me: “No, I don’t feel at all that I’ve left Poland. I’m in a constant contact [with Poland] [...]. I just live a bit further away from Slupsk⁶⁰, in a different system, that’s all”. Migration is thus considered a state of mind, not a matter of legal documents or a physical movement in space.

Apart from the return and the continuity discussed above, visits to Poland are also about exploration and expansion. Every visit is about bringing from and taking back to Finland something new: developing new social connections (“We constantly meet new people”, Helena and Wiktor remarked), exchanging cultural experiences and material objects. During the visits, my interlocutors travel to places in Poland to which they have never been. Those who have lived in Finland for a long time learn new Polish vocabulary they did not know, in relation to life areas such as the capitalist market and high-tech technologies which did not exist before they came to Finland. They discover a capitalist Poland they have never lived in. Shopping in the malls rapidly spreading around the country and eating out instead of eating in have become important social activities during the visits, marking my interlocutors’ newly emerging pride of having transnational ties to Poland – since the 1990s a country with a significantly larger and more diversified consumer market than Finland. The new political and economic situation in Poland contrasts with the Poland of shortages and political oppression which people left and to which they do not want to return. Nonetheless, there are also aspects of the communist past to which return is to some extent desired. My interlocutors talked about the decreased sociality and the materialization of human

⁶⁰ A coastal city in northern Poland.

relationships in Poland. Wincenty nostalgically recalled the by-gone moral division into “us” – the Polish nation, versus “them” – the state, and the withering of the sense of community. A highly unwelcome spinoff of the new system is also the increased criminal activity. Three of my interlocutors reported having their cars stolen during a visit in Poland. I would regard the experience of Wiktor and Helena, whose car was stolen from the parking lot of a church, to which they went to pray with the whole family as particularly symbolic. The car was taken for a ransom and thanks to Wiktor’s cousin working at a police station Wiktor was given a preferential treatment which also helped him retrieve the car fairly promptly. That Wiktor’s and Helena’s car was stolen from the church parking lot during their prayers and that family connections proved to be supportive in an official situation spoke of the mixed experience of the familiar amidst the alien.

The labour of meetings

In the first section, I showed that my interlocutors mark their transnational travel with a repeatable set of practices, often taking the shape of small-scale rituals. Stays in Poland also have a specific rhythm, built primarily around socializing rituals aimed at cultivating family ties.

Socializing rituals involve the combination of “facing people” and “facing places”, to use the aforementioned categories (Urry 2002). Many of my interlocutors are intimately linked to not one (as is usually common for transnational studies), but to multiple places across Poland. Multiple-place attachments are usually the product of domestically dispersed family and one’s personal history of mobility within Poland, often overlapping with family dispersal. The desire to visit people and places scattered across Poland contributes to the hectic character of visits and adds to the sense of physical exhaustion. My interlocutors perceive stays in Poland as energy-draining and energy-giving at the same time. They are not holidays in the classic sense of the term.⁶¹ In Poland, one cannot just sit down and relax. Meeting many people involves travelling from one place to another, sometimes located several hundred kilometres apart. Given the time constraints, my interlocutors thus try to navigate their social activities to maximize the pleasure of their stay in Poland, but in a way so as not to engender the core ties.

First and foremost, they have to make a choice about whom to exclude and whom to include in their schedule of meetings, in other words who deserves their energy of kinning. Usually, they decide not to meet persons with whom they do not have an emotional rapport, making space for those who really count. The “obligation”

⁶¹ For instance, Baldassar (2001) notes the contrary experience of Italians from Australia during their return visits to Italy.

to meet, as regards emotionally distant kin, can to some extent be avoided by not informing them about visiting Poland (and here the spatial dispersal of family members helps) or making excuses to shorten the meeting. As a last resort, one can skip a meeting and listen to the complaints until the next visit (“You didn’t visit us. Why didn’t you visit us?”) or from the start schedule a meeting for the “next time”.

Meeting with close friends is a form of “obligation” as well (“they would get offended if we didn’t come”), but inadvertently a positive one. My interlocutors report to care little for empty relatedness or what Strathern (2005) describes as kinship without relatives: kin whom one knows to be genetically related but without knowing them as persons. Bogusia said openly, “I have no interest in [meeting] cousins or aunts whom I haven’t seen for twenty or thirty years”. Mariusz told me that after his parents’ death his social circle in Poland has gradually been shrinking. In recent years, though, it has enlarged because his best friend has returned from Finland to Poland for retirement. To my question of whom he has to visit in Poland, he responded, “I have two sisters and their families, I have my cousin and I have my best friend (*przyjaciel*), who is like a family member and whom I have to visit”. Therefore, through visits, my interlocutors challenge the idea of the central importance of the biological family, although neither do they exclude blood relatives as a source of meaningful bonds. Furthermore, they give considerable time in their schedule not only to kinning with the living but also with deceased family members. A visit to the cemetery, which is treated as a place of the eternal dwelling of the deceased, is enumerated in one breath with other socializing rituals and the rationale behind it is perceived similarly. For instance Mirka told me:

Gosh, staying in Poland is all about visits. Firstly, there is the obligatory visit to my parents at the cemetery. My sisters go every Saturday. They bring fresh flowers. And it is also the first thing I do upon arrival. I throw down my luggage and run to the florists. I buy flowers and dash to the cemetery. Mikko [Mirka’s Finnish husband] always goes with me. And only afterwards are there meetings and meetings. But first of all there is always the visit to the cemetery.

The events which allow the broadening of family boundaries during visits to Poland are what Wolin and Bennett (1984) categorize as the rituals of family celebrations and family traditions. These include rites of passage, mostly weddings, baptisms and first communions, Christmas and Easter as well as anniversaries, birthdays and name-days. They allow one to acknowledge multiple family ties at the same time, thus proving convenient in terms of time management (“We solve a major part of our socializing at once”), ensure the refreshing of old ties and the meeting of new family members. They also reinforce or refresh in people’s minds the “Polish” ways of doing things, which often means relating Polish culture with Catholicism and festive hospitality. Religious and rites-of-passage rituals involve usually Catholic elements like going to church. Anniversaries are the celebration of Catholic marriage. Cuisine and alcohol are plentiful.

The latter element is however one of the double-edge swords of the energy of transnational kinning.

Whereas my interlocutors welcome the abundant consumption at large-scale rituals like weddings, in smaller-scale get-togethers they perceive it ambiguously. My interlocutors recognize it as a sign of affection and hospitality of their family members. There is the food and alcoholic drinks they crave for, often made or bought upon their special request. Sometimes though they fervently look for ways to moderate consumption, by leaving early or completely avoiding the meetings. Piotr, who since the 1970s has lived in Helsinki with his Finnish wife and whose extended family lives in Poland, told me:

In Poland, there is always so much food and alcohol served! [...] My paternal family lives in one village (...) and two of my mum's brothers live in a village four kilometres away. So on one day I usually visit four places and in each of them it is always the same: eat this, eat that. I have to eat because it is impolite to refuse. So recently I didn't even feel like going there – my stomach always ends up so full, Jesus! It is good I usually have my car – I can always excuse myself from drinking, saying I don't want to let somebody else drive because the car has Finnish registration plates. But I always have to eat. My aunt [says], "eat this, eat that, you come so rarely, eat this!"

As a result, kinning mediated through consumption imprints itself on the body as a weight gain. Food, as a common way of making relatedness and the symbol of familial affection (cf. Carsten 1995, 2000), becomes its troublesome expression in the culture of dieting. The getting rid of the weight gain after the visit takes considerable time and effort long after the visit is over. After a church get-together in Turku I noted:

I sat with few young women at the table. We were talking about food and visits to Poland. [...] Marta said that after last visit to Poland she gained ten kilograms. Now she is working very hard on losing it. Zosia concurred. She also immediately gained a tummy tuck. Her mum was constantly offering her food: "Zosia, maybe you would like to eat something? Maybe this or maybe that?" (Fieldnotes, November 2008)

From many accounts, it would seem that persons coming to Poland have a lot of power in deciding how to manage their visits' schedule. Theirs is the predicament of how to make enough room for competing social demands. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to think that their *close ones* in Poland put their lives on hold in the expectation to meet. Those visiting Poland may be in Poland on holidays, but most of their *close ones* in Poland are not. From the perspective of Finland, life in Poland seems to be more hectic, especially after the capitalist transformation. "Life in Poland is faster", Bogusia told me. People are busy working, making money and managing other types of everyday life obligations. In the end, it is not only those who come from Finland to visit who are "short on time". Also their *close ones* have to struggle to make time for them. As

a consequence, the myth of visits to Poland as a possibility for spending quality time with particular people is sometimes brutally disrupted. Piotr told me:

People [in Poland] do not have so much time as they used to have. Everybody is busy with work, grandchildren, this and that. In my opinion, in the past people in Poland had much more time on their hands, differently than here [in Finland]. The introduction of *markkinatalous*, the free market in Poland, has changed things. When we used to meet for tennis, afterwards we would go for a beer. Now I hear, “Unfortunately I have to go. I have some offer to send or a document to write”.[...] People have started to count money. Gone are the times when people partied every day. People work a lot, even more than me now, because they have to take care of their business.

If amidst the everyday hassle people have time to meet it is the more appreciated, “When I come, my close friends set everything aside”, Iwona said.

Because many of my interlocutors from Finland do not have independently-owned accommodation in Poland, finding a family member who will host them is also another way of discerning with whom the relationship remains familial and intimate as opposed to persons who are unwilling to provide accommodation or at whose place my interlocutors would not like to stay. It is a question of whose home one can claim and wants to claim as one’s own. Again, close emotional relations rather than biology alone are decisive here. Both Zofia and Alina, for instance, prefer to stay at their close friends’ rather than blood relatives’ place. They both emphasize that they know they always have “a place of their own” there. Transnational visits, thus, bring under one roof persons who might have otherwise never experience such mutual hospitality. Those who – either through independent investment or co-investment with other family members – own their place in Poland, feel entitled to stay there whenever they come.

Finally, a word should be said about four of my interlocutors whose social circle in Poland is highly limited. They have few *close ones* whom they desire to visit, either due to the *close ones*’ death or migration. As a result, their visits to Poland are also more intermittent. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, nobody has remained without a visit to Poland for longer than few years. Also, people’s desire to visit may increase along with the moving to Poland of their *close ones* (close friends or children) from Finland. Due to that, people’s physical ties to Poland may persist even if the composition of transnational family changes and socially originates in Finland – the effect of the multiple social embeddedness to which I revert, particularly in Chapter Ten.

Family meetings in Finland

For family members from Finland, visits to Poland play an important role in their efforts to maintain transnational family ties and their Polish sense of self. Upon stays in Poland, Finland suddenly emerges as “there” and Poland as “here”. “It is a funny

feeling”, Laura remarked after one of the visits to Poland, implying a positive experience of a sudden shift in the perception of two places. Visits to Finland made by *close ones* from Poland ascertain further unbounding of family space and intensify the transnational experience. By coming to Finland, persons from Poland can personally experience and contribute to the cultural and spatial stretching of their family into new environment.

Visits to Finland last several weeks on average. Sometimes they are prolonged to several months. Until now some family members have visited Finland only once or twice, but many are more regular guests. This also prompts me to talk about their visits to Finland in terms of repeatable ritual rather than one-time events. Among the more regular visitors are parents, siblings (with families) and close friends. The longer those from Poland stay in Finland, the more difficult it is to define them as mere guests and distinguish them from persons living in Finland in their everyday life. The already fuzzy boundary between migrant and non-migrant family members, becomes further blurred.

The families of my male interlocutors working in Finland temporarily meet in Finland more rarely than families of more settled persons. The reunification in Finland demands a financial investment which temporary workers and their spouses in Poland are often not ready to make, jointly adhering to the transnational strategy of economic accumulation. Consequently the “there” and “here” of such families is connected fairly loosely in comparison to the families who meet in Finland. Such disjuncture works to the latter’s detriment as only one side – a family member in Finland - has personal access and knows both habitats, whereas those in Poland only know Poland personally. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, technologically mediated communication is not sufficient to fully convey the realities of people’s lives in both countries. If we consider that knowledge is power, visits to Finland help to balance at least this type of power in a family.

Because usually the closest persons are invited to Finland, the process of kinning through visits to Finland is much more selective than through visits to Poland. There is no pressure to invite a wide circle of people. Those in Finland can focus on cherishing a few transnational relationships at a time. Likewise, the guests can enjoy the sense of being of particular significance for those in Finland. They are needed and cared for.

In stark contrast to the experience of visits to Poland, the guests from Poland usually perceive their visits to Finland as relaxing holidays. They can slowly relish the process of getting to know the Finnish sociocultural and geographical environment. Family members living in Finland take on the role of cultural translators and intermediaries. They emerge as “representatives” of Finland who simultaneously represent the intimate and familial. Although visits to Finland have a quasi-tourist character, those from Poland are not merely tourists. Belonging to a transnational family means that they have their place in Finland as well – they become locals by

association. Dagmara implied it well, when she told her sister not to take any excessive luggage upon coming to Finland: “no toothbrushes, no towels, no pyjamas”. “I told her: remember, you are coming to a family!” In the course of visits to Finland, transnational family evolves into a familiar space among the alien (Vuorela 2009a).

Because the possibility of expanding the family’s cultural habitat and cosmopolitan knowledge helps justify leaving Poland and promises a boost in personal status, family members from Finland go to great lengths to ensure that their guests will experience Finland in the most entertaining and positive way possible. They tailor the exploration of a Finnish landscape to the personal needs and characteristics of the guests. As Ula said, “because each person has a different character and preferences, we arrange a different program for everybody”. The “program” is usually the combination of the marked elements of Finnish national culture (a cottage rented by the lake, a trip to Lapland, a sauna) and unmarked elements chosen by the hosts. As a consequence of their effort, a stay in a country with apparently little mass tourist appeal is transformed into a vast array of possibilities.

To the hosts’ satisfaction, from the initial package of “representative” elements their family members from Poland quickly find their favourite tastes and pastimes, which they start to pursue repeatedly upon subsequent visits to Finland as well as transfer to Poland. For instance, when Kamila’s sister, Karolina, was about to visit Finland, Kamila prepared in advance a list of “typical” Finnish food her sister “should definitely try”, among them *pullat* (sweet buns) and reindeer meat. Since her sister particularly enjoyed *pullat*, they made them every day. Kamila also made a list of must-do activities. A sauna was Kamila’s first suggestion.

The sauna, which in Poland is conceived as somewhat luxuriant and exotic and in Finland is a part of everyday life, is appreciated by practically all the guests. They use it in different settings: at home, by a lake and at the swimming pool, and go all the way with the ritual. Perhaps most importantly, the sauna is the symbolic window to a different body culture and if one wants to use it, it necessitates breaking personal barriers and adjustment at a very fundamental intimate level. It is also the most illustrative example of the Finland-to-Poland remittance of material culture. To quote Kamila and Wiktor and Helena in more detail:

Kamila: We went to a public sauna. I told Karolina, “We have to undress”. She was angry, “What do you mean, ‘undress?’” I told her, “Well, we have to undress to get in”. She protested, “I’m not going to undress”. [laughs] She was angry but in the end she did what I told her and we went in. [...] She didn’t like the sauna too much. She didn’t like the building. The building was old and its walls were black from smoke. But later on we went to the sauna at my place. [...] Karolina liked it so much that we started going there regularly. She said when she has her own place, she will definitely install a sauna in it. I laughed at it. So in the end she liked saunas very much. She was constantly asking, “When are we going to the sauna?” But on the first day, it was quite a shock for her.

Wiktor: Our daughter made a bet with my brother that he wouldn't be able to last a couple of minutes in a sauna. He really was scared. He won the bet though. Because it's a matter of overcoming the first bad moment, then it's easy.

Helena: As a result, my brother and his wife decided to change the construction plan for their new house to make space for a sauna. All the family wants a sauna.

Anna: Really?

Helena: Yes! [...] Last year when we went to Poland we brought them sauna accessories as a gift for their new house. My sister-in-law and the kids didn't want to get out of the sauna here.

Wiktor: When we rented the cottage by the lake they went to the sauna and then straight into the lake every day.

Helena: My brother told me, "You know, I like saunas, but you know what I like the most? A beer after the sauna". [laughs]

Wiktor: That's why they decided to have one in their own house. They were just in the process of building the house and beforehand they didn't think about a sauna at all. Now they're waiting for extra funding to finalize its construction.

Sauna and various sorts of food are part of looking for and familiarizing oneself with the "exotic" difference. It is a type of cosmopolitan sensation commonly expected from crossing national borders, whereby the gaze is focused on comparisons and looking for contrasts. However, what guests see and appreciate in Finland is also a difference in degree not substance. In Finland, they not only do things they usually do not do at home, but also things they often do at home, only to a different extent. In this sense, through visits to Finland they can realize themselves more fully, just as those from Finland can realize themselves more fully upon visits to Poland. In Finland, the self-realization includes above all interaction with nature and fulfilling one's self-definition as a nature lover. During the visits, guests pick mushrooms and berries, work in the garden or wonder around the woods. Piotr's elderly mother and her friend ("I call her aunt") come to Piotr's cottage in Lapland every autumn to pick mushrooms. When I visited Iwona in Turku, her brother came to visit her from Poland for several months. We sat at the table, and her brother started to talk about the wonders of Finland. He commented on fishing in Finland: "it is not even about [catching] the fish... but being on the lake, among the rocks – this in itself is enough".

As is visible from the above, those from Poland can socially and culturally benefit from visits to Finland, as much as those living in Finland can symbolically benefit from providing access to it. Nevertheless, the symbolic benefit of introducing family members to Finland also has its limits. Instead of uncontested approval for Finland as one of the places of transnational family anchoring, many guests are critical of various elements of Finland. Finnish nature, for instance – admired for its paradisiacal character – can be also seen as harsh, depressing and manifesting the negatively valued "village" landscape. Correspondingly, Lucyna, who told me how she loves biking in Finland and that Finland is a "beautiful country", described the visit to her Finnish friend in the following words:

It was a village composed of three or four houses. Annika's house was small and pretty, but Gosh, I look outside the window and I see overgrown blackberry bushes and fields. A tractor was driving around. Annika was delighted, but I say 'terrible.' For us [the Polish people] it is a jerkwater village (*wieś żabita dechami*).

Similarly, when I visited Iwona at her home, her brother pointed out of the window, into the November darkness and drizzle, and asked me rhetorically: "What do you think about the weather? Isn't it horrible?" I agreed that I thought it was depressing. I was struck how the mood of my meetings with some of my interlocutors in Finland was dictated by the weather, or to be more precise, the "emotive energies" (Navaro-Yashin 2009) mediated by the landscape.⁶² In the summer everything seemed inviting and living in Finland easier to justify. Amidst the November gloom, neither Iwona nor I could gather much enthusiasm to cheer up her brother, although in earnest I told him: "You can get used to it". He did not seem convinced and Iwona suggested her brother would not manage to stay in Finland much longer. Consequently, negative impressions make visitors from Poland wonder how their *close ones* have managed to adapt to life in Finland and conclude that they themselves could never have done it. This weakens their willingness to follow in their *close ones'* footsteps. Their final statement would be: "visiting Finland – yes, living – no".

Getting off the Polish-Finnish route

As the previous sections suggested, intensive transnational family engagement means that people spend much of their holiday breaks socializing in Poland or in Finland. Visits go interchangeably. Teresa who has lived in Turku, Finland, since 1989, summed up the pattern:

I either visit Poland with the whole family or I visit by myself. My children go to Poland every year. We try to go together at least every second year. Now we plan to go in December. We did not go to Poland this summer, but there is always somebody from Poland coming here during the summer.

Simultaneously Teresa emphasized:

Every second year, we also try to go somewhere else. See something more than Poland because, of course, in Poland you spend time with the family. You sit at the table, eat, walk around and visit everybody. And that's it.

Regular visits to Poland, including doing similar things with people she cares about, is emotionally necessary to Teresa's life. She "recharges her batteries". Travelling nowhere else however can be also exhausting. As Teresa indicated, she does not consider her stays in Poland as true holidays or as holidays in a foreign place. All my interlocutors would concur. In the context of transnational visiting, Poland is not abroad, even if

⁶² I discuss more about the affective aspects of the Finnish landscape in Chapter Seven.

getting there demands the crossing of national borders. “Abroad” is a foreign place and Poland is not foreign. Going there thus does not allow seeing foreign places or full relaxation, a type of leisure travel which is deemed important or even necessary for the maintenance of status and personal wellbeing in contemporary Euro-American societies (Urry 1990).

Family members who come to visit Finland would also like to spend their holidays in other places. Ironically, it is not only Poland that due to its familiarity is not foreign for those visiting from Finland. Finland also loses its foreign aspect after multiple visits for those from Poland. As mentioned in the previous section, the more often family members visit Finland, the more predictable and patterned their stays become. Finland becomes a familiar space, which may become too familiar for a holiday break. At least during the Cold War, visits to Finland could provide a temporary refuge from the political and economic turbulence of communist Poland. Additionally, those in Poland had limited possibility to travel elsewhere anyhow. Nowadays, Poles can wander around the world more freely and the capitalist market is on their doorstep. A good illustration of the disenchantment with visits to Finland is the case of Wanda, who after visiting her husband Kazimierz annually for many years, was reluctant to spend another summer in Finland: “I thought to myself: Not that Finland again!” When she said that, we sat on the terrace of her Finnish home, in which she now lived more permanently. The house overlooked the fields and woods. It was a sunny, summer day. She advised me to bring my swimming suit and acknowledged: “It’s a beautiful day”. And yet, for many years, she simultaneously loved and hated her summer stays in Finland. She wanted to visit, and yet she found the continuous repetition exasperating.

In the situation of contradiction between transnational visits and the continuous search for foreign novelty, family members in Poland are in an easier position. They can visit Finland once in a while, explore it while enjoying family company and guidance, and use the rest of their holidays for other destinations, providing they have money. They can also wait for their *close ones* to come and visit them in Poland. It is known and expected that those from Finland will visit Poland at some point. This assurance and the desire to travel beyond Finland are one of the reasons some family members from Poland are reluctant to visit Finland frequently or at all if they have to pay for the trip by themselves.

That the persons who moved abroad (and thus left Poland) should be the ones who visit and bear more responsibilities for keeping the relationship alive is a part of nationalistic ideology that morally denounces migration. Some of my interlocutors in Finland criticize the imbalance in visiting obligations, but since they want to meet, they visit Poland anyhow. From their perspective, however, going elsewhere is not always possible. Ewelina, the daughter of a single mother, told me:

The worst thing about holidays is that we are in a sense limited in where we [Ewelina and her Finnish husband] can go. When we have holidays we want to see

the family first and foremost, but, for instance, exotic trips like travel to Mauritius are out. Whereas actually we should travel now, when we still do not have children. However, when you have free time you want to see your family. Besides, the principle is such: If I would tell my mum, “Mum I have a holiday leave but we will not see each other. I am travelling to Mauritius”, it would be a bit like stabbing her in her back.

Given the predicament, my interlocutors devise various strategies for combining world travel with family meetings nevertheless. Professionals with business ties to Poland try to meet their families and work in Poland at the same time. Additionally, they have a flexible work schedule and relatively high salaries, which allows them to vacation abroad often. Like in the case of Jakub and his wife below, Poland can be treated as a stopover on the route to other destinations. An interesting aspect of Jakub’s quote is that Finland is not among the countries he mentions, although Finland is where Jakub and his wife work and spent substantial amount of time as well:

My wife and I travel separately to many places. We agree that if you go to place you don’t know, to a totally new place, you should go by yourself. Then you can focus on getting to know the world. After we return, we exchange observations. My wife is quite an independent person. She travelled in Burma, Southeast Asia and Thailand by herself. Well, Thailand is not such a big thing anymore, but Burma or Vietnam – that is still something. A month ago she came back from Ethiopia, which was the most difficult of all her trips. On the other hand, there are places where she has not been and I have. I travel by myself and then we meet, let’s say on Sunday for three days in Poland.

Persons with limited vacation time and few international business trips can also combine visits to Poland and trips abroad by visiting Poland for a few days and only from there departing elsewhere for “proper holidays”, either by car or by plane. It is the sign of the changed political-economic landscape that it is nowadays cheaper and easier to fly abroad from Poland than from Finland. I also noted a few instances where couples with children come to Poland, leave their children with the family, go abroad on their own, and pick up the children from Poland on the way back to Finland. Alternatively, family members can come to Finland to take care of the children, while the parents use this time to travel abroad by themselves. It is a useful strategy since at least part of the transnational family can reunite for a longer period.

Another appealing configuration is to move the place of meetings outside of the Polish-Finnish route altogether. The first option is to take family members from Poland on a trip across Europe together. For instance, the aforementioned Jakub travelled with his mother around Europe tacitly hoping to ease her pain of separation. International journeys made together are an additional compensation for leaving Poland:

Jakub: I was the only child. My mum came to terms with the fact that I have a bigger chance outside Poland. She was coming to us for holidays or we were going with her by car to Italy. She was a rather settled person, but when we went to the

North Pole it was a big attraction for her. She was with us in France, Paris – I think she liked that.

Along with the increased international tourist mobility from Poland, transnational family members can also synchronize their foreign vacations and spend them jointly outside Poland and Finland. For instance, Piotr has been spending his winter holidays in Austria along with his brother and close friends for several years. “They come to Austria from Warsaw, and I join them from Finland”. A similar, but also quite different, example is provided by Rafal. During the Cold War, he met with his family several times in East Germany. They met in East Germany not because they wanted to “get off” the established route but because they had to: at that time Rafal was unable to visit Poland for legal reasons and his family was unable to get passports to Finland (see also Chapter Six). However, they could travel to East Germany, where Rafal could travel as well. They slept at the camping site. The foreign country of these meetings was enforced by the political situation, but there was still the value of the excitement of a new place.

Finally, those in Finland can satisfy their desire for relaxing holidays in a foreign place by visiting their family members who also live outside Poland. Because such visits entail the tightening of transnational family ties, they often meet with the approval of family members in Poland. Kamila, for instance, spent her last two summer holidays visiting her close family in the United States. Her parents had no objections to her not visiting them in Poland.

An important consequence of the interweaving of different international mobilities in transnational family life is the emergence of belonging to a wider European or even global space, yet without losing ties to Poland and Finland. Apart from mutual visits, such ties are emphasized through travelling jointly or along Polish transnational family networks, as well as meeting and befriending other Poles along the way.

Unexpected visits and meetings in odd places

Meeting in a foreign country is one of the ways to break up with the established transnational ritual of visits. Another way is to meet spontaneously or make a visit without a prior announcement.

The predictability of visits is usually of great value for transnational family members. Those from Finland often travel to Poland regularly and at established times: for summers and/or major holidays. Temporary workers visit Poland two or three times per year. A ritualized rhythm ensures the continuity and stability of contact and brings disappointment when visits do not happen. Janek told me that when he worked in Germany his family got used to his returns every couple of weeks. His work in Finland upset this schedule. Periods without visits have prolonged to several months:

“[Now] you are waiting to go [to Poland] and it does not happen. You start to feel uneasy”.

At the same time, meetings out of the ordinary, at odd times and at odd places, derive from a particular desire to meet. That such meetings are not anticipated adds to their emotional intensity and thrill. A long anticipation usually forestalls meetings as something which people are entitled to, the “obviousness” which becomes fulfilled as a Buddhist would say (Przybyslawski 2010, 198). When people meet unexpectedly, it is a “gift” they did not think they were entitled to in a given moment, getting it nevertheless. Once again, people also manifest their everyday creativeness in making their transnational families.

Firstly, unexpected meetings happen because particular circumstances do not always allow for elaborate preparations and scheduling. When an opportunity to meet opens up, people seize it. Spontaneous action indicates mental alertness to the possibility of a meeting and sometimes considerable resourcefulness in its realization. A particularly salient example of the above is the politically-enforced, very brief visit to Poland which Bronislaw made at the beginning of Martial Law in the 1980s. Bronislaw was highly concerned by the lack of contact with his family in Poland. Formally, the Polish borders were closed. Bronislaw recalled:

The Finnish national basketball team was going to Poland to play two games. The trip was agreed before Martial Law. Because I knew the coach, I asked him if it be possible for me to join the team as a translator and pay my own expanses. He called me the next day and said, “You won’t have to pay anything. You will come with us as for free as a translator”. That’s why I could go to Poland. [...] In Poland, I called my brother who lived in Bydgoszcz. I told him to come to Warsaw where one of the games was being played and my other brother lived. I stayed with the team at the hotel in town. [...] From Finland, I brought the package containing food and money. I agreed with my brothers that we would meet in the hotel lobby. They came. I looked at my watch and I suddenly noticed it was ten minutes to the curfew. They went running with the package back to my brother’s apartment.

The visit reassured Bronislaw that his family was safe and allowed him to provide support. Although the visit only involved a brief meeting in the “odd” location of a hotel lobby, Bronislaw was in no doubt it was worthwhile. Appropriately for families on the move, meeting places of transnational families also include other places of transition like airports or harbours. Again it was Bronislaw who, being afraid of disembarking from the ferry for political reasons, met with his family on the ferry in a Polish harbour in 1969. The short time span of such meetings and sometimes the considerable trouble in their enactment does not question their rationale, rather makes them the more meaningful.

Secondly, some visits to Poland are purposefully made as a surprise, without notifying anybody in Poland and in moments utterly out of the ordinary. From the perspective of family members in Poland, they are flabbergasting. Ann Phoenix (2011)

points to the empirical and analytical value of learning through surprise. Surprise illuminates our taken-for-granted assumptions, norms and expectations. What we did not foresee or thought of due to our cultural presuppositions, happened. Surprise visits, thus, highlight transnational life expectations by disrupting them. They defy a deep-rooted idea that the transnational condition of family life complicates meetings, at least as far as casual “dropping by” goes. One simply does not appear spontaneously for dinner or a party as if national borders do not exist. One has to plan and prepare, often months in advance. This is what the standard ritual of visits ascertains. Going against the transnational convention is appreciated though. An effort is put into carving the extraordinary tool of family making out of the ordinary practice of visit. One of the stories, told to me by Helena, is worth quoting in length due to its salient manifestation of a disbelief in a sudden and unexpected meeting in a transnational space, and the anecdotic complications that followed:

Helena: We have not been to Poland for Christmas for twelve years. We have been for Easter but we've never been for Christmas. The children wanted very much to go to have a family Christmas [...] We didn't tell anybody we were coming. We wanted to surprise our family. My parents had just moved to the countryside. We didn't even know where they lived. We just had the name of the village. We reached the village and stood at the crossroads. All the roads were covered in snow and we had no idea where to go. We went to the village mayor to ask about my parents but he said he didn't know them [...]. So I called my parents. It was after midnight. Obviously, my parents were already asleep. My mum picked up the phone. I asked her, “Mum, where do you live?” She said, “But baby where are you calling from?” I told her, “What do you mean? We're in Poland; we're standing with the car in your village at the crossroads. We can't move because there's so much snow”. My mum woke up my dad and told him, “Listen! Helena and Wiktor have come with the children and are waiting outside because they don't know where we live. You have to go out and get them”. My dad, of course, half asleep, got annoyed with my mum and shouted at her, “Woman, what are you talking about?! Helena is in Finland. Look at the time. Go back to bed!” My mum insisted, “It wasn't a dream! Helena just called and said they're here!” My dad looked at her doubtfully and said, “Woman, what's wrong with you?! How on earth would they get here, in such a snowstorm?” Nobody came so I called them again. My mum picked up the phone and said to my dad, “Listen, here's your daughter, your daughter is talking to you!” And then my dad finally started to wake up. He went out and picked us up. There was great joy, of course, because they never thought we could come.

The stories of unexpected visits and meetings in unusual places, similarly to the stories of travel and reunification, have a compelling power to constitute a new symbolic heritage of transnational family. They are constitutive for families' identification with movement and physical reuniting.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I discussed the transnational family as created through the corporeal mobility of its members. Visits, composed of travel and meetings, constitute one of the key tools of transnational family making and allow for the greater tightening of ties and family transformation than technologically mediated communication alone.

Clifford (1997, 3) writes about travel as a complex range of experiences involving the “practices of crossing and interaction”. Visits highlight the physical and mental labor invested in family building. They entail effort, personal entrepreneurship, and the host of positive feelings coming from traversing space and reuniting. Through visits, families expand their living space and intensify their physical presence in Finland and in Poland, claiming more national space as a familiar space.

I would regard visits as both integrative and transformative in transnational family life. People not only reconnect, refresh and continue old ties but also create new ones, redrawing the family’s cultural and social boundaries in the process. Transnational family membership, of both humans and companion animals, is confirmed and reconfigured. Having the family in Finland is a reason to travel routes one might have not taken otherwise, in historical moments when one would have not been able to travel, seeing places one might never have seen and meeting people one would not have had the chance to meet otherwise. New symbolic and cultural family heritage defined by travel and reunification, and new social relationships are built upon old ties, which become transformed and redrawn. In this sense, visits to Poland are about the continuity of ties in a new transnational context rather than return as in “going back” to the state from before migration, and to the fixed country of origin.

Working on the continuity of family ties entails that with time visits take the pattern of repeatable rituals. Despite differences of geographical location, the content of many visits to Finland can be compared with visits to Poland. They both include a rhythm of doing similar things. The continuous recurrence of visits’ is important and meaningful for family contact and self-definition, but recognizing this also helps one understand why and how sometimes people have a desire to break away from the pattern; why unpredictability and surprise are also of value and why different mobile strategies are devised to combine transnational circulation between Poland and Finland with visits to other countries. Europe or even the globe become the wider spatial background to the Poland-Finland transnational mobility.

Finally, visits more than technologically-mediated communication bring transnational families into the public arena. During the Cold War, the very act of visits was contingent upon revealing family connections and history. The state’s purview had to be taken into account in the realization of the desire to meet. My interlocutors always found the circumventing of obstacles and the outsmarting of political regimes satisfying. Interrelated with the above, by crossing national borders transnational family members have had the opportunity to directly experience the changing geopolitical

position of Poland: to which political world they have been ascribed and with which they have identified. A historical perspective on transnational visits allows us to observe the shift from the movement across the Cold War space, embodied by hostile (but also sometimes sympathetic) bureaucratic officials and border guards, to the European Union space, with the borders marked less by the activities of border guards and state apparatus, and more by everyday acts of the family members themselves who persistently and purposefully create national cultural differences by drawing upon elements of the social and material landscape. In effect, transnational families – through visits – maintain the *national* in the transnational aspect of their existence and indicate that the borders through which they are constituted and which they constitute are dynamic and performed rather than given and fixed.

Chapter 7 Longing, sharing and mistreating: managing emotional family life in a transnational space

In the previous chapters, I focused on transnational communication and visits as two major ways of maintaining transnational ties. The emotional context and component of their enactment remained underanalyzed, albeit visible. In this chapter, I bring emotions to the fore. I ask what people's emotional responses to separation are and what type of "emotion work" is performed to manage and maintain the family transnationally. By recognizing that emotions are the intangibles from which transnational family life is made, and which make the tangible happen, the chapter provides an important cue to the motives driving family transnationalism and helps us to understand how transnational life is experienced and enacted in general.

The concept of emotion work was introduced by Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983) to denote the act of working on or managing one's own or others' emotional states according to socially prescribed "feeling rules". By indicating that emotions are socially managed rather than remain "unbidden and uncontrollable", Hochschild joined anthropologists such as Michelle Rosaldo (1983), who argued that "insofar as all emotional states involve a mix of intimate, even physical experience, and a more or less conscious apprehension of, or 'judgment' concerning, self-and-situation", "emotions are by definition, not passive 'states' but *moral* 'acts.'"⁶³ The argument that emotions are culturally conditioned (and thus have a moral component) and can be managed (and thus can be modified) is nowadays widely upheld in sociology and anthropology. In recent years the stress of the affective component of social life in anthropology was strengthened by the anthropology of affect (Navaro-Yashin 2009, Stewart 2007),⁶³ which argues that affects as pre-linguistic "intensities" permeate our entire existence, moving from body to body and partaking in the emergence of particular emotional states. Because affects, in comparison to emotions, precede the (more or less)

⁶³ Anthropology of affect is heavily inspired by philosophical ideas of Deleuze and Guattari (as well as their philosophical follower Massumi) who define affect as a pre-personal "intensity" that corresponds "to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another" and implies "an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act" (Massumi 1988, xvi, forward to Deleuze's and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*).

consciously experienced human moral universe, and therefore, precede the consciously experienced and managed emotional transnational life, my argument in this chapter focuses on emotions rather than affects in themselves.

In transnational migration studies, the topic of emotions has grown in importance during the last decade (see for instance Baldassar 2008, Wise and Velayutham 2008, Aranda 2008, Parreñas 2001, Alicea 1997). However, far more studies imply the importance of emotions than focus on them specifically. As the aforementioned Svašek⁶⁴ (2008) indicates, there is a significant difference between “calling something ‘emotional’”, and the critical exploration of “context- and group-specific discourses of emotivity that influence individual migrant’s perceptions, or as examining in more detail the emotional practices and embodied experiences in which migrants are engaged”.

I would suggest that the frequent reference to emotions without analytical elaboration on the subject is related to the underlying assumption that “migration” and emotions are destined to go together. This assumption especially relates to negative emotional experiences like isolation, alienation, longing and displacement. Human mobility across borders, Sørensen (2005) argues critically, “was, and to a large extent still is, viewed as a condition causing disorientation and insanity”. The link between “migration” and detrimental emotional states is also suggested by the aforementioned Svašek who (in the introduction to the Special Issue of *Journal of Intercultural Studies* on “emotions and transnationalism”) writes: “although feelings of non-belonging are part and parcel of human nature and thus not restricted to migrants, experiences of loss and homelessness can be directly caused by migrant-specific predicaments”. “Migrant-specific predicaments” thus imply a state of heightened affective intensity, negatively charged.

Speaking from a transnational perspective, my study carries more positive overtones. This chapter shows that people learn to navigate, to various degrees, their emotional family life and manage their own feelings in new transnational circumstances, allowing for the diversified experience of mobility and separation. This if of course not a free-standing process, as, firstly, people manage their emotional lives amidst moral norms and expectations which always set a context for transnational emotional experiences, and secondly, there are subjective and objective (e.g. infrastructural) limits to what people (think that they) can do transnationally. Accordingly, emotional transnational life changes along with people’s material and sociocultural environment and the individual and family life-course. As in previous chapters, when it comes to

⁶⁴ In one of her recent projects, Svašek (2009) also investigated the emotional life of Polish post-accession migrants to Ireland.

emotional life, transnational families are still embedded in particular places and are still temporally and historically situated.

One can argue that emotions play a universally important role in the organization of intimate social life and the building of the moral sense of self. In Poland especially under the communist regime, one's material and mental wellbeing was contingent upon building close social relationships and the skilful managing of people's "hearts", to paraphrase Hochschild (1983). In 1991, Polish sociologist Anna Giza-Poleszczuk wrote:

An exceptionally strong drive in our [Polish] society is the drive for gaining human sympathy: positive emotions of others, acceptance and affiliation are elements confirming our individual worth and build our human, moral identity. [...] emotional rejection – the loss of sympathy, exclusion from the group – becomes particularly painful. It damages the sense of security and the sense of self. (quoted in Giza-Poleszczuk 2007a, 82)

I agree with Giza-Poleszczuk regarding the importance of emotions for Polish social life, but I remain cautious regarding her idealized implications that belonging to a close-knit group always carries emotionally positive overtones or that Polish people only strive to gain the sympathy of others. The fact of potential exclusion from the group, which Giza-Poleszczuk mentions, already suggests that some people tend to act from motives of disdain and rejection rather than sympathy towards others. Thus, in this chapter, emotions do not stand apart from power but underline intimate power relationships and are embedded in nationalist and family ideologies which are difficult to shed.

I start the chapter from discussing the feeling of *teśknota* as a reaction to transnational separation. Subsequently, I show how living across borders enables certain versions of emotion work and complicates others, and how it sets the stage for the fluctuating emotional quality of transnational family relationships. In the last section, I discuss "toxic" emotion work.

***Teśknota* and being at home**

Anna: Have you ever had a moment that you missed your family (*teśknileś za rodziną*)?

Iza: Honestly speaking, no. I have never missed Poland or my relatives. I hope that this conversation is confidential! (...)

Anna: Certainly! And there are no right answers!

Iza: I'm talking honestly so it's not very *politically correct* [originally in English].

Anna: Have you ever missed [Poland] (*teśknileś za Polską*)?

Mariusz: Actually not so much. Of course there were moments when I missed my past life, but I am rather atypical in that I did not have any particular longing (*teśknota*) for Poland or Polishness...only now thanks to my current Finnish wife. We have great memories from our last stay in Poland.

Helena: If I had known what I know now, I would never have left Poland. I would never have left.

Wiktor: I would also never have left. I regret it.

Helena: There, despite everything, I have a circle of people whom I can count on, who will always support me. Here I have nobody to talk to, pour my heart out – something you need after all. [...]

Wiktor: Everybody stayed in Poland. *Close ones*, everybody stayed in Poland.[...]

Here, there aren't many people like us. We are happy when we go to Poland.

When I see the Polish border I say, damn, I'm finally in Poland.

Helena: We're home at last (*wreszcie u siebie*).

During the interviews with my interlocutors in Finland,⁶⁵ asking about *tesknota* occurred to me as a natural emotion-related question. I assumed that the managing of transnational emotional life starts from the managing of *tesknota* brought about by the separation from people and places left behind. At the same time, I immediately realized its potential controversy. It was a question which tacitly appeared as laden with my presumed moral judgment and expectation. Although I told Iza, the daughter of a Polish couple living in Finland, that there were no right answers to my question, she still indicated, that there were answers which were more “politically correct” than others.

I was visibly not the first person with whom my interlocutors had discussed the subject of *tesknota* – in English, “longing”, “pain of distance” (Wierzbicka 1992). I am also far from being the first researcher to discuss *tesknota* in Polish migration studies (see for instance Korczyńska 2003, Giza 1998). Scholars typically put *tesknota* under the “costs” of migration, lacking the critical reflexivity of its analysis. They fail to notice or explicate that *tesknota* is a widely recognized emotional expectation from people who have left Poland and, potentially, a moral judgment of their individual and family lives; it is a “feeling rule” of Polish nationalist and family ideology, not just a spontaneous emotional reaction.

Krystyna Wierzbicka, a Polish-American scholar of emotions and language, traces back the genealogy of the term *tesknota* to the partitioned Poland of the 18th and 19th century and the “Great Emigration” – a wave of emigration which became the symbol of Polish patriotic nationalism and diasporic building of Poland. She argues:

I believe that the emotion terms available in a given lexicon provide an important clue to the speakers' culture. Arguably, the Polish concept '*tesknota*' [...] is a good case in point. In older Polish, this word designated a kind of vague sadness, as the related Russian word *toska* does even now. Apparently, it was only after the partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century, and especially after the

⁶⁵ The interview with Iza was conducted via Skype, while I was in Finland and Iza was on an internship in Spain. Although she was not in Finland at the time of our interview, she returned to Finland soon after.

defeat of the Polish Uprising of 1830 and the resulting 'Great Emigration', that this word developed its present meaning of, roughly, 'sadness caused by separation'. When one considers that after that time the best and most influential Polish literature started to develop abroad, among the political exiles, and that it became dominated by the theme of nostalgia, it is hard not to think of the emergence of the new meaning of the word *teskenota* as a reflection of Poland's history and the predominant national preoccupations. (1992, 125)

I would argue, thus, that from the perspective of nationalist and family ideology, for Poles living abroad *teskenota* is conceived as not merely a cost, but an emotional punishment for leaving, experienced alongside a tacit feeling of guilt or even betrayal of family and Poland as the family's natural homeland. The feeling rule that transnational separation should be painful and bring loneliness was especially prominent during the Cold War (when West-bound migration meant disloyalty towards both national and communist values), but its power also holds today.

I asked my interlocutors about *teskenota* because I was often not certain how they felt, given the ambiguity of their other embodied signals and discursive practices. Their reactions made me aware I was mistakenly looking for a definitive answer. Accordingly, many Polish scholars tend to treat *teskenota* as an absolute and non-negotiable emotion. Either people experience it or not. This would suggest one point of reference and one home, and the choice between *close ones* here or there. In turn, the quotes above suggest that *teskenota* stands for a continuum underpinned by different configurations of emotional attachments and identifications. For my interlocutors in Finland, talking about different degrees and shades of longing is important, for it indicates its negotiable character and opposes the dominant emotional regime dictating the feelings of transnational life. In other words, longing "a bit" or "not so much" takes away part of the drama of leaving and suggested that there may be many homes. I thus argue that we cannot understand the emotional life of transnational families only by looking at what people have "left behind". We should also consider the affective potential of the destination places in which transnational family members live. In this sense, family affiliations and support looked for in the countries of origin are always entangled, in "good" or "bad" ways, in reception contexts, and longing is always "emplaced", that is embedded in particular places.

My fieldwork observations and interviews indicate that a partial answer to the diversified experience of *teskenota* among my interlocutors lies in their contradictory emotional experiences of Finland, fluctuating according to their mobile trajectories and life course changes. Likewise emotional affiliations and the support looked for among *close ones* in Poland often complements emotional embeddedness in a new country, rather than constitutes merely a reaction to marginalization.

The majority of my interlocutors, upon coming to Finland, was impressed with their new place of residence, especially regarding its natural and institutional aspects. During the Cold War, the Finnish political economy culture positively contrasted with

the Polish shortage economy and the “greyness” of everyday life. The level of institutional organization still remains impressive. Some of my interlocutors mentioned that coming to Finland promised an adventure; an experience of something new and unknown. “I was enchanted by Finland”, Helena told me. Bogna and Leszek gave their move to Finland the definition of a desirable and valued “change”, remarking that if they had stayed in Poland nothing significant “would have happened in their lives”, as little has happened in the lives of their family members. Men whose spouses and children stayed in Poland took up the positive adventure-theme. “It’s always something new and cool”, said Bartek, a temporary worker, about working abroad. He criticized his cousin who did not come with him to Finland, preferring to “stay at home and rot”. Thus, rather than destabilizing the sense of ontological security, mobility is seen as a way of breaking with the ordinary everyday routine – a routine which some people may enjoy (like Bartek’s cousin), but not everybody.

Finnish nature also encourages newcomers to emotionally identify with their new surroundings. My interlocutors marvelled at the lakes, the woods and whiteness of the snow. Bronisław stressed two events: when five months into his stay in Finland he had to spend Christmas alone, with all his *close ones* left in Poland: “I almost cried. I told myself ‘What am I doing here, away from my home, my family and Poland?!’” – and two years later when he was sitting by a lake:

It was late in the evening, I had had a sauna. The wind stopped blowing, it was peaceful. The lake became like a mirror. A black smoke from a chimney was flowing up in the air. Somewhere at a distance a dog barked. There is such slogan from Coca-Cola, “This is it”. And then it came to my mind: this is the place I have been looking for. This is it.

Finnish nature is thus imagined as an affective space interaction which has the capacity to ease longing and allow for the powerfully positive feeling of being “at home”.

Furthermore, many of my interlocutors live in Finland with immediate family members or friends and colleagues. In cases where people moved to Finland with children and a partner or to a partner, life in Finland often offered the opportunity to strengthen family bonds, at least within the nuclear family. Persons remarrying in Finland after failed marriages in Poland hoped for a fresh start and a “complete” home for their children. Couples who lived for years in separation craved for reunification, whereas couples who had lived together in Poland welcomed the slower pace of life and more time for each other. The Finnish working environment seemed more “humane” even in comparison with communist Poland. Waldemar, who came to Finland in 1990, said:

In Poland, the work was on the account of family life. Here everything functioned completely differently. I came back from work and I could spend the whole afternoon with the family. Children finally had the chance to see me. And this was already a plus [of coming to Finland].

Also, those of my interlocutors who were single upon coming to Finland, within few years found partners and started families. The establishing of a family in Finland is considered a significant step towards building a home in Finland. It is an affective rooting and a buffer against the negatives of separation (cf. Aranda 2008, on Puerto Rican transnationalism).

At first sight the situation of men who live in Finland separate from their spouses seems different. They, however, are usually accompanied in Finland by co-workers with whom they dwell in the same or a nearby flat. Regarding this, Robert, an experienced contract worker, recalled the unexpected loneliness he experienced working in Iceland and comparable relief when he came to Finland, working with a large group of Polish workers in a power plant on the small island of Olkiluoto:

In Iceland, we lived in single rooms. It was terrible. I felt worse there than here [in Finland], much worse. I'm surprised I had such a hard time standing it [...]. But the loneliness was just insufferable. After work, I would come back to my room and shut myself away in it like in a prison cell. [...] It was terrible. And you had chosen to be there.[...] So it's better to be here, to live in a larger community. At first sight, the living conditions in Iceland were better, but it was insufferable.

Another worker, Bartek also mentioned the emotional difference between the time he worked in Germany and his current stay in Finland. In Germany, he painfully missed his wife and daughter, "I just wanted to quit everything and go back". Now the longing is somewhat subdued: "When I came here I also missed them (*teskenilem za nimi*), I do miss them. But it is a different thing, because I work here with people I have already worked with, people I already know. Somehow we manage".

One should not overestimate the emotional benefits coming from the achievement of material wellbeing either. I observed, first-hand, the enthusiasm with which newcomer couples approach their newly found material welfare in Finland and how temporary workers are focused on achieving it. Coming to Finland offers better cars, better apartments and fewer everyday material worries. Wealth – current and anticipated – mutes the sense of longing. Interrelated with material wealth is the emotional satisfaction from the work environment in Finland. Many of my interlocutors consider work as a means to self-realization – to some extent a heritage of the communist era which treated work as a moral imperative and the defining measure of a "good" person. After several depressive months, Marta started to work and stated: "I found myself here". Dagmara said, "I was lucky. From the beginning, I have had work I liked. I have fulfilled myself through work". All the work stories indicate that the sense of being professionally appreciated diminishes longing and helps build a home away from home.

The largely positive experience of the newcomers in terms of money, work and family would suggest an optimistic outlook for their future life in Finland. This was brought to question by Helena who has lived in Finland for twenty years. She said

emphatically, “I understand their enthusiasm. I was also like that. I thought I would live here forever. But you will see, it will pass”. Indeed, the declining fondness of Finland is a distinctive theme which was reported by several of my interlocutors, including a few Polish couples. Contrary to the sense of belonging to a new place and diminished longing for Poland, they started to perceive Finland in darker colours: the snow seemed less white, the environment less clean, the health system less caring and the bureaucracy more extensive. Migration within Finland and the disruption of already built roots, divorces, deaths, serious sickness or unfortunate career development all contributed to an affective shift. The appreciation of the social networks available in Poland increased and the plan of a return for retirement became seriously considered. Similarly, many temporary workers told me they had become disenchanted with Finland several months into their stay, as the sense of novelty of the place wore out and the time of family separation prolonged.

Finally, an important factor affecting my interlocutors’ feeling of longing for Poland is the organization of social life in Finland, ubiquitously equated with certain emotional discourses and practices. My interlocutors recognize social life in Finland as more structured, predictable and less intense than in Poland. Jakub’s remark on the “dullness” of his middle-sized Finnish hometown where he and his wife have lived since the 1990s is quite representative:

There is one main street where life disappears after 6.00 pm. There is no place to drink coffee, because after 6.00 pm decent people don’t go out, they just sit at home and drink beer. Life is very regulated, let’s say. You go to the sauna on Wednesdays and Fridays, on Saturdays you bash the carpets and so on. For us, such a rigid normalization of behaviour was completely unacceptable. We still find it unacceptable. Compared with other countries, Finland is not the easiest country for a foreigner to live in, although many things have changed for the better. But it is still a closed and homogenous country with a specific way of life and values. I do not recommend it.

My interlocutors thus interpret the “regularity” and “structure” of Finnish life, topped by relative restraint in the exchange of physical contact in the public and private domain (less touching and hugging and more constrained gesturing than in Poland) as closedness, and closedness as emotional distance and “coldness”. Such representations are not only produced by my interlocutors from their position as “foreigners” in Finland, but they are also reaffirmed to them by Finnish institutions teaching Finnish language and “Finnish” ways of life to foreigners. Dagmara recalled:

Even during the first classes you are taught certain principles of Finnish life: that you should not trespass on people’s personal space, that you should not touch or come too close to people, that everybody has their own privacy and so on. Hence, here it is better to leave people to themselves.[...] Of course it is a bit different if

people come from Karjala or other places, where people are perhaps more open, and have different temperaments.⁶⁶ But I myself have lived for six years in a block of flats and even the man who lives next door has never said “hello” to me, So this is the kind of society in which everybody keeps themselves to themselves.

My interlocutors suggested that the above emotional reserve is also pertinent to Finnish family life exceeding nuclear ties. They see its manifestations in the limited family socializing and the more pronounced division into nuclear and extended family, also reflected in Finnish language through the separate categories of *suku* and *perhe*. Such a categorical division is absent from popular Polish language, whereby the single term *rodzina* functions as a wide-encompassing category. Nina, a young woman who recently married a Finn, responded to my question⁶⁷ about how she perceived family life in Finland as follows: “Family life? According to me, there is none”. For Nina, the “lifelessness” of Finnish families was related to family contact which was maintained much less frequently than what she was accustomed to in Poland. I also noted, unsurprisingly, examples pointing to the contrary, with caring in-laws and families staying closely together, nonetheless even marriage to a Finn does not necessarily entail an intensive social life.

The subjective experience of the closedness of Finnish society, reinforced by public representations, is important in the sense that it can potentially impede the benefits stemming from the rich social capital available locally, thus preventing the cultural continuity of old emotional practices and making the “distance” to Poland less painful. Temporary workers disappointed with Finland can just return to Poland. Persons who have already established intimate ties with Finland face a more difficult situation. As my observations and interviews suggest, their attitude goes roughly two ways: they can either gradually get used to the changed social circumstance or reject it, and long for Poland.

The first option includes the management of negative feelings through the redefining of monotony into valuable peace and quiet, as well as satisfaction with whatever Polish-Finnish-other networks people manage to build locally and maintain transnationally. The categories of closedness and distance that seem to carry inherently negative overtones from the perspective of Polish social norms, are redefined and their content is given a positive vibe. They become part of the “affective atmosphere” (Anderson 2009) in which one immerses oneself as a willing participant and maker, thus making it one’s home.

⁶⁶ My interlocutors often mentioned regional differences in Finnish social life, but the openness was always indicated as a feature of regions other than the one in which they were currently residing.

⁶⁷ I asked the question during a chance meeting at an airport. The previous time we had met Nina was still engaged.

For some of my interlocutors, the impression that social life in Poland has changed as well is also helpful, thus posing the question of whether the longing for an intensive social life is pertinent to a specifically Finnish “lack”, or a sign of omnipresent changes emerging under capitalist pressure – an “asocial” life of emotional distance produced by a particular political economy culture rather than a national-ethnic one. Piotr, one of the old-timers, telling me how his *close ones* in Poland are now continuously busy with work, and how that differs from the communist period when people organized get-togethers “even on weekdays”, tacitly implied that people in post-communist Poland are more concerned with “managing their wallets”, than with “managing their hearts”, to paraphrase Hochschild. A dwindling social life in Poland in the context of *tesknota* was also mentioned by Waldemar and Jolanta. The couple, sitting in the living room of their “dream” house located in the small and peaceful town of Laitila,⁶⁸ told me:

Waldemar: The only thing we miss is the large social circle we had in Poland. We miss it. But something for something. However, we try to...

Jolanta: We try to compensate for it with our company, and once in a while we socialize with other people. However, we do it less often than we did in Poland. Although even in Poland the tradition [of social gatherings] is disappearing.

Waldemar: So I’m not sure whether we are losing anything, considering the contemporary times.

Jolanta: That is people in Poland now live differently than when we lived there. We’ve heard from our *close ones* that social contacts have also waned. (...) Moreover, here we have found a house we feel good in, and we are surrounded by nature. It’s our home. If we want a worldly life, we get into the car and go to a restaurant or a theatre.

Waldemar: They built a shopping mall nearby. You can see a few more people there. More than four [laughs].

The more people I met, the more I also realized the importance of individual pastimes in people’s emotional self-management efforts. When the aforementioned Nina told me she complained to her Finnish husband about their limited family life, he advised her to find herself a hobby. Nina and I grinned, for his advice seemed misguided from the perspective of Polish life ideals, but worked well within what we imagined as a popular way to achieve well-being promoted in Finland.⁶⁹

Accordingly, many of my interlocutors have taken up hobbies which do not demand human companionship, but which nevertheless keep them “sane”, to quote Wanda, who after recently joining her husband in Finland took up rollerblading and cross-country skiing. Through various pastimes, people try to make a virtue out of being alone, taking the advantage of social peacefulness and serene nature and trying to

⁶⁸ A town located near Turku in southern Finland.

⁶⁹ “Hobbies” are practiced and discussed in the mass media and the academia much more in Finland than in Poland.

deal with it at the same time. Initially these practices can be regarded as a deliberate “attentional shift”, that is managing distressful emotions by shifting attention to another activity (Heelas 2007). However, with time, the chosen pastime often becomes emotionally satisfying on its own terms and ceases to be only an escape.

Emotional satisfaction without human companionship is furthermore achieved through getting companion animals. Companion animals constitute an everyday source of affective support and the fulfilment of the need for interpersonal contact. To outsiders, animals may seem like a poor substitute for human companionship, but for my interlocutors animals are supportive family members with their own affective personalities, needs and emotional comfort to offer. As we talked with Jolanta and Waldemar, their dog, Felek, circled around our legs. Several months later, Jolanta told me: “We had a very sad event in our family, Felek died”. Her grief struck me as real as her emotional attachment.⁷⁰

Not all of my interlocutors find the above practices and relationships to be emotionally sufficient though. Some people are strongly disenchanted with their social life in Finland, refusing likewise to give up their past emotional habits centred around and satisfied through intensive socializing. They also experience *teskenota* more. When the aforementioned Nina told me that “there is no family life in Finland”, her disappointment was clear. Having seven siblings, she longed for the “familial” (*rodzinną*) atmosphere she enjoyed in Poland. She was just on her way to Poland to see her family for Easter, as I was. “I haven’t been home for Easter for eight years!” she told me emphatically. After arriving in Poland her sister picked her up and we had a spontaneous dinner together. Thus, Nina’s remark on Finnish families’ “lifelessness” was arguably augmented by the emotional exhilaration of her imminent family meeting. At this point, the contrast seemed particularly pronounced.

Simultaneously, all the above persons draw emotional energy from transnational contact. It is very likely that without it even people who are most satisfied with their Finnish status quo would experience affective setback and their mild longing for Poland would be exacerbated. Judyta, who declares Finland to be her “home”, the place where she feels “safe” and where her children and work are, said that without contact with Poland she would feel “miserable, very miserable”. She continued: “Indeed, these contacts are very important. It is important for me to have news about my *close ones*, to know how they are, and if they all right”.

⁷⁰ One should not idealize relationship with companion animals though. Companion animals, being family members, also tend to be more “disposable” than human ones. One of the couples I met brought a dog from Poland. They gave the dog away, though, after nobody had time to take care of it. Thus, the dog seemed to be less affectively indispensable to their family than Felek was for Jolanta and Waldemar.

Emotional support and sharing in everyday life

Ideally, contacts with family in Poland act as a complementary factor in attuning the sense of *tesknota* and help my interlocutors live a satisfactory life in Finland. From the perspective of family members in Finland, those in Poland, if they wish to remain *close ones*, should also miss them and express it through remaining attentive and interested as much as those in Finland try to. In the intimate order of things, *tesknota* is not only a moral expectation of the people who left, but is also expected from the people who stayed. Here, however, as my interlocutors in Finland tacitly suggest, it has weaker grounding in the national ideology, which tends to stress migration and not staying put as a moral misdeed, thus putting the weight of caring first and foremost on the “migrants”. In my study the “migrants” indeed carry a lot of emotional load in a transnational family, but they also expect that those in Poland will reciprocate, at the very least by staying interested in and attentive of their unspoken and spoken needs. The transnational family’s “feeling rules” are here imagined as detached from the spatial position of its members and are rather about “diffuse enduring solidarity” (as Schneider 1968, famously put it in his study of American kinship) regardless of who lives where.

The most cherished transnational relationships are considered those where both sides are engaged in the positive emotion of work, that is when transnational contact allows for the alleviation of longing, anxiety and worries, and for the stirring of a sense of being appreciated, cared for and understood. Hochschild (1983) would call it the production of “the proper state of mind” in oneself and others.

At the forefront of my interlocutors’ positive transnational emotion work is the sharing of ordinary events and apparently trivial situations: a good dinner, a day at work or the first day at school. Until the 1990s, the means of the emotional sharing of everyday life was limited to letters and short phone calls, but since then transnational family members have been able to employ richer communication means. I had already noticed the importance of the sharing of the trivial upon commencing my fieldwork. I entered the home of Teresa, a middle-aged woman and my first interviewee, when she was on the phone. After several minutes of me waiting, Teresa came back and explained that she had been talking to her elderly mother. They discussed the beginning of the school year of Teresa’s daughter and her upcoming mathematical test. Teresa seemed to be very up-beat about her mother’s continuous interest in such details.

My interlocutors in Finland consider their need to vocally share – or at least to share in writing – their experience with their *close ones* as both an emotional desire and the cultural norm they internalized in Poland. The “Polish” cultural element of the above is accentuated by Finnish examples, which as was already suggested in the previous section, often point to the contrary, according to my interlocutors. For instance, Ida emphasized that she cannot imagine not talking to her parents every other day about “how things are, I have a runny nose, I had great week at work” and so on, whereas her Finnish friends do not express such a need, having likewise “no family

support system”. Dagmara mentioned that when she asked her Finnish mother-in-law why she did not call them more often, the mother-in-law responded: “There was nothing important to say”. Apart from the noticeable differences between the Finnish local and Polish transnational family engagement, what is perhaps the most surprising for my interlocutors is that Finns themselves seem to show little regret about their family contact. In other words, they do not feel somehow less “cared for” than they should be, suggesting that there is no transgression of culturally acceptable behaviour or “feeling rules”.

The meaning of the above statements does not lie in their correspondence to Finnish “reality” (many Finns would probably disagree with Dagmara and Ida), but in the moral discourse they represent – a discourse which indicates how my interlocutors interpret the emotionality of particular social relations and how cultural norms assist in this process. From their tone of voice and the context of our conversation it was clear that Ida and Dagmara brought up the above Finnish examples as a way of defining what type of family behaviour they considered morally proper and emotionally satisfying. A famous phrase of Leo Tolstoy, sometimes quoted in academic studies, says that “happy families are all alike”.⁷¹ From the perspective of my interlocutors, that does not seem to be the case, as Finnish and Polish families seem to be happy in different ways. Thus, for my interlocutors to do their transnational families the “Finnish” way, even if it works for the Finns, would be unsatisfactory. Accordingly, emotional sharing is an important gauge against which many of my interlocutors measure their transnational relationships. People who are not actively interested in their lives – and separation by borders is not a sufficient justification for losing interest – are considered secondary, and if these are parents, children or previously close siblings, friends or cousins, the relationship is seen as disappointing. It is considered an emotional rejection, which as Giza-Poleszczuk argued, undermines “the sense of security and the sense of self” (2007a, 82).

A case in point is provided by one of my young interlocutors from Finland, Ula. I met Ula in a church. For the interview we went to her home in Tampere, where she lives with her Polish husband and their daughter. Ula seems to be very satisfied with her life in Finland and the relations with her family in Poland, including her three siblings and father. The only bleak point is her mother, who fails to stay interested in Ula’s life and remains passive in their transnational contact; that is she fails in the very basic aspects of transnational emotion work:

Anna: Does it make a big difference for your parents that you left Poland?

Ula: Well, it’s hard to say. When I lived at my family home, we always had more contact with my mum than with my dad because she was taking care of us. Now, when all the children moved out, it is our dad who actually maintains more

⁷¹ Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*.

contact with us than my mum. Now I am more in touch with him, because he calls me and my mum doesn't call me at all. [...] Initially it bothered me. I missed talking to her. It bothered me, for instance, when I heard how the mums of my friends here called them at least once a week from Poland asking how things were. And my mum – nothing. One month passed, two months, three months, and nothing. But now I've got used to it. [...] I've got used to it because I get on well with my dad and all my siblings, whereas my relationship with my mum is practically nonexistent – we're only in contact when I visit Poland. But apparently this is how it has to be. [...] I talked about it with my siblings and we all have similar impressions. When we left home, we became of secondary importance to her. For instance, when my sister needed help with childcare, she had to ask a friend or another sister for help because my mum refused to help, although she does not work. She said: "It is your kid. You take care of it". It was a shock to us, because how is it possible that a person like my mum, who has five children, is a devoted Catholic and believes in doing "good", refuses to help her daughter? My husband's parents, on the other hand, are very different. They are interested, they want to take care of our son, they want to visit us.

Like many other of my interlocutors, Ula contextualized her failed relationship in reference to the transnational relationships that "work", likewise indicating how disappointments bring to light what is considered emotionally fulfilling and proper in a transnational space. At the same time, Ula's instance indicates that the idea of close contact and being interested does not appear to be the yardstick of emotional acceptance and thus, of satisfying transnational relations, due to reference to an abstract Polish cultural norm, but rather stems from a comparison with genealogically similar relationships maintained by other Polish and Finnish persons across and within the national borders. Ula evaluates her contact with her mother by looking at her siblings in Poland as well as Poles living in Finland, the latter suggesting to her that her situation is different, but the former that her experience would be nothing different had she lived in Poland.

My interlocutors in Poland also made various contextualizing comparisons regarding the everyday emotional workings of their transnational relationships. Władysława, an elderly mother, for instance, visibly heartbroken about her son living in Finland ("now all he can do is come and bury me", she told me with a low and deliberate tone of voice, which immediately evoked in me a sense of guilt on his behalf), at the same time stressed how much he takes care of her by listening and talking to her on the phone more often than her neighbour's children living abroad talk to her neighbour. She thus ended her parental story on an emotionally positive note of rupture which though painful still functioned better than other similar Polish transnational relationships. From her viewpoint her son seemed to transgress the moral norm of dwelling in the same national space ("It was horrible when he left"), but succeeded in making their transnational relationship work at the very fundamental level of showing everyday care.

This type of practice of comparing and relativising with the Finnish, Polish and transnational counterexamples are helpful, for they provide people with a moral-emotional relief from concluding that their transnational family relationships, judging by the enactments of their everyday emotion work, may be more emotionally satisfying than other people's family relationships. Relativism helps my interlocutors accept the emotional circumstances of transnational family life.

At this point, it should be mentioned that staying interested and remaining in transnational contact evokes positive feelings in my interlocutors, provided that it is done with positive intentions and in a proper way. Emotion work is often a difficult endeavour of knowing what to say, when and how so as not to offend, irritate or intrude. In various situations, the difference between being actively interested and being too interested is a fine line. In this context, the idea of Finnish family life as being built upon non-intrusiveness may appear in a more positive light. If Finnish families seem emotionally "deflated" to my interlocutors, Polish families sometimes seem excessively engaged. I would argue, though, that for my interlocutors the key is to maintain a balance between remaining emotionally engaged and interested and unwelcome disinterestedness. This perspective helps to understand the contradictory situations I documented, when, for instance, one of my male interlocutors living in Finland expressed disappointment that his mother pays more attention to his brother in Poland than to him due to him living far away, but on another occasion he complained that she calls him too often and excessively intrudes in his life.

Emotional protection through concealment

I met Jadwiga, when she was visiting her daughter Hania in Finland,⁷² in the winter time. After having dinner with Jadwiga, Hania and her second Finnish husband (Hania remarried a few years after her divorce) in a jovial atmosphere at Hania's home, I got to talk to Jadwiga alone. She remarked how different Hania's current husband is from her previous one, and recalled:

Hania only told me about her [divorce] problems much later, when she had already found a new apartment and a new job. Then I came to Finland to help her. All the boxes were piled up in one room. I was taking all the stuff out, cleaning them and putting them on the shelves. She was working, so I arranged everything [...] Jouni [Hania's Finnish ex-husband] was abroad so he did not help her. Only his friends did. When Jouni returned to Finland, [...] I [Jadwiga] asked Jouni: "Jouni, how could you let you and Hania split up? He told me "Don't worry Jadwiga, don't worry. Everything will be fine. We'll [Jouni and Hania] be together again". And Hania shouted „What?! Together? No way" [...] My God.

⁷² Hania lives in Jyväskylä - a middle-sized town in central Finland.

The divorce is a tragedy, you know. I told Jouni, “how could you let this happen?” and he told me “Don’t worry mum, everything will be all right”.

According to both Hania and Jadwiga, they are in a very close relationship. They talk a lot and Jadwiga tries to stay up-to-date with all her daughter’s life affairs, continually expressing her readiness to help. Hania’s divorce problems were one of the moments when Hania denied her such a possibility (although Jadwiga knew about the divorce itself). I asked Jadwiga why she thought Hania did not want to tell her everything. Jadwiga responded that Hania sometimes wanted to “spare” her bad news, especially when Jadwiga herself was in an emotionally difficult situation.

Considering the previous sections, one could assume that since transnational emotional support is important for everyday and small-time matters, it should be particularly sought after and meaningful in times of major misfortunes. One may expect that transnational family members will share the emotional upheavals of divorces, deaths, illness or financial difficulties. These events could be considered the affective “pressure points” (Stewart 2007) of transnational family life. The intensities fly high and have a particular potential for causing emotional downslides to family members. Here however people are much more taciturn, often hiding their problems rather than talking about them explicitly.

Firstly, by hiding problems, people try to prevent their *close ones* from being worried, believing that the latter, given the transnational separation, cannot help much anyhow or will even experience the problems more acutely than is necessary. Not only may the relief coming from emotional sharing help insufficiently and overburden the other person, but it can also ricochet, causing oneself to worry additionally about the fact that the others are worried, thus beginning the vicious cycle of suffering. Jadwiga provided one example. Another comes from my interlocutor in Finland, Krzysztof, who like Jadwiga’s daughter went through a difficult divorce in Finland. This time though, it was his mother in Poland who attempted to achieve emotional protection transnationally:

Krzysztof: 1986 was the worst year in my life: my father died of cancer and approximately at the same time the relationship with my wife deteriorated and we got divorced. So it was a very difficult year. [...]

Anna: Was your dad’s death sudden?

Krzysztof: Well it was a strange thing. I was still young and stupid despite being already thirty, but I was young in a sense that my father was a prop for me. [...] He was my dead cert. And suddenly he got sick. He had lung cancer. They cut out one of his lungs. He quickly recovered; he even came here for a while. But after one year he returned to the hospital. He had metastasis, the cancer spread to other parts of his body. [...] The doctors only told my mum. They didn’t tell me – I don’t know why. So when I went to Poland to see him in the hospital, I was sure he was there due to some back problems, because he always had some. And two weeks after I returned to Finland I got a telegram that my father had died. So it was very difficult.

Anna: Why do you think your mum didn’t tell you about his condition?

Krzysztof: I think she wanted to protect me. She knew something was wrong in my marriage and she didn't want to worry me even more.

Persons protected from problems at home are also temporary workers whose spouses stayed in Poland. Both sides conclude that in the long run it is impossible or at least very ineffective to “micro-manage” the household “virtually” to attend to and resolve conflicts “when you are not there, when you do not feel it,” and finally, that knowing about certain problems at home in Poland would cause those in Finland more anxiety than needed.

Not to upset the other party is one of the main reasons for hiding worrisome events. Another reason lies particularly with family members in Finland and with the specificity of their own situation as imagined by them. They assume that certain problems they encounter in Finland will not find proper resonance with those in Poland. The latter, due to the different place of residence, will not be able to grasp the problems fully and therefore their capability for emphatic emotional understanding, precluded upon the intellectual ability to imagine oneself in the other's situation,⁷³ will be limited. “Empathy is a way of knowing” as Wispé (1991) argues, and to know is to be able to comprehend. Experiences which according to my interlocutors in Finland are difficult to share with their *close ones* in Poland include being away from home and dealing with the foreign environment as well as the particularities of the Finnish cultural and economic environment. Leszek and Bogna, for instance, consider spending on credit and the necessity to pay off loans as the major source of their worries in Finland, whereas in Poland, life on credit has only recently become popular. During communism, when Poland faced massive economic shortages, talking about one's own financial tribulations in Finland had the potential to meet with a particular scepticism in Poland (see also Chapter Eight).⁷⁴ *Close ones* in Poland are also considered to have the limited capabilities of understanding the difficulties with Finnish social services or health institutions. It was suggested to me that only Poles living in Finland or other fellow migrants can properly commiserate. Through the use of such phrases as “you know how it is”, it was clear that my interlocutors in Finland considered me as a person who could “get” their life, since I am, as a Pole living in Finland; one of them.

These instances indicate how transnational space, through offering the space of support and comfort, can also contribute to the “multiplication of misery” across borders, a multiplication which my interlocutors themselves would consider senseless. As Nietzsche put it, pity is detrimental because it “increases the amount of suffering in the world” (cited in Nilsson 2011), thus to open oneself to the feelings of compassion

⁷³ For the emphatic understanding as an “intellectual construction” see Fainzang (2007).

⁷⁴ I consider the concealment of financial problems for reasons of lack of emotional understanding as qualitative different from the concealment of financial problems for the sake of status maintenance, as is often reported in transnational studies.

of others, it is to cause others' to suffer. However, the above examples also suggest that, at least regarding certain events, it is easier to avoid the multiplication of misery across borders than locally. Death, illness or divorce are easier to hide when people are physically absent, and particularly when, as in the Polish case in Finland, there is no extensive transnational community whereby the truth could be revealed by third persons.

Initially, I thought that the decision to relinquish transnational support through emotional sharing would be particularly detrimental to those in Finland. As I mentioned in the first section, their local support seems to be fairly limited and the general atmosphere is not always affectively satisfactory. I thus presumed that the diminished "multiplication of misery" across borders would primarily effect the augmentation of family' members' misery in Finland. This was a justifiable assumption, especially after hearing the positive accounts of my interlocutors who hide little from their *close ones* in Poland. In contrast, those in Finland who reported being more reticent about their tribulation, mentioned health and mental problems, talked about "growing armour" and developing emotional resistance. They indicated that by withdrawing from emotional sharing they have learnt to manage problems on their own: to suffer for their own sake rather than to let others suffer. Nonetheless, the story of Kasia, whose husband works temporarily in Finland, indicates that also family members who stayed in Poland – at first sight embedded in extensive social networks – may have similar experiences. Even if they have the possibility of looking for emotional support from people residing nearby, they may decide not to use it, thus taking away a cultural or spatial specificity from certain emotional behaviour. A powerful example is provided by Kasia. I met Kasia in Poland. At the time, Kasia's husband Bartek was visiting Poland on holiday. The tense atmosphere at home was nearly palpable. Kasia's every word and gesture embodied the pain of separation. In my field notes I noted:

On the very mention of Bartek's stay in Finland, Kasia started to cry. She cried, stopped, and cried again. She said it was a NIGHTMARE. [...] Initially she agreed on Bartek's work in Finland but then she realized how hard it was for her and now she does not want him to go anywhere anymore. "It is beyond my strength", she said. (June 2007)

After a lot of hesitation, I asked her whether we could have a recorded interview. She said "go ahead". Since I had already known from both Kasia and Bartek that Kasia kept various problems from Bartek through not wanting to worry him, I asked her, "Did you have any emotional support from your mum, or close friends?" She responded:

I had my mum. I could also talk to my sister. But I don't like to unburden myself on others, to feel sorry for myself because I am alone and feel bad. If you tell somebody about your problems, you will feel better, but on the other hand feeling sorry for oneself is not good either. You can tell yourself that other people have it much worse than you. ... Anyway I wouldn't like to burden my mum or my sister with my worries, because they are the people who are the closest to me and if they

see I am worried they would also worry. So what's the point? If I feel bad, why should everybody around me feel bad as well?

Again in play was the notion of emotional empathizing as the multiplier of misery, only here the transnational situation also had the potential to spin the cycle of misery locally, in Poland. Kasia seemed to think that when people commiserate with you, they suffer as well, even if it is a different form of suffering than your own. Thus, through the sharing of pain, one can cause harm to others rather than help oneself.⁷⁵ I myself felt uncomfortable with the interview, feeling that by encouraging Kasia to reflect and recall, I was intensifying an already difficult situation. Yet, afterwards, when we went for a drink, she reflected that “talking things through” was purifying. In the context of the multiplication of misery though the difference between me and her *close ones* was that she was free from worrying that I would suffer, indicating that to “talk things through” was easier for her outside the transnational family than within it. While she had emotional commitments to her *close ones*, she had none to me.

Noteworthy, all the above examples illustrate that the concealment of problems has been taking place at different historical moments, as much in the 1980s as in the 2000s. Therefore, one can suggest that transnational communicative environment is used by different family members to enact different philosophies of emotion work, rather than that technological development determines it. Suffering can be hidden both in letters and talking on the mobile phone. On the other hand, along with the increased political economical similarities of Poland and Finland, the explication and understating of certain issues across borders has become easier. “People in Poland and Finland nowadays have similar problems”, Bogna told me, referring to car loans, house mortgages and the instability of the labour market. By sharing the capitalist conditions of life, both sides can imagine each other's tribulations and genuinely empathize. In this sense, the emotion work of concealment is contingent upon the political economy environment, affecting what problems can be sufficiently translatable across system differences and inequalities.

Being there in times of crisis

When problematic life events are of a minor nature, their hiding across borders may be accepted by the other side, especially if the truth is never to be revealed or the problem is quickly and successfully resolved. In contrast, the hiding of serious problems, especially death, illness or a relationships crisis, is generally objected to. All my interlocutors who discovered that serious problems were hidden from them including Jadwiga and Krzysztof who have been quote before expressed it explicitly. They

⁷⁵ There is certainly also another, interrelated side to this perspective: a desire to maintain the sense of emotional self-sufficiency understood as moral strength. I talk more in the next chapter about the need for self-sufficiency, albeit in the context of financial support.

acknowledged that their *close ones* had well-intentioned motives for selective disclosure, at the same time though they disliked the fact that it denied them the agency of showing care, thus frustrating their possibility to actively enact their family membership through proper emotion work. They rejected the implicit presumption that due to living abroad they could have done nothing. Even if they could not have directly resolved the problem or even understand it completely and fully empathize, they had various possibilities for an active response, as exemplified by the many reactions once the tribulations were finally revealed.

In problematic situations, the least family members can do across borders is to emotionally sympathize, that is to relate to their *close ones*' being in pain (Wispé 1991). In my study, emotional sympathizing entails the physical action of phone calls, letters, thoughts, prayers or even embodied commiserative suffering. The aforementioned mother, Jadwiga, when her daughter Hania finally brought her into the loop about her divorce, told me how she worried about Hania. She thought of her tribulations constantly and consequently; lost weight. "My nosy neighbour in Poland asked me why I had lost so much weight. I told her I was on a diet", Jadwiga remarked. However, it does not seem that Jadwiga saw the transnational multiplication of misery through her own suffering, on top of her daughter's, as senseless. For her it seemed to be inherent to a particular cultural idea of motherhood: if a child suffers, a "good" mother suffers as well, taking partial pain from the child.

Despite a possible escalation of anguish across borders, my interlocutors in the end appreciate that out there, in Finland or Poland, there is somebody who relates to their being in pain and wishes them happiness. *Close ones* who are being supportive are always talked about in affirmative tones as a sign of positive family belonging. Sympathetic emotional support is especially appreciated when it is unsolicited, for it suggests a tacit understanding (and thus a profound affective connection) of what should be said and done to provide comfort. Sometimes family members emerge as more supportive than they were expected to be, being able to sympathize even despite their personal moral convictions. The situation of divorce in Finland (and given how many of my interlocutors are divorced, it is quite a common example) confirms the above.

As I mentioned in Chapter Five, in Catholicism marriage is a sacrament which cannot be dissolved. For many of my interlocutors in Finland the decision to divorce is emotionally and morally difficult, particularly if they come from religiously devout families. Words of support and acceptance from family members in Poland whose belief system they share and whose opinion they value (rather than from Finns who, given the more liberal Finnish cultural atmosphere, tend to be more permissive towards divorce), provides a mental encouragement for divorce and reduces its moral burden. For Dagmara her divorce was an extremely painful experience, to the extent that that she only agreed to talk to me after her divorce was over – that is one year after we met.

She had married her Finnish husband at the end of the 1980s and they had two children, but marital problems started fairly early. Nevertheless, she waited until she thought there was no hope for a positive resolution. She stressed that her family supported her “tremendously” throughout her divorce. “I went to Poland in a terrible mental state. And my mum and dad, despite being devout Catholics in a Catholic marriage, told me, ‘Listen, if the situation is such, you absolutely cannot endanger your mental health for some Finnish guy.’ Thus I had a great support in my parents and my sister. It helped me to endure the divorce”, Dagmara recalled. A divorce is a good example of how intimate moral commitments to transnational support and commiseration can trump transnational moral commitments of a higher instance evoked by religious moral norms. Religion is here factored into the emotion work, but is not its ultimate normative guideline.

In critical situations, *close ones* may (unexpectedly) not only show acceptance and provide concrete advice, but also show tangible support through mobility. Transnational mobility is considered a desirable type of emotion work especially on the event of a serious illness or above all, death. Firstly, the mobility is prompted, quite conventionally, by the desire for physical co-presence. People move across borders to “be there” for their *close ones* in despair. They often go spontaneously, conceiving that mediated communication, not allowing for touch and embodied closeness, limits their ability to show affection and provide comfort. Judyta’s sister, for instance, travelled to Finland to support Judyta when her husband died. During our interview in Poland, Judyta’s sister told me: “Judyta stayed at home all the time, she didn’t go out, she didn’t go to work, she didn’t drive her car. I knew she needed me. I think [the fact that I went there] helped”. For the aforementioned Dagmara, who was going through a difficult divorce, the awareness itself that her sister was ready to come to Finland in an instant was reassuring: “My sister told me ‘just say the word and I’ll jump on a plane’”.

Particularly desired is travel to see *close ones*, especially parents, in the last stages of their lives. Many of my interlocutors would agree with Hanna who was travelling to Poland to take care of her mother throughout all my fieldwork, at some point told me: “I know that my mother is old and scared and needs help. And my moral obligation is not to leave her. In my view, my moral obligation, the obligation of a child towards an elderly parent, is to guide her to the other side”. Physical co-presence is deemed as a part of emotion work ensuring “good death” and a culturally appropriate closure to a cherished relationship. It gives the possibility of amending relations and saying goodbye. For this reason all my interlocutors from whom the information about the imminent death (or the death itself) of their *close ones* was hidden, considered such decision as well-intended but painfully misguided. By withdrawing information, family members in Poland decide that those in Finland – by the fact of living abroad – have an legitimate excuse not to “be there”, and thus that the filial obligation to “guide” the parent “to the other side”, mentioned by Hanna, is spatially and situationally

contingent. My interlocutors in Finland did not feel content with such a moral release, still facing guilt and un-fulfilment. Mariusz's divergent experience of his parents' death in Poland is illustrative of the emotional repercussion of "being" as opposed to "not being there".

Mariusz, a man in his fifties, has lived in Finland, Jyväskylä (where we talked at his home), since the beginning of the 1980s. His relationship with his father has never been satisfactory – Mariusz ascribed it to his father's wartime experiences, which made his father reclusive and difficult in social contact. Living transnationally did not make the relationship easier. His father's death, however, was an opportunity to amend what was previously lost for Mariusz. Unfortunately, Mariusz did not manage to be with his mother when she died:

I never got along with my father. But I'm glad that when my father was dying I went to see him and I got to hold his hand. I did not manage to see my mom before she died, though. I was on my way [to Poland] when she died and somehow I cannot come to terms with that. I got along well with my mum; it was good between us, but I still have a distaste that I was late, that she did not wait for me. It still weights heavily on me. Whereas the fact that I was with my dad when he died, that I held his hand, meant a lot. I somehow felt that we finally understood each other. That he understood that I loved him. Because he always had an opinion that nobody loved him. That I did not love him. So it was something very special for me that I could be with him when he died.

Those of my interlocutors who knew about the approaching death of their parents, but failed to see them on time, despite many "extenuating" circumstances, blame themselves for the failure, regarding transnational separation as a painful experience of their own doing. They conceive that, at the end of the day, it was not the spatial distance which was the problem; the problem was their failed ability to conquer it. After all, they could have decided to stay in Poland. When people manage to "be there", to "hold the hand", "kiss the forehead" and "say goodbye" (to quote Henryk's words of farewell to his dying father), it seems like a tribute to their own desire and effort to meet. Thanks to that, transnational life emerges as not only bearable, but as a feasible way of building and closing at least the embodied form of the relationship. Accordingly, the instances of travelling to Finland or Poland to accompany one's family members in difficult moments show that transnational family members engage in the transnational mobility as much to comfort others as to emotionally reassure themselves. It is both about showing care, and preventing one's own (possibly life-long) guilt.

Apart from the need to "be there", transnational family members also engage in transnational mobility to take the emotional advantage of spatial distance and the division by national borders. Instead of travelling to offer support, people invite their *close ones* who are suffering to come and visit them. It is hoped that the transnational change of location, from Finland to Poland or vice-versa, will help to ease the pain by offering emotional distance and detachment. One could argue that national borders

always carry particular affective potential. Usually they are associated with coercion, violence and a negative sense of being torn apart. Here they appear as the dividing line behind which problems can be left or at least can be looked at from a distance and a fresh perspective. Paradoxically, thanks to national borders, the emotion work of support in suffering can be enacted more effectively. To illustrate, when Basia's child died tragically, her brother and sister-in-law came for the funeral and later on persuaded Basia to come to Poland for a while, "so she could get away from all that". When Bronisław's brother's wife passed away, Bronisław – upon his brother's request and with certain difficulties, for it was the Cold War period – arranged for his niece to come to visit him in Finland. According to Bronisław, the visit helped his niece "get a new lease of life". A particular way of using transnational mobility for emotional support was told to me by Piotr, my interlocutor from Finland, and his mother living in Poland, whom I met in Finland and afterwards interviewed on the phone. Piotr's transnational family constitute a tight-knit transnational collectivity centred around his mother, now in her late seventies. "My mother brought us up in an atmosphere where nothing was more important than the family. Nothing", Piotr told me. This principle gave shape to a particular type of emotion work through mobility when Piotr's twin brother Przemek became seriously ill and was about to undergo surgery. Both brothers hid the news about the illness and the surgery from the mother, and agreed that Piotr would invite the mother to Finland to keep her unaware of the problem. The plan succeeded, for the mother only found out about everything after the surgery. As she told me, she experienced it with mixed emotions, but understood her sons' intentions to protect her.

Thus, in a transnational space, mobility across borders enables varying ways of emotion work, by enabling co-presence, hiding the problems or escaping from them.⁷⁶ It is a form of a healing tool enacted when technologically mediated communication does not suffice. Again, political and technological conditions do not completely determine it, although open borders and cheap air transportation definitely make it easier. For instance, some of my interlocutors have travelled to Poland within the last few years to support their elderly parents every two or three months or even monthly. After Laura's father died, I met Laura in a church. Beforehand she had travelled to Poland twice a year. Now, when her widowed mother needed support, she travelled twice a month. "Thank God for budget airlines", she told me.

The pains of dual separation

Anna: How have you emotionally managed difficult situations?

⁷⁶A perception of national border as enabling escape is also documented in the literature in terms of the motives for migration, whereby women migrate to escape from abusive relationships (see e.g. Kuźma, 2005, for Polish migration; Sørensen, 2005, for Dominican migration).

Mariusz: Well, for instance I will never forgive my mother for not coming to see me in Finland when I got very ill. She said she could not leave her husband alone.

Aleksandra: My mother[-in-law] only visited us for Christmas once, when I was very sick. She wanted to comfort me. It was very difficult time for her though, because she had left her husband in Poland. He was by himself on Christmas Eve. It was painful for her and for him. Thus we have never suggested to her that she come for Christmas again, unless they came together. My father[-in-law], however, has been very reluctant to do that.

Emotion work through physical co-presence is widely appreciated, particularly considering that it involves the necessity to overcome various obstacles. Among the factors to overcome are obvious ones, like the financial, technological or legal aspects I discussed in Chapter Six. There are also those less visible, pertaining to the necessity to negotiate between affiliations to different people and companion animals. One of the dilemmas of transnational family life, stemming from its multi-local emplacement, is that physical reunification with one side usually involves separation from the other. The responsibilities and attachments have to be weighed against each other and uneasy choices made: between spouses and children, parents and conjugal families, siblings and partners, animals and parents and so on, determining whether to go at all and if so, for how long and when. Women are often more constrained in their choice than men, usually having more caring responsibilities, but they are also particularly desired to come. The emotional work through transnational mobility is thus an act of balancing the needs of various family members. It often ends up as an experience of showing affection to one side, while missing or even feeling guilty for leaving the other side. Alternatively, one side may feel guilty for receiving affection at the expense of the other side. In this context, transnational family life emerges as the emotional zero-sum game where somebody will always suffer or, in other words, experience the “pain of distance”. From this perspective, misery across borders can never be reduced. “When we visited our daughter for three months in Finland, we experienced the emotionality of separation ourselves, because we missed the rest of our family, who stayed there. So it all piles up”, Waclaw told me, indicating the persistence of a particular equilibrium of pain in the transnational space.

As the quotes above show, there is no absolute rule regarding whose needs will take precedence. Neither genealogy, nor spatial location entails a fixed answer. Mariusz was hoping that his mother would come to support him after the surgery. Yet his mother decided to stay with his stepdad in Poland (likewise indicating that knowing that somebody needs support is not always tantamount to providing it). Aleksandra’s mother-in-law made a different decision and as a result she and her husband who stayed in Poland suffered, while Aleksandra and her husband felt guilty. A different compromise was made when Hanna desired to be with her ill mother for Easter (“We cannot leave the poor woman alone for the holidays”, Hanna said): Hanna went to

Poland with one of her sons, while Hanna's husband, who could not travel at the time, stayed with another son in Finland. Minimizing the emotional downsides of transnational separation thus involves the negotiation of emotional commitments by separating and bringing together different family formations.

The dual emplacement of transnational family members especially affects the length of stays. The pleasure from reunification and the possibility to provide emotional comfort is mixed with anxiety to go back at some point in time. Once someone is staying in Poland or Finland, reunification in the opposite direction is looked forward to. For some persons, the emotional desire to return is a question of three months, for others it is even several days. Bogna, for instance, recently went to see her frail mother to Poland, but was anxious to come back after three days, one of the reasons being that she was doubtful of her husband's effort to take care of their cat properly. "I know he is not much of a cat-person. He would not even play with him [the cat]". She tacitly indicated that companion animals have emotional needs as well, which should be seriously considered. Zofia, who has battled a serious depression for last few years, was planning that her widowed sister would come to live with her in Finland. "I thought that we could live together a bit here and a bit there [in Poland]". She was hopeful given that her sister had already spent a significant amount of time visiting her in Finland. Zofia was thus disenchanted when her sister met a new partner and started living with him, leaving Zofia alone and lonely in Finland at least part of the time. The latter example also shows that the amount of time people are willing to spare for transnational support through mobility is a gauge of their affective attachment to different places. When those from Poland visit Finland, it is clear that even if their family hosts in Finland do not consider Finland their "full" home, the latter feel more at home in Finland than those from Poland do. Similarly, Poland is already only a partial home for long-term residents in Finland, lacking whatever and whoever they have in Finland.

Although, as I mentioned, there is no absolute rule about whose needs will take precedence in mobility for support, people certainly make moral claims for whose emotional needs should be given priority, evoking a particular hierarchy of family relationship that they consider morally justified. When the claims are not fulfilled, the "feeling rules" are considered broken, engendering disappointment. My interviews and observations indicate that the claims are made through drawing on ties of blood and affinity, commitments people accumulate in the course of their relationship history (Finch and Mason, 1993, in their study of support in British kinship talks about "accumulated commitments") as well as the emotional justice of a given relationship (including spending an exceeding amount of time with one child/sibling at the expense of another). Thus, for instance, Mariusz regarded it as natural that his mother should come for his surgery. He stressed the priority of his needs as a child, despite him living abroad. The behaviour of his mother, by choosing the needs of her (second) husband

instead, was for Mariusz “unforgivable”. Zofia was disappointed that her sister would not come to live with her, especially considering that, as she told me, her sister had not known her boyfriend long and he was unreliable.

Nevertheless, the least legitimate excuse for failed care seem to involve companion animals, since Polish (and Euro-American in general) cultural norms privilege human-to-human solidarity. When Bogna told me she had to take care of her cat, thus the visit to her frail mother was a short one, she said it between-the-lines, and very probably, she did not tell her mother. Also for these reasons, if animals cannot be taken along, it seems acceptable to leave them under somebody’s else care in favour of taking care of human family members – and this is what Bogna did. I would argue that people may feel guilty about the animals they leave, but within the context of Polish cultural norms they will not be judged as harshly as if they would were they to leave children, spouses or frail parents. Sometimes though, it is the *close ones* in need of care who themselves want to see the animal. For instance I was a witness to a conversation when Hanna’s son asked Hanna whether she and her husband planned to leave their dog, Sunia, in Finland on the occasion of their visit to Hanna’s mother, who was recuperating in a hospital in Poland following surgery. Hanna said decisively: “No! Grandma also wants to see Sunia!” Sunia appeared here as the people’s means of enacting emotion work, offering comfort to the frail mother. In this case, the human-animal separation as a consequence of showing care through mobility was avoided.

Becoming closer and growing apart

As was depicted above, transnational family members manage to provide each other with a substantial amount of emotional support and reassurance, although there are limits to what family members want and can do. What I would furthermore regard as positively significant is not only the mere maintenance of transnational ties through successfully enacted emotion work but also the tightening of ties: becoming emotionally closer against the increased spatial distance.

To begin with, the ritualisation of contact discussed in Chapters Five and Six gives transnational relationships a somewhat exceptional and out-of-ordinary status. I have already indicated that communication and visit rituals are not unequivocally conducive to increased social cohesion; nonetheless, many relationships can be read in such terms. Ritualized transnational contact has the feature of a small celebration and objectifies the increased consciousness of the necessity to systematically and continuously work for your relationship through staying interested and showing affection. Several of my interlocutors in Finland tacitly pointed to that by comparing the contact they have with their family members in Poland with the contact the latter have with each other in Poland. My interlocutors suggest that the transnational presence – even if disembodied – is characterised by regularity and a certain emotional intensity of interaction, whereas living within the same national borders may dilute both

the regularity and intensity of contact. Living transnationally, they consciously work for having time for their *close ones*, whether on the phone or during visits. They listen and manifest concern, as well as share events of their own lives. One of the instances is provided by Jagoda, a woman in her early twenties who had only lived in Finland for over a year when we met. She came to Finland with her Polish husband and small children and for all them Poland was still the prime site of emotional affiliation. Since she lived in Tampere, we met often. Once, when I went for a walk with Jagoda, she was very preoccupied and constantly checked her mobile phone. She explained that Monika, her closest friend of whom I had already heard, was seriously ill. "Everybody has turned away from her", Jagoda said emphatically, "even her boyfriend. I am the only one who stayed. I call her every day. Today she went to the doctor again. She'll send me a message when she comes out". Jagoda was afraid that without any support, Monika would give up and fail to be treated. Eventually, Jagoda managed to assist her friend through all the healing stages up to almost full recovery. There were many examples similar to the above. They all pointed not only to the personal satisfaction from successfully providing support – from doing "good" emotion work – but also suggested an increased moral self-worth and a sense of empowerment coming from being an important part of the emotional life of those in Poland despite living in Finland. It is morally uplifting to remain within networks or even to have increased one's importance, especially if the local counterparts for whom transnational separation is not an issue fail to do that.

Several of my interlocutors suggested that the avoidance of conflicts thanks to separation and distance is also helpful in tightening the transnational family bonds. To paraphrase Turner, some transnational relationships appear to remain within their liminal period, "betwixt and between the categories of ordinary social life" (1987, 53). For ten minutes of conversation or three weeks of visits, transnational family members try to remain calm and composed, focusing on showing affection rather than venting frustrations. "Both sides try to refrain from arguments and use the time to the fullest", Henia told me about the meetings with her parents and siblings in Poland. Adam, a temporary worker, said that thanks to transnational separation it was easier for him to endure divorce and subsequently maintain a good relationship with his former wife, even though she left him for another man four months into his stay in Finland. "Distance allows you to look at things from a different perspective", Adam concluded.

Overall, the tightening of bonds pertains more to relationships with families of origin and close friends than with spouses and children. In the latter instances, the issue is not to become closer but to remain emotionally close at all and to maintain the feelings of love despite separation. The temporary workers I met all indicated that jealousy and the suspicion of matrimonial betrayal, underpinned by sexual and romantic attachment, is a common part of transnational conjugal life. Dawid, a temporary worker, remarked, "Not being in Poland makes us imagine what our wives are doing

there. Likewise they imagine what we are doing here”. Husbands usually make attempts to manage their own emotions “by thinking of something other than our emotional states” (Heelas 2007), but often they find such an “attentional shift” very difficult. “There is too much to think about”, one of the temporary workers told me. Left unmanaged, the imagination leads to strained relationships or their dissolution in extreme cases. Sarah Mahler (2001) who studied Ecuadorian transnational families, similarly notes, “As people imagine relatives' sexual behaviour across borders, anxiety is produced that occasionally translates into concrete actions”. Thus the type of emotion work that people can do to provide themselves and their *close ones* with a sense of comfort and security across borders is limited. If in some instances, borders carry positive overtones, here their affective potential is actualized in exactly the opposite direction. National borders are seen as an inevitable obstacle to trust, causing conflicts and setting transnational family member apart. In this context, doing emotion work transnationally is to work against the “wall” of national borders.

It is also difficult to create an emotionally close relationship with family members with whom one is unable to perform emotion work via technologically-mediated communication and where an embodied presence is required. That regards animals and, particularly, small children. Jurek recalled how his one-year old daughter did not recognize him when he came back from working abroad the first time (“It was a bit shocking for me. She thought I was a stranger. She was afraid”), and how the situation repeated with his little granddaughter upon his most recent visit from Finland. As he summed up, she did not miss him because “she did not know him”. Wanda portrayed a similar situation regarding her husband’s, Kazimierz’s, transnational role as a grandfather and a father:

I took care of my grandson a lot when he was little so we are very close. On the other hand, he knows that grandpa exists, and it is good that he exists, but they do not have a close relationship. Time took its toll.[...] My husband’s stay abroad also affected his relations with our children in a negative way. [...] When our son or daughter had problems in adolescence he was not there, only me, and this is how it stayed. And he feels it (*on to czuje*).

In the above case it seemed, though, that it was not precisely that Wanda’s husband was not there, but that he was not there in a way which would allow his children to develop respect for his opinions. To observe the failure of his emotion work “was painful”, Wanda remarked. Even if he wanted to “direct” them and provide advice, they disregarded him. She also added that in the most difficult situations regarding children her husband left all the decision-making to her. He was thus not “properly” there when it was time for him to step up, even if he would have been “stepping” up from afar. Nevertheless, for Kazimierz, many of his tribulations as a grandfather and a father have come from physical separation. In terms of his relationship with his children, he regrets his transnational life, he does not seem to feel guilty though. I would argue that from

his perspective, he might have to some extent failed as a father emotionally, but he has not failed in material terms, which has also been Kazimierz's way of showing affection: a way of emotion work through material goods.

Thus, even the emotions surrounding transnational parenthood (and childhood) are less clear-cut than the emotional downside related to the feelings of growing apart. One cannot also forget that the family ideology which to date prioritizes the emotional presence of mothers over fathers is helpful in producing such emotional state of affairs. Ideologically speaking, in Poland less is affectively emotionally expected from fathers and so they may be less tormented by transnational living than mothers. In this sense, mothers are culturally assigned to do more "emotion work" and fathers, to do more "material" work (although they are not released from doing emotion work of a disciplining type). Consequently, attempts at the redefinition of the affective role of motherhood in the transnational space to include material provisioning are filled with ideological obstacles, which fathers face to a lesser extent. Number of gendered-focus transnational studies confirm the above (see for instance a classic study on the pains of transnational motherhood among Filipino female migrants by Parreñas, 2001, and Sørensen, 2005, for Dominican female migrants). For Zofia – my only female interlocutor whose child stayed in Poland – the very sharing of her transnational motherhood experiences with me was difficult. She preferred to avoid the subject. I had the impression that perhaps if I had not been Polish, it would have been easier for her to gain some distance to talking about it. I felt she felt I was there to judge her morally. What she revealed was the emotional distance between her and her (already adult) son and, as a consequence, between her and her grandchildren. At some point, when her son called, she remarked that they had had an argument recently and had not spoken for a month. On the other hand, Zofia has managed to develop a very close transnational relationship with her nephew, whom she treats like a son. This also had further generational consequences. When I entered Zofia's apartment for the first time, my attention was caught by children's drawings displayed in the living room. I mistakenly presumed they were made by Zofia's granddaughter whose photo was on the shelf. It turned out they were Zofia's nephew's daughter, made during the latter's last visit.

Zofia's story indicates that increased affection with children across borders also is possible. However, it comes easier when the relationship is not marked by the moral baggage of prescribed living arrangements (mother and child under one roof) and a sense of guilt when this rule is broken. That Zofia was the sole breadwinner for her son (as his father, who lived in Poland, was mostly unemployed) and remains in a frequent contact did not suffice.

“Toxic” emotion work

When I met the aforementioned Aleksandra, an educated women in her forties living in Finland with her husband, she was in the middle of reading Lilian Glass’s work on how to avoid “toxic people” and maintain relationships with “terrific ones”. Drawing on it, she reflected upon her transnational experiences, “My husband and I try to surround ourselves with terrific people, people who give us positive energy and who boost our self-worth, people who, I believe, also take positive energy from us, for whom we also are a source of mental good”. All my other interlocutors would readily subscribe to this philosophy. It would be emotionally “energizing” (to use Aleksandra’s expression) to stay in touch only with people with whom there is mutual appreciation and sympathy. My interlocutors would hope that transnational intimate life, already complicated by national borders, should allow to focus only on positive relationships and liberate oneself from emotionally destructive ones. At the same time, Aleksandra acknowledged that total avoidance of “toxic” people across borders is impossible. As a result, transnational space is inhabited not only by supportive and commiserating family members, as well as those who are present insufficiently, but also by those whose transnational emotion work is considered to be carried out at the direct or indirect expanse of self-worth, wellbeing and the dignity of others. It is not as much about the withdrawal of support or growing estrangement, which I discussed in the prior sections, but about being present in a wrong way. The transnational relationship is maintained, though in a detrimental way. It involves the abuse of trust, dishonesty and/or direct callousness done out of spite, fear or inconsiderate self-interest. It may be directly related to the transnational context of life or constitute the continuation of mistreatment from the past for which transnationalism provides a new stage. An important aspect of “toxic” emotion work is that it is assumed to be done with at least a degree of deliberation. Unsurprisingly, my interlocutors mainly view themselves here as the wronged party, although they sometimes tacitly acknowledge that in their transnational families they are also perpetrators of sorts.

As I mentioned, transnational context encourages particular forms of positive emotion work. The same applies to its negative forms. To begin with, the concealment of truth, arguably easier across borders than within a local context, can be done not out of the desire for the wellbeing of others (as discussed in the previous sections), but out of personal gain. It is the sort of ill-advised concealment that a transnational family member sometimes mistakenly presupposes and sometimes is proved to be right about. A good example is provided by Marta and Damian, a young couple living in Tampere. Upon coming to Finland in the post-accession period, Marta and Damian left their dog in the care of Marta’s sister in Poland. They intended to bring him to Finland on their next return visit. The dog was old and demanded veterinarian care. When we first met, Marta told me how much she missed him: “I will go to Poland and bring him here, and even if he is sick I will make him healthy again. He is the only member of our family

who really should be here with us right now”. Several weeks later Marta got a message from her sister that the dog was so sick they had to put him down. Marta was suspicious and upon contacting the veterinarian discovered her sister’s negligence. She told me that most likely the dog was a nuisance for her sister, who hoping that Marta would not find out, decided to get rid of him. Marta to date has remorse towards her sister, although they continue to stay in touch.

What was undermined in the above transnational event was both Marta’s wellbeing and the image of family as based on sharing and solidarity. Solidarity was not only undermined between the sisters, but also across the human-non-human divide in kinship. As I suggested earlier, animals, being cherished family members by many of my interlocutors, can also be discarded more easily or subjected to abuse without any legal consequences. For some people they are family members, for others, even within the same family, they are disposable objects whose “humanity” and kinship is questioned. Marta’s example show that this diverse attitude can negatively affect the human-human family relationships across borders.

Another distinctive feature of detrimental transnational relationships involves outright verbal abuse ranging from relatively mild taunting to extreme vulgarities, as well as the expression of harsh disapproval. Instead of emotional empathy or consideration, there is openly expressed disdain. If consistently recurring, verbal abuse is often part of a larger, more or less conscious strategy to control through subjugation, guilt and/or fear. The latter instances also bring me to the “toxic” emotion work directly related to the transnational material conditions of life, namely the open manifestation of envy regarding an (alleged or actual) increase in the economic status of family members living in Finland and disputes over transnational economic exchanges. I will develop it more from the material viewpoint in the next chapter. Here it is sufficient to stress that family relationships exist within a particular transnational material context which is of consequence for the family’s emotional dynamic. Disputes over inheritance in Poland, whereby those living abroad are denied the right to inheritance, are a pivotal example of the overlap between detrimental emotions and material life in a transnational family. Residence abroad is a major factor in the attempts at denying family members their right to inheritance, but other aspects also play their part. In court battles, sometimes lasting for years, the local and transnational history of the relationship comes through: sibling rivalry, conflicts, jealousy and the sense of injustice.

The painful paradox of all the above experiences is that despite abuse and disappointment transnational family members rarely decide on the ultimate cessation of ties. Only inheritance battles have such long-standing consequence. In the process of fighting over inheritance, family members say and do things on which it is very difficult if impossible to go back. In the aftermath of the inheritance battle over the father’s estate, one of my interlocutors Bronislaw broke off all contact with his brother. "He is

not my brother anymore", Bronislaw told me. Otherwise, family members tend to shed aside negative feelings, forgive and hope for improvement.

Multiple factors hinder the ultimate disconnection. Among them are accumulated commitments and affiliations developed between family members during living in Poland and transnationally, the interconnectedness of family members within the common kinship matrix, and the internalization of particular family values. Family is important, but at the same time everybody acknowledges conflicts and disappointments to be inherent to the family life. "There are no ideal families", I was told. Hochschild argues that emotion work in its successful form produces appropriate, and if failed, inappropriate feelings. However, from the viewpoint of family as, by default, a conflicting unit, there is a certain "appropriateness" to negative emotional experiences. They may be tolerated to a certain point or accepted as inevitable if transnational family belonging is at stake.

Arguably, by severing family ties, those in Finland often have more to lose. For them, transnational family inclusion also means active ties to Poland and Polish cultural heritage. Furthermore, by severing particular ties they not only run the risk of being excluded from other family relationships and of weakened ties to Poland, but they also reduce their children's chances for transnational family membership, thus reducing their chances for active transnationalism in general (see also Chapter Ten). Partially for the sake of transnational intergenerational reproduction my interlocutors in Finland also attempt to maintain a close relationship with their parents, even if they hold bitter feelings towards them. As Dominika said: "My mother is a great grandmother. Even though she was not worth her salt as a mother, now as a grandmother she is. She fulfils the role of a grandmother one hundred per cent. And you have to give her credit for that".

Filial ties are also among the most difficult to abandon. As already hinted, Polish Catholic ideology construes a filial relationship as central to the moral sense of self and personal wellbeing. On several occasions, my interlocutors quoted the opening verse of the 5th of the Ten Commandments, "Honour your father and your mother". This moral principle is habitually exacerbated by the practice of everyday life, entailing the development of multiple emotional and material interdependencies. Regardless of how harmful they may be, they tame the willingness to escape from a filial relationship. My interlocutors usually reject the escape even if transnational separation tentatively gives them such a possibility and contemporary academic and popular discourse which questions Church dogmas offers them a moral justification to do so. This is visible from my conversation with Jagoda – another of my interlocutors who explicitly pondered on the notion of "toxic" family members and their inescapable presence across borders. During one of my interview meetings with Jagoda I just received a text message from my mother. I commented that my mother constantly worries about me. Jagoda responded, "at least she cares for you", and continued:

I think that my mum only bestowed love on her first child. She did not have space for the rest ... She has never appreciated me, she has always told me that I am nobody and will be nobody... Now I'm trying to boost my self-esteem a little. I have my husband and my baby daughter. I am reading a book about toxic parents. Just to understand all this. My mum comes from a normal family. She used to be totally different, only later on she became so bitter. I don't know what happened.[...] She has no interest in me.

Anna: But you said she used to be interested?

Jagoda: But you know it is not that kind of an interest as if she would like to help. She just does everything to prove to you that you are worse, that everything you do is wrong. If I have a problem and want to ask her something, for her it is just satisfaction that I am stupid and I do not know something.

Anna: So maybe it's good you are here, and you can get a break from each other?

Jagoda: Well, yeah. But the thing about toxic parents is that they attract their children. And children try to do everything to get their love.

A dissatisfaction with her mother's intrusiveness was also shown by Natalia, as visible from my conversation with Natalia and her husband, who is like-minded on the issue of Natalia's mother:

Jarek: My mother-in-law only approves of me when I have money.

Natalia: Oh how my mother loves money!

Jarek: When I didn't have any money she was like: "Get the fuck out of here!"

Natalia: [She was saying] "Look who you've married! He's such a loser!"

Jarek: But when I had money, she immediately changed her tune. I was the dearest son-in-law (*najukochańszy zięciulek*). [...]

Jarek: She only talks about money.

Natalia: When she calls the first thing she asks is: "When will you send me the money?"

Anna: Why do you want her to visit you [for Christmas] then?

Natalia: Our children want her to...And after all, she is my mother. She is my children's grandmother. We lived together for so many years that it is not like we are not close, because we are. It would be also nice to have a family by your side for Christmas.

Natalia's account indicates all the aforementioned elements constitutive for the highly ambivalent experience of transnational family life: exploitation, verbal abuse, conflict over money and a great deal of attachment nonetheless. Jagoda's mother, on the other hand, "supports" her, but as Jagoda sees it, in order to exert dominance and disempower Jagoda.

Simultaneously, both Natalia and Jagoda have a critical distance towards their relationship with their mothers. They do not talk about the burdens of filial "moral obligation" from which it is difficult to escape, even transnationally, but rather about the awareness of a desire for transnational family belonging, which would exceed beyond a nuclear unit and the importance of parents for one's self-worth, despite their multiple failures of emotion work. From the gendered perspective, it is worth noting

that fathers constitute a positive, emotional counterbalance for both the women. They seem to be doing the positive emotion work which the mothers are failing to do.

Certainly, in the ambivalent webs of transnational family relationships those in Finland are not merely the objects of detrimental emotional work, but sometimes initiate it themselves. By their own admission, they sometimes deliberately aim to upset rather than ensure the wellbeing of their family members in Poland; remain overtly critical and are able to retaliate, also exploiting their transnational position. Dominika, whose in-laws recurrently verbally abuse her, decided to force her father-in-law into confrontation during one of the visits:

Dominika: When my dad [-in-law] comes here I will argue with him. Over vodka I will start a fight with him.

Anna: He won't have anywhere to escape...

Dominika: [A nod]. That is, I won't simply fight with him. I will rather give him a piece of my mind. I will ask him what the purpose of his previous actions towards me was. What did he want to gain by acting like this towards me. Maybe through this I will also manage to get through to him.

Another of my interlocutors from Finland, Jarek, told me about his parents who abandoned him when he was little, and his maternal aunt and grandparents who made up for his parents' absence by bringing him up and treating him as a son, but towards whom he also has fairly ambivalent, if intense feelings. He acknowledged honestly, "Whenever I visit my grandmother she always pisses me off. My grandfather is OK, but my grandmother always pisses me off. Recently she pissed me off so much that I broke a window in her bathroom door". Old tensions can be thus continued or re-addressed in new ways in a transnational space as a part of "the constant play of power in the games of life" (Ortner 1999, 23). The window broken by Jarek can serve as another poignant example of a physical repercussion of particular affective states, here, by Jarek's belief, tenaciously provoked by his grandmother who recurrently crosses a boundary his grandfather does not.

My interlocutors in Finland also tacitly admitted to (and I sometimes personally observed) another form of emotion work carried out at the expense of the welfare of their family members in Poland; that is disparaging gossiping.⁷⁷ Disparaging gossiping can be regarded as an indirect form of "toxic" emotion work. Paradoxically, it is a side effect of the positive emotion work directed at those family members support for whom demands emotional sympathizing through the denigration of other family members. In such cases, abstaining from disparaging gossiping would mean the withholding of words of empathy and understanding, and the obstruction of people's desire for unrestrained sharing. By not agreeing to criticize and disdain others, transnational emotional talk would be heavily curtailed. Therefore, in such (fairly

⁷⁷ For disparaging gossiping see Jaworski and Coupland (2005).

common) instances, the transnational solidarity and harmony achieved through everyday emotional sharing are done for the benefit of particular family members at the expense of others. In disparaging transnational gossiping different family loyalties are negotiated and set against each other, with siblings against other siblings, siblings against parents, parents against aunts and uncles and so on. In this context, emotion work produces transnational kinship divided into fractions rather than a single, united transnational family.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have indicated emotions to be one of the central forces driving the transnational engagement and an important key to understanding transnational family relations and experiences. Emotions matter because they are culturally meaningful and have a particular moral charge, and because they have actual consequences. As people strive to adjust their emotional practices to a new environment and to family life across borders, emotions leave their mark on people's attitudes, transnational relationships and individual bodies.

Transnational separation is certainly a challenge and there is no single uniform reaction to separation. My interlocutors in Finland have to deal with the dominant nationalist ideology imposing the emotional regime of *teskenota* and guilt upon those who leave Poland and often with social deprivation in destination places. Those in Poland have to deal with longing and the sense of potential abandonment as the family members who are being "left" behind. Consequently, transnational family members, for the sake of their own and others' emotional wellbeing and moral worth, engage in a plethora of transnational emotion work by means of talking, listening, concealing, sympathizing, empathizing, attention shifting and the embodied co-presence. If the transnational enactment of everyday talk and sharing has become easier along with the political and technological changes, not all the problems in the transnational family are shared to date and not all can be resolved across borders. There are "secret spaces" and compromises, as well as the negotiation of one's commitments to different human and non-human family members "here" and "there". At the same time dwelling in a transnational space offers the possibility to enact the types of emotion work inaccessible locally, having to do with navigation of distance, national borders and the ritualization of meetings. People also look at the family ideals and practices of others within Poland, Finland and across borders to evaluate the emotional character of their own transnational family relationships. Contextualization and relativization facilitate a more positive attitude to separation.

Referring to the importance of affective support and family ties maintained across borders, Elizabeth Aranda (2008, 84) argues that "positive emotions, such as happiness, emerge out of feelings of emotional embeddedness" and that the "feelings of emotional embeddedness" are stimulated by the "social interaction, companionship,

and feelings of connection to a group or community". This echoes Edwards and Strathern's argument (2000, 152) that, "Belonging', like 'association', 'relationship' and a host of similar connective terms, carries positive overtones. It is almost as though there was something productive and generative in making connections as such". In contrast, I indicate the ambivalence of transnational emotional embeddedness. Transnational space offers new ways to evoke positive feelings and a sense of being cared, however it also enables and stimulates new forms of abuse and new reasons for disdain. What follows is that transnational emotion work is not only about "noticing, acknowledging, and empathizing with the feelings of family members, patching up quarrels, and soothing hurt feelings" (Hochschild 1997, 210), but also about causing quarrels and indignities. Detrimental emotions produced in others are also quite "proper" from the perspective of the family members who provoke them, if they are produced deliberately, and with the conviction that the other party deserves it.

Chapter 8 Intimate (in)equalities and transnational distinction

The emotional or affective transnationalism discussed in the previous chapter may be considered an elusive phenomenon if approached apart from its material manifestations. In this chapter, I shift the angle of enquiry to the socioeconomic stratification of transnational families. Changing the angle of enquiry, I do not, however, discard emotional factors (see also Matyska 2011).

This chapter emphasises the importance of social stratification for understanding transnational family life. It asks how stratification inequalities, understood as hierarchies of socioeconomic and cultural distinction, are experienced, co-produced and negotiated in the transnational family. In the chapter, I show that various status distinctions, including consumer consumption, cultured behaviour and participation in historical events, play an important role in transnational family-making and are indicative of the family members' positions in a transnational hierarchy. I stress their Cold War and post-Cold War changeability.

Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984) is widely considered the most important work on distinction in social sciences. For Bourdieu and a number of his, albeit critical, followers, a distinction has functioned in relation to class reproduction (see for instance Bennett et al. 2009, Ortner 2003). "‘Distinction’, or better ‘class’, the transfigured, misrecognized, legitimate form of social class, only exists through the struggles for the exclusive appropriation of the distinctive signs which make ‘natural distinction’", Bourdieu (1984, 250) argued. Transnational studies also lean towards treating distinction and class jointly (Scott 2006, Sklair 2001, Peisker 1999) and predominantly discuss economic capital in the form of remittances as the key factor in the transnational hierarchy reproduction.

Remittances are often considered from the perspective of the "development potential" of migration (for an overall review of migration-development nexus see Sørensen 2012, Sørensen et al. 2002) and their "value to global capitalism, national budgets, and local economies" (Cohen 2005). Their importance is related to the dire economic conditions from which most of the migrants originate and which they try to address through mobility. Key questions regard the patterns of remittance utilization and its effect on the household's class position and the local communities' development

(see for instance Cohen, 2001, for Mexican migrants, Landolt, 2001, for Salvadoran migrants). Polish migration studies also gave special value to economic factors in the emergence of transnational family hierarchies. The ethnosurvey of Polish migrant communities conducted in the 1990s, which I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, paid much attention to the ways “migrants” and “non-migrant” relatives consume and invest remittances (see Frejka et al. 1998). From the remittance perspective in Polish migration studies, Polish migration stands as an index of successful or, more often, failed economic development, whereby remittances are mostly spent on consumer goods rather than invested for the sake of a long-term advancement of families and communities.

In this chapter I recognize the importance of material differences and economic transfers for stratified transnational family making. This theme seems to be inescapable given the material gap between Poland and the capitalist West during the Cold War and its economic and symbolic repercussions in post-Cold War hierarchies. Elizabeth Dunn and Kathryn Verdery (2011), responding to the criticism of why Eastern European anthropologists give so much focus to material aspects of transformation in Eastern Europe, stated that the “blame” is on Marx and Communist governments and the significance they gave to the material fundamentals of social life. However, I do not reduce transnational family’s stratification hierarchies to material aspects alone and, drawing upon my fieldwork, I emphasize the multidimensionality of transnational stratification. I point to the material as well as other less obvious sources of distinction which overlap or challenge the material dimension.

In my analysis, I keep Bourdieu’s (1986) idea of various forms of economic, social and cultural capital as contributing to the social hierarchy reproduction, but I refrain from the discussion of class. The arguments of other scholars corroborate the above approach. Firstly, an important reflection comes from the stratification ambiguity of communist Poland. Due to the Communist Party’s attempts at equalizing social structures, it was difficult to determine the mechanisms of stratification in Polish society. Income differences between different social groups, from manual workers to technical and non-technical intelligentsia, were reduced to a minimum and, accordingly, the prestige of education and occupation did not translate into a higher level of life, unlike in the capitalist West, Finland included (Alestalo, Słomczyński and Wesołowski 1978). Kolankiewicz and Lewis (1988, 59) argue that it was “difficult to make sense of inequality indicators” in communist Poland, Domański and Rychard (1997, 10-11) talk about the politically regulated “organized disorder” of Polish society, while Anna Giza-Poleszczuk (2007b) indicates that people had problems with determining the appropriate means to achieve the top of the social hierarchy or even determine what this “top” was. Another set of disagreements comes from contemporary Western scholarship, whereby “class” is questioned as a viable means of explaining inequalities in “post-industrial” societies (Clark and Lipset 2001, Lee and Turner 1996). Finally, the

issue emerges to what extent “class” can be read unambiguously across different national locations (Ead et al. 2006). Leslie Sklair (2001) developed the concept of transnational capitalist class, and then others followed, but this category is clearly located within a single global economic framework and seems to be more relevant to high-end transnational elites than people located lower in the social hierarchy, for whom a smooth class translation between different national context is more difficult.

In accordance with the above, my interlocutors indicate various status distinctions as relevant for their transnational family life. Depending upon who is talking and in the context of which national location, various elements are mutually congruent or contradictory in locating people in a transnational hierarchy. The changing national contexts have contributed to ambiguities and disagreements regarding people’s transnational position. Although I note that transnational family members usually support each other and are in many ways mutually involved in capitalizing on the “profits of distinction” (Bourdieu 1984), this is not a tension-free process.

I start my account with economic exchanges and material-status differences emerging across the Iron Curtain and changes caused by the capitalist economy in Poland, including the increased difficulty of material giving and receiving. I also discuss transnational family members’ involvement in each other’s careers. Finally, I stress the importance of the distinction stemming from embodied and institutionalized cultural capital as a way of balancing the possible economic inequalities emerging transnationally.

Transnational help in centrally planned economy

During the Cold War, material aspects became paramount in the transnational family hierarchy. As the Iron Curtain was imagined to separate freedom from political subjugation, it also separated economic affluence from austerity.

In the 1930s, Finland was still Poland’s poorer neighbour. The situation started to change after the war, when Finland continued the political economy model of capitalist democracy, whereas Poland shifted from capitalism to a centrally-planned economy. Despite living under different political economy systems, Finns and Poles (one could say, unfortunately for the latter) tended to share common ideas about the “good life” and grounded it in material qualities. In Poland, materialist desires flourished in particular during the Gierek era. Edward Gierek introduced the “propaganda of success” into Polish public discourse and stirred people’s hopes for an increased material standard of living. The promised affluence not only did not materialize, but also by the end of the 1970s the Polish economy collapsed. In contrast, Finland was reaching its economic heights. At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s sociologists J. P. Roos and Andrzej Siciński carried out a comparative project on Polish and Finnish ways of life. They summed up the objective differences and value similarities between Poland and Finland by rhetorically asking:

are any kinds of cultural and way of life comparisons at all relevant or necessary, when people in one country are living in an almost permanent crisis situation, when shortages and even rationing of certain goods have become an almost permanent feature, when such goods as meat, flour, sugar, butter and even chocolate are strictly rationed for a long period of time and where consumer durables, cars and apartments are attained only after long waiting or use of inducements (relations, bribes, etc.), where travelling is difficult and credit card or bank services almost inexistence; whereas in the other country rationing cards are memory of the 40's, where shortages were last experienced in the 50's, where the housing or day care problems are very relative when compared to the Polish situation, where people are buying eagerly videos, dishwashers, and home computers on credit, and changing apartments more and more often? This kind of superficial comparison would lead us to the conclusion that there is nothing to compare, but this is not true. The fact that the above differences are important shows that there is a common ground, common value, that Poland is lacking what Finland has got, and feeling the lack, culturally. (1987, 4)

Common material expectations permeated transnational families as well. Despite living under different regimes, transnational family members shared similar cultural material values, family members in Finland representing the desired standard of life. Thus, the geopolitical, Cold War power hierarchy was reproduced at an intimate level. Family members in Finland – by economically supporting their *close ones* in Poland – aimed at an evening out of the inequalities. At the same time, material transfers from Finland to Poland reproduced rather than undermined the established hierarchy, confirming for family members in Poland their economic inferiority.

During the Cold War, material transfer consisted primarily of goods which were in short supply on the Polish market. On their own initiative or in response to explicit appeals, my interlocutors in Finland provided their *close ones* in Poland with exotic fruits, sweets, clothes, toys, pieces of furniture and technological equipment, detergents and hygiene products. They sent or brought them personally to Poland or supplied their *close ones* with them when the latter visited Finland. The objects and means of exchange became the source of post-Cold War anecdotes. Jan recalled making a plane trip to Poland with nothing but diapers and washing detergent in his hand luggage and checked-in luggage. Helena told me how she still distinctively remembers an image of three bags neatly placed on the floor in her Finnish apartment, which she was about to take to Poland for her three closest friends at the end of Marital Law. Young family members in Poland would get talking dolls, chocolates, fizzy drinks and fashionable clothes from Finland that none of their schoolmates had.

Dollar transfers were an important form of transnational material support, reflecting the different status of different currencies during the communist period. Due to the fundamental systemic differences, Finnish salaries did not have to be high to matter on the Polish market. The nominal wages in Poland were low while the dollar incomparably exceeded the value of the Polish zloty. As a consequence, a one-month salary in Finland could exceed a one-year salary in Poland. For instance, Bogna laughed

at the reminiscence that she and her children travelled to Finland to visit her husband by ferry in the 1980s because the ferry was cheap, but it was cheap only from the perspective of her husband's Finnish income as a researcher. "For me, an accountant, it was a year's salary", she said. Leszek concurred, "Yes, from the Polish perspective it was indeed an amazing amount of money". They also quickly managed to buy out their apartment in Poland with Leszek's Finnish salary: "It was unbelievable. For a ridiculously small amount [of dollars] we bought out our apartment. We paid like 1,800 dollars.If you had dollars back then, you were a big shot". Today the apartment is worth the incomparable sum of one hundred thousand dollars. Dollars also allowed access to other commodities and services, either unattainable for people with the Polish zloty, or attainable but only after a long period of waiting.

The power of dollars is one of the iconic images of the communist period. It was documented, among others, by Frances Pine (2002) in her ethnographic account of the Highlanders⁷⁸ in southern Poland and by Barbara Cieślińska (1994) in her ethnography of rural migrant communities in eastern Poland. "Not all cash is alike", Alain Lemon (1998) indicates, with regard to the use of money in Russia. Cash, while applying to abstract certain values, does so in "culturally specific ways" and is an indicator of other values and social relationships (Ibid.). During communism, dollars embodied the symbolic and material power of the West. They were the markers of capitalist modernity and affluence, and constituted a prestigious objectification of intimate transnational ties. Given their purchasing and symbolic power, I would regard dollars as the utmost source of material distinction transnational family members could enjoy in communist Poland.

The circulation of dollars on the formal and informal Polish market also indexes well the contradictory transnational relationship of the Polish state with the West, whereby transnationalism from above and transnationalism from below across the Iron Curtain were mutually constitutive. The Polish state needed dollars to support its trade with the West, whereas private citizens needed dollars to support their everyday and more luxurious consumption. Paradoxically, dollars were banned by Polish law from being sold or bought. Their possession was nevertheless allowed. The only place where one could legally obtain and exchange dollars was a bank, but given its state-imposed control and the unfavourable rate of exchange, usually people exchanged dollars on the informal market.⁷⁹ One could use dollars to make legal purchases in Pewex – the chain of state shops which sold Western goods and valuable goods produced in Poland only for foreign currency (the so-called "internal export"), as well as legally jump the queue for luxurious goods. Pewex was mentioned by some of my

⁷⁸ Inhabitants of the Tatra Mountain region.

⁷⁹ The informal market functioned in practice as the primary market (Wedel 1986).

interlocutors from Finland with considerable nostalgia. For an ordinary Pole, Pewex shops were an exclusive space symbolizing the geographically close but politically and economically distant West. However, for people working in Finland it was a space where they could feel economically comfortable and which allowed them to exercise their capitalist connections in the Polish communist context for personal and family benefit in a legally unrestrained manner. To quote Henryk:

[Poland in the 1980s] was a tragedy. It was really horrible. Horrible. The only good thing was that there was Pewex and, you know, I bought all sorts of stuff in Pewex. It cost me like nothing. I bought everything there from coffee, tea, vodka through cigarettes and clothes. I had a good salary in Finland and the exchange rate was very good. Just imagine: I earned around 2,500 dollars, whereas a big bottle of whisky [in Pewex] cost approximately two dollars, and jeans twenty dollars. So the exchange rate was really good.

Pewex, bank and luxury consumption through official channels were also major institutionalized ways through which the state could intercept the valuable currency of private citizens, many of whom, as mentioned above, were part of transnational families. Another official source were foreign travellers who upon coming to Poland had to exchange currency in an embassy.

In her ethnography of Bangladeshi transnationalism, Kathy Gardner (1993) indicates how for the Bangladeshi people “homeland” (*desb*) and “abroad” (*bidesb*) are associated with particular forms of power reaching beyond a simple geographic referent. They are mainly expressed and reproduced through the exchange of goods. *Bidesb* represents “success and power, which the *desb* is unable to provide.” Similarly in the Polish case, economic transfers in transnational families reproduced and reified the hierarchical images of the East and the West. They showed the economic failures of the Polish homeland and its centrally-planned economy and to some extent the failure of the communist ideology of nationalization, equality and restrained consumption.

One could argue that the emergence of economic inequality within transnational families was inevitable across the Iron Curtain. Conversations with my interlocutors suggest that it was an inadvertent effect of living in Finland and of the desire and commitment to help, rather than a conscious and deliberate way to exercise dominance. Remitted goods were an expression of emotional attachment, soothed the guilt of separation mentioned in the previous chapter and allowed people to build their family relations in an objective and tangible manner. Nevertheless, it was difficult to escape from the symbolic distinction that Western residency manifested, since power ascribed to particular places projects power on people associated with these places whether they want it or not (cf. the aforementioned Gardner 1993). “Hard currency indexed specific kinds of social ties, as if physically linking chains of people”, Lemon (1998) writes about Soviet Russia. Thus transnational family membership and dollars seemed to be as-if-naturally intertwined. Basia, with a menial job in Finland and a Finnish husband who was not willing to share his income, recalled with frustration:

Basia: I told my parents all about my situation in Finland. How much I earned, where I worked, how much I spent – because I couldn't even save a markka from my salary.

Anna: So I understand that your family was not pressuring you [to send them money]?

Basia: No, no. Only people who didn't know... All of them [including the family] thought I lived like a queen here. Well, I lived.. neither did I die of hunger, nor did I go around naked – that's true. But living here costs, everything costs... I only gave dollars to my parents. But even then my mum told me that once her friend wanted to buy dollars from her and she was surprised she didn't have any to sell. 'You have a daughter abroad and you don't have dollars?' the neighbour asked disapprovingly.

Basia's reaction of discomfort and frustration to the suspicion of her unbridled affluence are understandable in the context of consumer values propagated by the communist authorities. In communist Poland material wealth enjoyed little legitimization. The communist ideology propagated moderate consumption, juxtaposing it with the robust consumerism of the "rotten" capitalist West. Particularly money earned in the West could be read as providing a morally "unjust" boost to one's economic welfare. Simultaneously though, Polish society was ridden by an "envious egalitarianism" (Nowak 1979), whereby wealth was both morally denounced and envied. In this context it is unsurprising that my interlocutors in Finland, Basia included, stressed having "enough" for normal living in Finland, but they denied having "too much". In Finland, Basia lives in a well-maintained detached house. She showed me around and remarked disgruntled: "For people in Poland this is a sign of luxury. But in Finland this is normal".

Although *close ones* in Poland often showed more understanding and belief in the above claims than distant kin or acquaintances, the images produced by the incommensurable currency converter and the capitalist market were hard to shed. Ultimately, those in Finland had to work against the fact that they did live in the West and had free access to dollars or commodities. They did live in "Pewex", as one of the old-timers to Finland acknowledged and often enjoyed material trappings of the "middle class" life in Finland, getting apartments, good cars, and eating food unavailable in Poland. Basia, for instance, almost immediately increased in weight from 49 to 56 kg after coming to Finland: "I did not eat bread. Just chocolate". This image itself exceeds what Basia described to her parents as solely "not dying out of hunger".

From the perspective of post-Cold War changes, it is important to mention that the above transnational inequality and economic transfers, although certainly upsetting for family members in Poland, seemed less destructive to their moral sense of self than today. As Roos and Siciński (1987, 9) indicate, in communist Poland people were "ready to blame the state or the society for anything that happens or does not happen to them" (see also Domański and Dukaczewska 1997). Economic capital held by family members in Finland might thus have been perceived as not of their own doing as much

as economic deprivation in Poland could be ascribed to the systemic conditions over which one had any power. Many of the exchanges within the family were also taken as disinterested and altruistic help, not a matter of straightforward reciprocity. It seemed quite natural that those in Finland, being presumably better off, would help. Family was the “extension of the self” (Nowak 1979) and thus not subjected to direct reciprocal exchange (cf. Wedel 1986, Pawlik 1992). Furthermore, being the benefactor of transnational transfers meant gaining the means of distinction locally. The position of family members in Finland increased but those in Poland benefited as well.

Finally, there were plenty of other exchanges which flew in the opposite – Poland-to-Finland – direction. People in Poland provided their *close ones* in Finland with practical and emotional support as well as material gifts, at least to the extent the Polish economic conditions allowed. I documented the transfer of toys (mostly of bad quality, which quickly broke), alcohol and Polish delicacies – a fact which Polish-related literature usually disregards or does not document (see for instance Burrell 2008a). Such commodities were rarely the source of distinction in Finland but they mattered as an expression of care and could function as a gift in the Finnish context – an imagined possibility most likely taken from the Polish political economy context of barter. To illustrate, Henryk’s mother, Aldona, recalled:

I bought Henryk a beautiful painting which he still has. [...] My husband said, “Let’s buy it for him. Maybe if he has some financial difficulties he could sell it”. We were just thinking how we could help him. So we brought him some stuff [...] but they were single items. I thought maybe he would give them to somebody as a gift, so that he wouldn’t be there just like this...Well, one tried to help as one could.

In 1989, Hania’s parents brought eight litres of pure alcohol for Hania’s wedding in Finland and, quite exceptionally, several hundred dollars as a wedding gift. In Poland, Hania’s father was a factory director. As Hania said, “we even had a maid” – a salient sign of those few who were economically quite privileged by the communist system.

Making sense of new economic hierarchies

The end of the Cold War brought a new context to transnational material transfers. With the introduction of the capitalist system in Poland, goods from Finland have lost the previously-held power of the mythical West. By the 2000s, their flow to Poland had almost completely ceased. Also Finnish salaries ceased to represent the extreme difference of status they did in the past. Nowadays only temporary workers separated from their wives and children in Poland remit money to Poland regularly.

It is true that by working in Finland one can still buy a new apartment, a car or other status markers more quickly than in Poland. Nonetheless, the economic careers of my interlocutors’ family and friends in Poland suggest that the achievement of the above is also possible without leaving Poland and undergoing transnational transfer.

The principle that “the real differences in wealth are between those of us whom, with varying degrees of success, are trying to do something in Poland and get paid in zlotys, and those who have been lucky enough to work for any length of time abroad, anywhere abroad”, quoted in the 1980s by Wedel (1986, 84-5), no longer holds. Poland has become a country of increased economic inequalities, where it is feasible to attain a good material standard of living based on a combination of locally-based occupation, income and education. Similarly in Finland, it is also possible to acquire high-end goods including a car or a computer having “only” a manual or low-skilled white-collar occupation. As a consequence, many (although certainly not all) of my interlocutors’ family members living in Poland can afford what Polish people in Finland can afford by working and consuming in Finland or working in Finland and transferring the income to Poland. When I met Kasia in Poland, she told me, resisting her husband’s decision to stay longer in Finland for economic reasons: “After all, we bought our apartment by working in Poland”. Similarly, Waldemar, a long-time resident of Finland, remarked in a highly meritocratic and capitalist fashion: “Fortune favours the brave, regardless of geographical location”. In the Cold War period, to make such a claim would have been unthinkable.

The possibility of achieving a good level of consumption without moving from Poland is one of the indicators of the gradual changes of economic hierarchy between Poland and Finland. Another is the extent to which goods or even money have started to flow from Poland to Finland. Family members in Finland either bring goods personally from Poland or are the benefactors of their *close ones*’ gift-giving or monetary help. The goods given by those from Poland can be substantial: electronic equipment, good quality clothes, shoes or expensive toys. I was surprised to learn that one of my interlocutors in Finland asked his wealthy cousin in Poland for a loan to help buy a house in Finland.

The Poland-to-Finland flow of material goods also manifests the qualitative changes between Finnish and Polish consumer markets. From the perspective of my interlocutors, Polish capitalist market is more ruthless than Finnish market, but also, on a positive note, it offers greater consumer choice and is more open to foreign products. Such shift in the market situation is symbolically empowering for Poles in Finland vis-à-vis the Finns as well as people in Poland vis-à-vis their family members in Finland. It is finally Poland which can offer distinction in the Finnish context. Henryk’s niece in Poland told me how in the 1980s, thanks to her uncle, she enjoyed having clothes other children at school did not have. In contrary to that, another of my young interlocutors, Marysia, the daughter of a Polish couple in Finland, told me with pride that nowadays, whenever she gets new fashionable clothes after visit to Poland, her Finnish girlfriends immediately ask her jealously: “You’ve been to Poland, haven’t you?!” In a similar example, during my visit before Christmas to one of the Polish couples in Finland, the wife told me that her mother and mother-in-law from Poland have started to compete

amongst each as to who of them would send better Christmas gifts to their grandchildren in Finland. She took out some radio-control cars, dolls, and other gifts. She stressed proudly: "This year my mum sent better ones!". Thus *close ones* from Poland can nowadays mark their presence in Finland and struggle for influence through material means unavailable beforehand. Those in Finland, on the other hand, can display the goods at home and in public places for others to admire. The old material power balance, geopolitical and intimate, has been disrupted.

The transformation in access to and the affordability of goods in Poland also has a side effect: in the transnational family it has become much more difficult to identify each other's economic status and establish the principles of material exchange across borders. For my interlocutors in Finland, the good consumption level enjoyed by their family members in Poland combined with an occupation ensuring such consumption (as such perception excludes the unemployed and to some extent pensioners) is tangible and thus an undeniable sign of their good status, comparable to what one would have with average earnings in Finland. Those in Poland, on the other hand, perceive their economic wealth through the prism of their "non-Western" peripheral location, which they continuously conceive to be inferior to the Western one. A priori, people living in Poland should have it worse. "In Poland, the image still prevails that if somebody lives abroad [in the West] it means that her/she has to be very well-off (*super ustatniomy*). Not merely live and work normally like in Poland", one of my young interlocutors in Finland told me, frustrated by her cousins' incessant questions about her material wealth. Tacitly, she suggested that they make her feel guilty for living in the "West", which (as she sees it) does not even exist in its older glamour. I would therefore argue that the contradictions of perspectives, already lingering during the Cold War, have widened and for those in Finland have become even more annoying for lacking grounding in the Cold-War economic divide, which was previously indisputable. Additionally, "a bit" of luxury, but not an excess of it, continues to be stressed and morally acceptable in post-communist Poland (cf. Galasińska and Kozłowska, 2009, on Polish post-accession migrants in the UK) and transnational family members continue to avoid being perceived as having "too much".

Poles living in Finland permanently are especially the object of spite, but it also affects temporary workers. Their transnational strategy of advancement based upon earning abroad and investing and consuming in Poland may seem like a shortcut to material welfare. Assuming that nationalist ideology expects people to earn and spend in Poland, economic capital gained through working and diligent saving in Poland may be regarded as having more moral worth than economic capital gained through challenging the national system by earning abroad. As a sign of this Bartek chose not to tell his distant kin about his work in Finland. "Why should they know?" he rhetorically asked me, indicating that working abroad as a source of material wealth could be (and better be) hidden.

For family members living in Finland, the criticism of their alleged wealth is bearable if it only entails verbal disputes of “who is better off?”. The contradictions become more problematic if they affect the principles of transnational exchanges, first and foremost the sense of “economic justice” (Scott 1976) underpinning expectations of who should pay for what and how much. Transnational family controversies concern all forms of economic transfers, including monetary remittance, buying of goods and sponsoring visits. The frustrations are well evoked in my conversation with Jarek and Natalia quoted below:

Natalia: My mum constantly asks me on Skype why we don't send her any money. Well, we don't have any money ourselves. We would have money if we didn't have so many loans to pay off. We took them to do up the house, so that the house would look decent. [...]

Anna: But does your mom believe you when you say you don't have any [money]?

Natalia: You know what? No, she doesn't. She thinks that we are [super rich] here.

Jarek: She thinks that we have money but we just don't want to give it to her.

Natalia: As if we won the lottery.

Jarek: She thinks we don't want to send her money out of spite. [She thinks we want] to leave her on her own, that we don't give a shit about her.

Anna: So what do you think she'll say when she comes and sees [your apartment]?

Jarek: When she sees the apartment...

Natalia: She'll say, 'Right! And they say they don't have any money!'

Jarek: [She will say] 'They have leather couches, a flat screen TV, two computers, and, fuck, they say they don't have any money!' Don't you know Ania how it is?

Natalia: And who knows when she will actually come? When I used to send her money, she was supposed to come for Christmas. Now she doesn't come. Even if we bought the tickets. She doesn't have the money for Christmas gifts anymore. [...] She immediately got so poor. She has her pension, she has two jobs, my father has his pension plus he works as well. And they have no money.

Anna: So what do they spend it on?

Natalia: My mum is a dressy woman. Gold, false nails. [...] You haven't seen such clothes in all your life, I tell you. You know what kind of [expensive] clothes she buys for herself? I have never had clothes like that. [...] If you saw my old woman's closet, it would stun you!

Visibly, economic status in a transnational space is mainly measured by the material goods which family members possess. At first sight commodities provide the appearance of objectivity and non-negotiability in assessing mutual wealth. However, they can be fairly ambiguous. An important reason for doubt is consumption on credit, which in Poland unlike in Finland is a relatively new phenomenon. Credit dilutes the concept of ownership (Calder 1999) and complicates the definite evaluation of which transnational family member actually owns more things. Likewise, it gives transnational family members, from their perspective legitimate, arguments on their role in transnational material transfers. Looking from the viewpoint of people in Finland, transnational inequality seems less clear-cut than those in Poland imagine. However, this seems not quite to be a valid argument from the perspective of those in Poland,

who see the houses, cars and other possessions of their *close ones* in Finland as an “objective” and undeniable signifier of status, regardless of the form of ownership.

Having said the above, there is some substantiation to the claims of diminishing transnational inequalities made by my interlocutors in Finland. After 1989, Poland has become increasingly expensive from the perspective of Finnish salaries. I have participated in many conversations where Poles in Finland have discussed the fluctuating currency exchange of the zloty to the euro. An increase in the price of the Euro is always welcome, a decrease is undesirable. Polish people in Finland are caught up in a contradiction. On the one hand, they are in favour of Poland’s economic development (usually interpreted as “progress”) and its catching up with Finland. They are pleased when their *close ones* get wealthier. On the other hand, they are disappointed that the purchasing power of their Finnish salaries on the Polish market is gradually decreasing. Without changing their material status in Finland, their transnational position dwindles. Old-timers to Finland especially recall with nostalgia the power of their past Finnish salaries, still earned in Finnish markka until 2002. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, Poles who came to Finland before 1995 also had to face the crash of the Finnish economy in the 1990s. The recession hit my interlocutors in Finland to various degrees and most of them managed to recover by the time we met. Nonetheless, their material prestige could have been much higher if it had not been for the crisis. A salient example is provided by Zofia, who has not been able to find steady employment since the crisis. The increasingly unfavourable rate of exchange of Finnish currency to the Polish zloty has made it additionally difficult for her to help her family in Poland as much as she helped them during the Cold War. We sat in the kitchen of her relatively modest apartment in Finland (a floor area of around 50 m² in an old block of flats) and Zofia told me with frustration about her family demands:

100 marks was a lot for them then. But later on, when the crisis started, I helped less, because I got into a bad patch myself. Also the purchasing power of Finnish money in Poland has decreased, now you will give 100 euro and it is a lot here [in Finland], for me 100 euro is a lot now, and when you give 100 euro or fifty or twenty euro in Poland, they look at you as if you had given nothing. [...] I just wanted to help, I wanted to do it. [...] But now the financial situation has changed... and yet they still look at you.... I tell them, well you were there [in Finland], you saw how it is, and I see that at times some of you have a better standard of life here than some of us there. Now we live there at the same level as you live here, if you work.

As Zofia indicated, her *close ones* do not find her arguments and personal visits to Finland persuasive enough to limit their expectations. A push for remittance by the latter, especially considering that Zofia’s family lives in a rural town with mostly low-status jobs available, is a fairly classic case of transnational and Polish migration studies, whereby migrants are treated as the family’s “cash cows” with unbridled resources to distribute (see for instance Glick-Schiller and Fouron, 2001, on Caribbean transnational

families; for Polish migration see Burrell 2008a, Znaniecka-Lopata 1994). Only here, it comes along with Zofia's doubt as to who really needs help.

Finally, for decades the Polish imagination of life abroad has been shaped by migration to the United States. The United States has been considered a "promised land" and as one of the old-timers in Finland noted, "Finland is not America". Finnish salaries are moderate by Western standards. Additionally, one can observe moderation in conspicuous consumption. For instance, in Finland it is conceivable for people with a good income to live in a block of flats. Accordingly, a young professional, Ewelina, who is married to a Finnish man and lives in Turku, told me with frustration:

I remember when I visited my distant family in Poland – and this shows in what categories people think about those who live in the West – they didn't ask me if I liked Finland or if I was happy. No. In turn, they asked me what sort of car we drive and what telephone my husband has. Because they know that Nokia is Finnish, they asked if he had the newest type of Nokia. They also asked whether we had our own house already. When I told them 'No, we live in a blocks of flats', they were shocked. Because they thought that if somebody lives in the West or in the North – because for them the North belongs to the West [M. laughs] – one automatically lives in a house and drives a Mercedes 600 [laughs].

Similarly to Ewelina, many other of my interlocutors debate about whether contemporary Finland belongs to the North or the West, and whether these categories overlap or should be treated separately.

In venturing complaints towards the heightened economic expectations and false imagination of family members in Poland, my interlocutors seem to tacitly suggest that the latter still mentally live in a Europe divided by the Iron Curtain, whereas they themselves have managed to move on. It is a dangerous assumption if taken at face value, as it gives agency to only one party. In contrast, I would suggest that the people in Poland operate with images which have their roots in the Cold War period, but they employ them to address transnational hierarchies emerging in the new capitalist, post-Cold War reality. Political transformations have heightened people's economic expectations in Poland. It has made them believe that not only their material status would improve, but that it would improve painlessly and rapidly reach the Western standard; that in no time they would earn Western-level salaries and be able to afford good apartments, good cars and technological equipment. It is frustrating for them that their status has often improved, but has still not reached what they think to be the Western (here, Finnish) average. I would therefore argue that rather than living mentally in the past, they painfully live in the present, dealing with economic developments and expectations produced by the post-Cold War era (cf. Burawoy and Verdery 1999). As I will show in the next section, my interlocutors in Finland are sometimes very aware as well of the above old-new inequalities.

The difficulty of giving

The argument about equalizing the material standard of living is easiest to uphold when transnational family members move within and speak from the perspective of their respective national locations; that is when they interpret the power of economic income in the same national context in which it is earned. Inequalities are more difficult to deny once family members find themselves face-to-face on common national ground, in Poland or in Finland, or when those in Finland want to provide their *close ones* in Poland with monetary support or material gifts but the latter are reluctant to accept them.

The persisting economic inequalities especially come to the fore during visits to Finland. With the exception of the salaries of those few family members who belong to the financial elite in Poland and usually live in Warsaw – by the end of the 2000s an island of salaries higher than the average in the EU (Niklewicz and Fusiecki 2009) – the purchasing power of Polish salaries⁸⁰ on the Finnish consumer market is not high. If shopping empowers as Miller (1997) argues, visitors from Poland are fairly powerless in Finland. In a Finnish shop, they commonly embark on the self-degrading practice of converting all Finnish prices from euro to zlotys, likewise converting the relative economic equality of their transnational relationships into absolute inequality.

Arguably, the above situation is particularly troubling for visitors whose income has a reasonable purchase power in Poland and who embody what could be considered the cultural capital of capitalism, namely the values of self-sufficiency and achievement through personal effort. Their personal effort and good material status in Poland, enabling them to buy basic as well as more luxurious commodities on the Polish market, does not matter much in Finland, where money-wise they find themselves lower than the Finnish working-class or even the unemployed. To accept their family hosts' sponsorship means to face their own economic inferiority and insufficiency.

Nevertheless, the visitors have several tactics to protect their self-worth in Finland and diminish the power of their benefactors. They can buy certain things in Finland on their own or at least insist on buying them, letting their family hosts turn them down. They can also refuse to receive certain commodities, indicating their redundancy or stressing that the same things can be found in Poland. Success with the above strategies demands a conscious effort and sensitivity on the host's part. The failed sensitivity of the family host is portrayed by Wacław from Poland, who with great exhilaration told me during our phone conversation:

When we were in Finland two years ago, I nearly lost a daughter and a son-in-law and they nearly lost a father. Because, I had my name day and they insisted on taking me to a shop and buying me a [flat-screen] TV. A war erupted. I told them "Have you gone crazy? You would have to bring it to Poland and all". They told me that they would have no problems in bringing it. So I told them that if they

⁸⁰ Averaging between 300 and 500 euro monthly.

had any respect for me, they should give this TV-purchase a rest. I told them, "There are so many TVs in Poland and anyhow we have a TV at home. There is no need. Please, do not make unnecessary expenses" [...] I know they meant well, that they did it out of the goodness of their heart. They bought the TV anyhow and it aggravated me so much that, can you imagine? I left the shop and I got lost. I found my way back, though, but they got scared. They thought that for the first time they went against my wishes, they asked me, "Daddy, why were you so against it?" Finally, it all ended well. They brought the TV and it was installed and it was great.

The above and other situations indicate that material transfers in the context of new transnational inequalities can be a difficult matter for transnational family members. Benefactors such as Waclaw's adult children have to figure out how to give without emphasizing their own distinction. Even transnational gift-giving is not trouble-free. Interpreting material contribution as a gift and pinning it down to a special occasion promises diminished discomfort and a power-free exchange. It takes the contribution out of the straightforward market exchange and into the space of apparent altruism. Nevertheless, there are no free gifts, as Mauss (1990) indicates (see also Werbner 1996). Gift-giving always has its costs and may result in an reciprocal imbalance which undermines the recipient's self-worth. As Waclaw suggested, he had no other way of reciprocating, with his modest Polish pension, than through love, which he would have given anyhow. His children's predicament was that they wanted to provide him with a gift nonetheless, perceiving material goods as a constantly attractive way to show affection.

When transnational family members meet in Poland, economic inequalities are tamed by the prices on the Polish market. Many family members in Poland are reported to play generous hosts to their *close ones* from Finland or even sponsor some of their non-food consumption. The guests' refusal to be paid for, which would be utterly proper in Finland, can appear demeaning for the hosts in Poland. Paying would be to reinforce the hierarchy and deprive those in Poland of the possibility to step up and distinguish themselves. No clear cultural scripts for the situations like the above make transnational family members step lightly and carefully, taking the cultural and personal context into account.

Material transfers when *close ones* in Poland actually need help also have to be approached cautiously – and despite increased economic welfare in Poland, such situations are not uncommon. Frequently family members in Finland are expected to be attentive enough on the phone or during meetings to notice that their *close ones* have difficulty in acquiring desired goods or services on their own and need help. They should read between the lines and infer from subtle remarks, helping their poorer family members to maintain the demeanour of self-sufficiency (cf. the oft-quoted study of British kinship by Finch and Mason 1993) and make sure that the act of giving will

not further emphasize the economic inferiority of the recipient. The issues is how to downplay the hierarchy stemming from the exchange.

To say all the above is not to idealize transnational material exchanges. I also noted the examples, as those referred to in the previous section, which suggest that the family members in Poland are inconsiderate and exploitative and those in Finland resisting it to the extent they find possible without totally forfeiting the relationship. Not everybody in Poland minds receiving unbridled support. Such examples are however fewer than one might expect reading the Polish and international literature on the subject.

Work trajectories and transnational ties

In the previous sections, I have focused on the economic dimension of transnational stratification, discussing it in terms of access to material resources and their transnational transfer. Here I would like to address transnational family members' intertwinement of work trajectories. I discuss them separately as they emanate symbolic power and generate practices and problems of their own. In the context of class distinctions within transnational families, this issue was taken up, among others, by Karen Fog Olwig. Olwig indicates how in "middle-class" transnational Caribbean families family acceptance is conditional upon the family members' ability to live up to particular expectations of a "proper livelihood", including receiving a good education and "learning and mastering of a profession" (Olwig 2007, see also Olwig 1999). Transnational family members who derailed from the prescribed career path at home and in the destination places faced tensions and worries.

On the surface, the careers of many of my interlocutors in Finland are of their own doing, achieved independently of their family members in Poland. Aside from temporary workers, who most likely would have not been in Finland if not for their wives' practical support in managing the household in Poland, the contributions of family members from Poland seem non-existent. Our conversations nevertheless revealed that support is there, although usually of an intangible, symbolic and emotional kind.

First of all, many family members in Poland provide their *close ones* in Finland with motivation and a reference point. They encourage their work-related efforts in Finland, being able to benefit from it symbolically and materially themselves. I met Jakub, one of my most professionally distinguished interlocutors in Finland, through my grandmother, who knew Jakub's mother in Poland. My grandmother told me: "You should talk to Jakub. His mother was always so proud of him. She said he made a successful career in Finland". Jakub himself, unprompted, spoke of his mother's encouragements and pointed to her efforts as pivotal in developing his professional ambitions. Also many others of my interlocutors in Finland draw upon their family's cultural and occupational heritage, which serves as an incentive and inspiration.

Belonging to the intelligentsia obliges and makes one's own professional deterioration in Finland in comparison to more successful family members in Poland particularly painful. In contrast, I noted that those of my interlocutors who are not encouraged by their families in Poland to professionally advance and/or whose family members in Poland have modest careers (work manually or in low white-collar occupations) have less problems accepting their low occupation status in Finland and are less driven to advance. The differences in the above approaches are also related to the diversified prestige of different occupations depending upon different social circles. A job which in one transnational family would seem of little or no distinction, in another would be considered more prestigious, if only for the very sake of generating income in euro and not Polish zlotys – a question of both what you do and where you do it. From the transnational perspective, there is no single hierarchy of professional distinction. Transnational family members may also represent the influence of a more unusual type, providing a negative reference point. For instance, Bronislaw's professional success in Finland can be considered as redemption for the conflicts with his father living in Poland, who was initially disappointed with his son's career choices (popular music instead of classical music) and the settling of scores with his resentful brother. Finland became Bronislaw's alternative place to excel and prove his own worth. His success in Finland reverberated transnationally. As Bronislaw told me, his father finally acknowledged the value of Bronislaw's achievements, especially when Bronislaw invited him to Finland to one of his concerts. Recently Bronislaw was also awarded the title of "honorary citizen" of his Polish hometown, where his family is widely renowned and his brother is an important benefactor. Bronislaw's words suggest that he had received it mostly because of becoming "somebody"⁸¹ in Finland, which in turn helped him to become "somebody" in Poland.

Despite various work-related support flowing from Poland to Finland, the most tangible and pronounced are nevertheless contributions in the opposite direction, in accordance with the higher income opportunities offered by the Finnish labour market compared to Poland. The assistance in job-finding in Finland is valuable for both sides and in the context of the problems of economic transfers discussed in the previous sections one can understand why. It puts the tools of struggling for distinction into the hands of an interested party and minimizes the difficulty of material exchanges. Therefore, it is relatively easy to ask for and furthermore, it is appropriate to ask when in the context of a given transnational relationship asking for monetary help would seem unfitting, for instance if a person living in Finland is a distant relative whom one barely knows or in situations where money would not solve anything in the long run. It

⁸¹ For the sociological importance of the category of "somebody" see Ortner (2003).

also relieves those in Finland from providing transnational economic support if they feel committed to provide it.

My fieldwork indicates that the assistance in job-finding is mostly provided to family members who already have a stable job or student status in Poland and through transnational networks want to gain additional income and/or boost their Polish careers. In such cases family members in Finland help them through arranging temporary employment in Finland or, more rarely, intermediate in business cooperation with Finland. Both of these practices are well exemplified in Piotr's story. It is worth quoting it in length, for it embodies the ideal of economic family cooperation and mutual profit smoothly continuing from a local to a transnational setting. Sociologists of transnational migration like Alejandro Portes or Luis E. Guarnizo would consider such an example an important argument for the analytical validity and social significance of transnational phenomenon.

From Piotr's perspective, he and his twin brother have always lived parallel lives. Piotr was born one hour before Przemek, and, in Piotr's view, later Piotr also made key educational and career choices first and then Przemek followed. Thus, living in a big city, they both attended the same high school and graduated in engineering from the same university. Back in the 1960s, in primary school, Piotr and his brother also engaged in their first "business" cooperation, manifesting the entrepreneurial drive which would help them on the capitalist markets in Finland and in Poland in the decades to come: they bought doughnuts in bulk from a local pastry shop to subsequently resell them with profit during the lunch break at school. During their student years they also took up their first job abroad together, coming to Helsinki to assist at the international Conference on Cooperation and Security in Europe⁸² in the 1970s. After graduation, Piotr returned to Finland. Within a few years he had launched a private company. In the meantime, his brother Przemek worked in Poland – appropriately for the communist period – in a state enterprise. As Piotr summed up, "Przemek worked hard and earned lousy money". Piotr helped him by finding him temporary employment in Finland during the summer holidays. Przemek invested the money earned in Finland in the launching of a private company at the end of the 1980s. Piotr recalled: "After I set up my own company I told my brother: "Why don't you open a company as well? I would help you get sauna stoves from Finland and you could start making saunas in Poland. Finland was becoming popular in Poland and people started to grasp the concept of the sauna. This is how it has started".

With time, both brothers' companies have become successful in their respective national markets and the brothers have maintained formal and semi-formal

⁸² The Conference marked a positive breakthrough in the relationship between the Eastern and the Western Bloc during the Cold War.

cooperation. When I visited Piotr's home, there was a van with Polish lettering "Sauna manufacturing" parked at his gateway. "The workers from my brother's company have come to work for me for the summer", Piotr explained. "They are substituting my Finnish employees who are on holiday. The van belongs to my brother's company. On Thursday one of my brother's workers and I are driving to Hanko to pick up supplies for my brother's company. [...] On Sunday it will be shipped to Poland". On our tour around the house, I also got to know of another aspect of Piotr's brother's professional life:

Piotr showed me around his apartment. Sauna was on the ground floor, next to the "entertaining space" for parties. It was a spacious sauna made out of big logs of light wood – it looked quite fancy. Piotr said that the wood was high-quality alder, which his brother had acquired for him. Alder is lacking in Finland since the Finns did not recognize its value and use it for burning. We chatted about the sauna for a while. Piotr said that his brother also made saunas for Polish VIPs. Kwasniewski, Walesa [former Polish presidents], and the best Polish hotels. Also for the "ugliest woman in Polish politics". I didn't know who he was referring to. "You don't know? For Mrs Kaczyńska". I asked him, half-jokingly, whether he had the same sauna as the First Lady. He said no – she had alder panels, just like the one he had on the ceiling in the "entertaining space". [...] Needless to say, I was impressed. (Fieldnotes, July 2008)

Although the above transnational assistance started in the Finland-to-Poland direction and has admittedly helped Przemek's career more than Piotr's, Piotr has visibly profited from it as well. As is apparent from my fieldnotes, the symbolic distinction embodied by his brother's top-ranking professional connections in Poland was a striking one for me, especially when one considers the great intimacy that a sauna represents. Thanks to his brother, specifically in Finland Piotr can also enjoy the material distinction of having an exquisite sauna interior many Finns do not have. Furthermore, he has the practical benefit of having qualified and trustworthy workers for the summer, which helps Piotr's business to thrive smoothly. Also several of my interlocutors who own businesses in Finland enjoy a similar benefit of having a trustworthy workforce by temporarily employing transnational family members. The assistance in job finding can thus yield concrete professional profits for both sides.

Nevertheless, the Finnish labour market is not as easy to conquer as one may suspect from successful professional stories. Consequently, arranging a job for a family member from Poland is a valuable – but not necessarily effortless – form of assistance, which is well visible once family members are unable to provide one.

It is a common opinion among my interlocutors in Finland that the Finnish labour market is more difficult for foreigners than other Western markets. "Money does not lie on the streets in Finland", as Bronisław told me. Certainly, the situation has changed historically. Until recently only persons well-positioned socially in Finland could help. Bronisław, for instance, was proud when he managed to arrange a music gig for his brother back in the 1960s. He treated it as proof of his own professional

distinction. “I was a guarantee that my brother represents a high professional level. The Finns were sure because I am somebody here. I was very respected and valued in the Finnish professional community. I still am”. After Poland’s accession to the European Union and the improved legal access to the Finnish labour market, the possibilities of arranging work in Finland have markedly increased. Still they are incomparable with the possibilities offered by English-speaking countries or Germany. Nevertheless, many people in Poland believe that Polish people can find a job in the West relatively easily, particularly if it is a low-skilled one. This image strongly affects the expectations and desires of family members in Poland regarding Finland. Persons with no appropriate social connections in Finland find themselves in a difficult position to explain to their family members why they cannot be more helpful. Kinga told me with frustration:

When I moved here, my cousin was constantly on my back, wanting me to find him a job in Finland. He went on and on asking “Find me a job in Finland!” I told him “Listen. You don’t speak any English or Finnish, only Polish. How, then, I am supposed to find you work here? Am I supposed to walk from company to company and ask whether they would hire my cousin?” “[He answered:] “Well, I don’t know [how you are supposed to do it], but find me a job. [...] I have the same problem with my mum. My mum cannot understand why Kasia [a family friend] who has been living in Finland for over a year, is still unable to find a job here, although she speaks fluent English. I tried to explain to my mum that Finland is not England, knowing English is not a big deal here. Here 99 per cent of the population speaks English, on top of which people also speak Finnish. And Kasia barely speaks Finnish. My mum, however, is convinced that Kasia is not persistent enough in looking for job. I tell my mum, “Well, it is not so easy here!”

Finally, a word should be said about those family members in Poland who not only have no need for transnational assistance, but whose professional status is mentioned and constitutes a source of distinction for my interlocutors in Finland. My interlocutors in Finland especially stressed the success of their genealogical family members, for institutionally-recognized relatedness to people of distinction carries particular symbolic power. Among family members and more distant kin with professional achievements mentioned by my interlocutors are top-ranking politicians, specialists heading private corporations, business owners, and internationally renowned doctors and artists. Transnational pride from their achievements is enhanced by the particular features of the Polish labour market. During communism, prestige was boosted by defying closed-door politics and being a pioneer in one’s discipline; in capitalist Poland – by the ability to navigate among fierce competition and thrive in a new, unknown reality. It is important to stress the prestige stemming from occupational status and not necessarily from high economic income, for in the context of the economic inequalities between Poland and Finland independent occupational achievements offer family members in Poland the possibility to counterbalance the economic power of those in Finland. Family members in Poland may be nominally less well-off but not of less prestigious standing. There are also other possibilities to counter transnational economic inequality,

indicating that transnational family stratification is not determined by economic capital alone.

“My sister is a simple woman (*prosta kobieta*)”

Zarycki (2008) in his work on the applicability of Bourdieu theory of cultural capital to Polish and Russian societies, points to the distinct social stratification system in Poland and Russia owing to their peripheral location in the global world order. He argues:

Since other dimensions of social organization than the economic field can have a dominant or particularly privileged role in the peripheries, one should consider them when studying the key aspects of social inequality there [...] Of course it does not mean that one can totally disregard economic inequalities, especially if they exceed accepted norms, it is however important to pay attention to other inequality dimensions in peripheral societies, which from the social status perspective may be of no lesser importance than the economic field.

From Zarycki's viewpoint, an important dimension of inequality in Poland is constituted by cultural capital produced by a relatively autonomous cultural field. My fieldwork suggests that the above argument gains particular importance in a transnational context as the possession of legitimate cultural capital allows transnational family members to negotiate their position in economically unequal transnational space as well as giving Poles symbolic leverage against the Finns.

My interlocutors in Finland consider the hierarchy of the Polish rather than the Finnish cultural field as symbolically hegemonic. In it the “intelligentsia subfield” continues to dominate symbolically (Zarycki 2008). Intelligentsia – a social category dating back to the 19th-century declassed Polish nobility – has no single definition. Many scholars would consider higher education, book readership and being a “cultured” person as fundamental for the intelligentsia status (Mikulowski-Pomorski 2005). Nonetheless, a higher education can be a contested factor, compensated by the investment in one's intellectual development and cultured behaviour through legitimate culture consumption (Zarycki 2008). Book readership, especially is a powerful symbol of belonging to the intelligentsia in Poland.

In the transnational space, intelligentsia ethos is evoked in the process of “othering”, whereby close and more distant transnational Others are considered to possess different levels of legitimate cultural capital. The process of intimate “othering”, common for all my interlocutors, creates a categorical continuum. On the one end, my interlocutors mention culturally inferior Others. They are encapsulated by the categories of “simple” or “primitive” (in Polish: *wieśniak*, *burak*, *prostak*) mentioned in this subchapter's title. On the other end, there are people, who according to my interlocutors, “have class” (*człowiek na poziomie*) or belong to the cultural “elite;” those who can boast of a higher education or even aristocratic origin. By default, each category contains the opposite in itself (Ortner 2003). The Other may be a non-related

stranger, against whom the superior cultural capital of one's immediate transnational circle is posed. The Other may also be an emotionally intimate, but culturally distant, family member.

In the first instance, *close ones* in Poland help those in Finland increase their self-worth and tangibly contribute to the reproduction of their legitimate cultural capital. They provide them with books and quality newspapers, exchange family mementos and rediscovered the family's superb pre-communist past; perform high-end cultural activities together during the visits and provide stimulating conversation. These practices yield symbolic profits for both sides. A topical example of this type of transnational cultural transfer is represented by Paweł and Aleksandra, a middle-aged couple with whom I developed a particular rapport. Arguably, our age difference was balanced by the similarity of our socio-cultural background. Both Paweł and Aleksandra have high education and white-collar occupations in Finland and come from families of high cultural and economic capital, from a large city. Meetings with their *close ones* in Poland are usually accompanied by "intellectually stimulating" (as the couple says) discussions about art, books, life and politics as well going to places of classic cultural consumption like the theatre or the cinema. Both in Finland and Poland, they try to avoid people with whom "they have nothing to talk about". When I entered their house in Espoo, Finland, I was struck by the large number of books in different languages, many in Polish, which they often buy themselves or receive as gifts from *close ones* in Poland. Their house is also filled with old paintings – old family heirlooms from both sides ("We didn't feel at home until we had hung these", they told me) as well as the most recent, yet historically old purchases – decorative artefacts that belonged to Paweł's family before World War II and which were lost when the communist authorities took over Paweł's family's estates. Recently their son residing in France spotted them in an internet shop and the couple immediately bought them back. They gave a few of them to Paweł's parents in Poland and kept a few for themselves in Finland. As they showed me, the artefacts still had Paweł's family name on it.

I would consider Aleksandra and Paweł, and their family members in Poland, as the embodiment of the most legitimate Polish cultural capital. Their transnational family, apart from the present cultural assets, possess the "social power over time which is tacitly recognized as the supreme excellence" (Bourdieu 1984, 71). The aristocratic and bourgeois signs of distinction that the communist authorities tried to eradicate in Poland have never lost their symbolic power and can now be returned to in a tangible form of old mementos. Aleksandra and Paweł's family also represents the transnational family to which another of my interlocutors, Zofia (whose words serve as this subchapter's title), would arguably like to belong. I met Zofia through a mutual Polish friend. She immediately considered me a good companion for high-brow discussions and implied that we shared cultural credentials and interests that her family

members in Poland do not possess. In contrast to the transnational family of Aleksandra and Paweł, Zofia's family constitutes a negative reference point for her.

Zofia has secondary education, but wanted to become a teacher in her youth. She was accepted at university but quit due to meeting her Finnish husband. Her grandfather was an influential person in her life. "He read a lot. Often aloud sitting at the table. Perhaps that is why I got hooked on reading". After she experienced the professional downfall due to the 1990s crisis in Finland, books, mainly in Polish, were her consolation. "Books. Books helped me. Nothing else but books. If it had been for books, I would have gone crazy. When I read, I don't think about anything else. I don't pick up the phone, don't socialize. I just read". She brings plenty of books back from Poland. None of her *close ones* in Poland read, including her own son. Zofia suggested, between the lines and explicitly, that they have little cultural ambition. They are "simple" people and lack Zofia's sophistication. Thus, transnational family ties, on the one hand, fail to practically contribute to Zofia's cultural development, on the other, they afford her with a sense of superiority and boost her self-worth. By occupying lower cultural echelons they appear to Zofia as proof of how much Zofia herself has managed to achieve.

My interlocutors' attitude toward me also provide an example of the role they ascribe to their social contacts within Finland, and not only across borders, for the appraisal of the cultural distinction of their transnational families. First of all, many persons in Finland gets to know categories of Poles they would not have close interactions with in Poland, given the differences in their sociocultural background. In Finland, in the context of the relatively small and diversified Polish community, the Polish cultural "centre" and "periphery" meet. "I never knew people could be so different. It's like a different world to me", a highly-educated woman, Dagmara, told me. Another woman reflected, "Now I really see how primitive my family [in Poland] is". The aforementioned Zofia's reflection on her own cultural capital is also partially built upon her encounters with the most recent Polish newcomers to Finland. Some of them may have "some" university education, but, as Zofia rhetorically asked me, "tell me Ania, what sort of education is it, if they cannot even hold a decent conversation? They have nothing to talk about". Recently Zofia arranged manual work for her distant kin (a brother of the former husband of her sister), whom she also temporarily accommodated in her apartment in Finland. He irritates and embarrasses her as well. "I have nothing to talk to him about". "Just look at him", she told me during one of my visits. I looked, and indeed, I understood what she was getting at. From our elitist cultural position, he is crude, his Polish language code is poor and drinks alcohol in an "uncultured manner", as the means of getting drunk and not for socializing. He drinks cheap vodka, Zofia mainly drinks wine.

In all the above "othering" practice one can recognize, in a modify form, a phenomenon which Buchowski (2006) calls a "nesting orientalism in Poland".

Buchowski argues that the dominant discourse of the post-communist Polish elite in the mass media and academia constructs the undereducated and poor as subalterns within Polish national borders. He argues:

Polish scholars have unconsciously represented the stance that cultural difference need not be far away from home but *hic et nunc*. Otherness is dissected from an exotic context and brought home, thus displaced primitives can be found on our doorstep. On the one hand, they implicitly counter the traditional view that the tribal other is locked up in underprivileged regions. On the other hand, they then place them in local pockets of poverty and rural areas. In any case, the spatially exotic Other has been resurrected as the socially stigmatized brother.

The difference in my study is that “the socially stigmatized brother” is sometimes a literal “brother” residing across transnational space, simultaneously close and far away from home.

Cultural rather than the economic distinction also plays a major role when the object of “societal orientalizing” are the Finns and the national heritage of Finland itself. Orientalization of the Finns is an empowering and compensatory practice, both for people who have low Polish cultural capital and for people whose Polish intelligentsia capital may not find proper recognition in Finland. In the process of the cultural denigration of Finns, the historical narrative of Poland as a country of sociocultural inequalities becomes an important tool. The aforementioned Pawel and Aleksandra represent the perfect example of such critical perspective:

Pawel: What I do not like here [in Finland] is people’s primitivism. There is a lot of primitivism in Finland. It is rooted in Finnish history, in the rapid economic transformation of the Finnish society from great poverty and great primitivism to great affluence, without the simultaneously fast development of intelligentsia strata. Because the native intelligentsia did not exist here. The Intelligentsia were Swedish.

Aleksandra: Finland has never had Finnish nobility. Never.

Pawel: And the Finnish intelligentsia is very superficial – because it is not enough to graduate from a University to be an intelligent. These are two different things. People here [the Finns] are terribly nationalistic, arrogant and big-headed. They are simple people who know nothing about the world, even though they travel around. But when they travel they do not learn anything, they just sit, sunbath and drink cheap wine. [...]

Anna: So where do you meet these “primitive” people. At work..?

Pawel: Everywhere. Everywhere. It can be a very educated person. We meet, we talk, the person seems to have “class” (*być na poziomie*). And suddenly he or she will say something so stupid I just give up.

Pawel and Aleksandra’s reading of the cultural capital of their Finnish acquaintances is very arbitrary and as such quite in accordance with Polish ideals about intelligentsia ethos, whereby education is not necessarily a determining factor. Their perspective also echoes the theoretical difficulties of applying Bourdieusian theory of distinction to the Finnish cultural context and statements made by the Finnish researchers themselves

that, “Finland is a periphery of the international field of intellectuals” (Rahkonen 2008). Incidentally, Bourdieu himself also shared the peripheral view on Finland (ibid.) and most likely would have viewed Poland in similar terms.

A cultured (transnational) body is a fit body

Cultivated decorum and consumption are salient dimensions of cultural capital addressed and reproduced across borders. In this section I would like to discuss its less obvious dimension, namely sport activities. Sport may not be an explicit normative credo of the Polish cultural elite. Nevertheless, transnational cultured bodies in my study are usually fit bodies, doing particular forms of sports, often within an intimate transnational circle.

Starting from Bourdieu (1978, 1984), scholars have linked the playing of particular sports with particular social classes (Stempel 2005, Wilson 2002). In Poland, sports activities have never been a popular form of pastime, even despite the increased political effort of communist authorities to bring sport to the “masses” (Krawczyk and Krawczyk 1989, Wohl 1971). Before and after 1989, the majority of the Polish population remained passive (Jung 2004, CBOS 2003). In contrast, Finland has traditionally enjoyed high rates of people engaging in regular sports activities. Considering the above, I noted as significant any mention of sports practiced by my interlocutors. My attention was especially caught by the type of sports activities which from the Polish perspective are considered as “exclusive leisure pursuits” (Kunicki 1985), or embodying the “dominant taste of the dominant classes”, to use Bordieusian idiom (1984). Exclusive sports mentioned by my interlocutors include tennis, golf and downhill skiing. They engage persons belonging to the managerial elite and the intelligentsia (similarly to the Polish national sample, see CBOS 2003) and in a subtle yet decisive manner help generate and reproduce embodied distinctions across transnational space. My interlocutors give elite sport a secondary or very central place in their lives. They learnt certain sports while living in Poland. Other sporting skills they learnt after moving to Finland, from their *close ones* in Poland or by themselves in Finland and transmitted them along transnational networks, performing sports jointly during transnational family meetings.

The historical context of transnational sport engagement plays here a significant role. During the Cold War, the aristocratic provenance of elite sports diverged from the dominant ideology and political goals of the communist government in Poland. Sport was supposed to be part of political propaganda and as such was to be brought top-down to the masses. The infrastructural investments went into “mass” sports like football, basketball or volleyball (Wohl 1971). If tennis was played by a minority (today still below one per cent of the population, GUS 2010) and the minority went skiing or sailing (also below one per cent) golf was virtually non-existent, despite its pre-war popularity among the Polish aristocracy. “When I lived in Poland nobody

had even heard of golf', I was told by Danuta, whose life revolves around golf and who could only recently start to play it during visits to Poland. After 1989, the number of golf courses and golfers increased but did not exceed 5000 persons.⁸³ In comparison, there are 50000 golfers and 150000 tennis players in Finland nowadays. Considering the figures themselves, the cultural capital embodied by my interlocutors as golfers or tennis players evokes distinction, particularly in Poland. They belong to the select group who plays. Furthermore, if the skill is passed transnationally by family members from Poland, the latter's position should be considered particularly prestigious. In turn also in Finland they embody legitimate cultural capital. Unlike formal education or sophisticated vocabulary – cultural intangibles, so to speak – sports performance is easy to decode and can be recognized transnationally with no need for cultural (or legal) translation. Also during the Cold War, without moving to the capitalist West transnational family members from Poland could evoke their symbolic power through sports.

The mechanism of enactment of elite sport along transnational linkages, and across time, is well illustrated by two of my male interlocutors living in Finland, Bronisław and Piotr. In their lives, participatory sports, particularly tennis, play a pivotal role, and for both of them transnational sibling companionship was important for the development of their sport interests.

One of my first meetings with Bronisław was dominated by the topic of tennis. He had played tennis that week and hurt his back. His movement was slightly limited. During our meeting in a Tampere café, a Finnish woman approached us. She was wearing a track suit and had a tennis racket. Bronisław explained that they were tennis partners. She advised him about how to take care of his back. Prompted by the above, I asked Bronisław how he had got involved in tennis. He said he started playing forty years ago, soon after he moved to Finland. However, his first memories of tennis go back to his childhood. "In my hometown, there was the recreation centre with tennis courts. The courts were located near the path through the woods I often took. Tennis had the illicit aura of mystery and capitalism. Every time I passed the courts I told myself how great it would be if I could play on those courts". Bronisław acquired tennis skills three decades later, in the 1970s. His brother living in Poland was his first teacher:

I came [from Finland] to visit my brother in Szczecin. He took me to the courts to watch a tennis tournament. Afterwards he told me 'Listen, I'll give you a tennis racket. Let's try to play tennis.' All the brick courts were taken. The only free court was layered with a cheap plastic material. We played on this court for one hour. I was barefoot and got such terrible foot blisters, that I had a hard time walking. But I got hooked. Later my brother and I often played together when he

⁸³ After www.golf.pl and the Polish Golf Association.

came to Finland. He was often angry that he could not beat me. He was insisting “one more set, one more set”. He finally concurred that the student had surpassed the master.

Soon Bronislaw started to participate in various semi-amateur tournaments, including the World Polonia Olympics – the major sports competition of “Poles and people of Polish decent living abroad” organized in Poland. In the 2000s, Bronislaw also finally realized his childhood dream. Visiting his home town for a family reunion he brought a tennis racket from Finland and decided to play on the courts he used to pass by. “You see how everything turned out?” he told me merrily, “The 1950s and then the 2000s. I still remember when I was little and wanted to play on these courts. And there I was, fifty years later, playing on the courts of my childhood as a citizen of Finland. And I played very well!”

For Bronislaw, tennis symbolizes a historical and social loop. It brings him back to the places and people he cares for in Poland, and helps to establish new contacts in Finland and on the large transnational stage of Polish sports. Past desires rooted in communist Poland and symbols of “capitalist” distinction are realized to an unexpected extent and in an unexpected transnational context with the family’s help. A sports history firmly rooted at the intersection of different political economy systems and family life is also provided by Piotr.

When I went to visit Piotr in Helsinki, he picked me up from the station. In the car, he immediately told me how he could not wait to go to Poland and play tennis with his brother. He was going the following Saturday and his brother had already booked the tennis court. “We are going to the court practically straight from the airport,” he told me. Piotr had been preparing for the game the whole week. “Yesterday I played two hours with my friend, today we also played two hours. I will play two hours tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. On Saturday I will play with my brother, so altogether I will be spending 10 hours on the court”. I asked him, “Who’s going to win then?”. Piotr responded: “Depends. Now I hope I will win. [...] Perhaps we have a sort of tennis rivalry going on with my brother; who is better”. Later on, Piotr elaborated on his sports history.

Piotr had already started doing sports in primary school in the 1960s. He got hooked on cycling and running. His brother quickly joined him. The tennis-era in their sibling relationship started only after Piotr moved to Finland. “I started to play tennis because of my children [in the late 1980s]”, he said. “They played a lot and since I was driving them to practice sessions, it was consuming a lot of my time. [...] Eventually I bought a tennis racket and started to play myself”. Again Piotr involved his brother, and then his brother’s family, in his new sporting passion. He quickly extended it into a larger social circle:

Anna: So you inspired your brother to play tennis?

Piotr: Yes. And then our tennis playing group has extended to over fifty people [...] We started to organize tennis camps. The first one, 15-16 years ago, was in a closed military base. The base was inoperative, but one of our friends had a highly positioned relative, who arranged the place for us. We called these camps “tennis-bridge-drinking camps”. We were around twenty people, but there was only one court. Gradually, our group grew to fifty. Now we rent a whole recreational centre just for us. The centre is located in a godforsaken village in Poland. [...] Half of the houses are still wooden. We are about to go there for the third time. [...] We love the surrounding and the facilities. There are four courts. Lessons start in the morning, then breakfast, then lessons again. Two courts are floodlit. We have four tennis coaches. Each person plays three hours daily. After tennis we play bridge for three to four and for four to five hours, we drink. The camp lasts a week. The camp used to last two weeks but now our livers are not as strong. [Piotr and I laugh]. Moreover, 10 years ago our children were still coming with us, so playing took more time and one could not always drink – it was a slightly different thing. Now there are only adults. The company is great. Just great.

Throughout the years, Piotr's tennis circle has gained familial character. They not only meet for tennis, but also go skiing in winter. Piotr is mindful of the high economic position his tennis circle occupies and to what extent their economic capital allows them to play their favourite game. Although Piotr has a family-rooted negative attitude toward the communist system, he told me with reverence and in detail about the communist state sponsorship of sports without which his and his brother's youth sport participation would not have been possible. In contrast, in post-communist Poland his intensive elite sport involvement is precluded by his good economic position. He belongs to the elite social circle which after 1989 can afford to play tennis or go skiing even with Polish earnings. As Piotr said, his brother and close friends are successful professionals and businessmen. “During these past two decades [since the political transition] none of them has gone out of business, they have kept on going”. Most of them live in metropolitan areas in Poland – an environment strikingly contrasting with the spatial location of their tennis camps, the “godforsaken village” with the wooden house, inhabited by the Polish “others” from the cultural and economic periphery. Piotr's sport involvement also distances him and his *close ones* from the uncultured others in terms of “moral character” of vitality, competitiveness and bodily fitness – a “moral character” signifying distinction (Stempel 2005). Piotr remarked:

The thing is that, for instance, now my brother and I will play for two hours in Poland. We will not play all the time. We will sit, talk, exchange some jokes. For us playing tennis is like golf for Japanese people. We could go to the bar, order a beer, sit and talk, but we want to do something [active] instead. And I imagine this is the difference [between us and those who do not play].

To conclude, both Bronisław's and Piotr's stories point to the importance of the transnational family in socializing into particular kinds of sport and its assistance in the reproduction of superior social status across borders within a particular historical political context. Set against the economic hierarchies which usually divide transnational

family along national lines, sports meetings produce and reify social inequalities which do not cut across the transnational family, but rather strengthen its symbolic dominance towards the rest. They also help reproduce the status at the more large-scale transnational level and stimulate a formalized transnational sport involvement, like the Polonia Olympics mentioned by Bronisław. Sports emerge here as a platform from which to identify with particular family communities and national communities at large. It is also non-coincidental that both Bronisław and Piotr stress male sibling rivalry. The anthropology and sociology of sports widely indicate the gendered nature of sports and the importance of sports for masculine identities and masculine bonding (see e.g. Wacquant 2010, Scambler 2005, 152-154, Messner 2002). Sports, as the oft-quoted Messner (2002) argues, reinforce “hegemonic masculinity” and its association with competition, aggression and physical strength. In my study, women also play elite sports, and many do it in a transnational family setting. Piotrek’s tennis camps alone are gender-mixed. Yet, none of my female interlocutors, talking about their sports engagement, talked about winning or rivalry. These, on the other hand, emerge as important for both Piotrek and Bronisław, which also translates into more regular games with particular (male) transnational family members. Elite sports in the transnational family are thus practiced in a particular cultured way which (re)produces distinction of both social status and gender. Men emerge here as transnational “winners” on the court and, along with women, in the socioeconomic hierarchy.

Participating in legitimate history as a distinction

Aleksandra: We are proud to boast that Paweł [Aleksandra’s husband] is the grandson of the first officer of the Polish pilot high school. In 1952, he was executed by the communist authorities under the accusation of espionage – he was in the Royal Air Force.

Mariusz: On my mother’s side, I come from a very noble family. The mother’s father was an Armenian prince. [...] My father, on the other hand, came from a regular bourgeois family. My grandfather was an army officer – a pilot during World War I. My father fought in the Grey Ranks in World War II. He participated in the Warsaw Uprising, in the Zośka Battalion. He was a famous person as well. He knew Zośka and all other famous people from the book.⁸⁴ He is in the book as well. My father had been in the Grey Ranks since he was a boy [...]. He has never belonged to any communist party. Everybody in my family has been rather right-wing.

⁸⁴ Mariusz refers to a classic Polish book *Stones for the Rampart* which depicts the fights and resistance movement of the Grey Ranks during World War II. The book is a required reading in Polish schools. Partially thanks to that, the Zośka Battalion became a symbol of Polish resistance during the War.

In the previous sections, I presented history as the context for transnational family life. As the above quotes suggest, personal participation in historical events which are important for the Polish nation or being transnationally related to people who participated in such events is also employed by my interlocutors as a cultural distinction in its own right. It reflects the common practice in Poland to use history as the legitimization of one's claim for political power and social prestige (Zarycki 2008). Simultaneously, such a claim is still made within a historical context of its own: the present affects how the past is organized into "history" (Nora 1989).

The "present" for my interlocutors is constituted by the post-communist era, which has brought a revised narrative of legitimate Polish history (Madajczyk and Berlińska 2008). In the transnational family, the revision of history affects how culturally prestigious given transnational family ties are considered to be. Following the new Polish historical narrative, ties which embody what Zarycki (2008) has differentiated as the "(post)oppositional" type of capital in a Polish cultural field are valued and legitimate. In Zarycki's conceptualization, the "oppositional" cultural capital is constituted by values and activities of anti-communist opposition, in the 1980s centred around the Solidarity movement. I would extend the oppositional capital to participation in the fight against the Nazis within the structures of the Allied Armed Forces and in the Polish underground resistance of the Polish Home Army and the Grey Ranks⁸⁵ during World War II.

Most commonly, participation by family members in Poland in the making of "legitimate" Polish history gives those in Finland a sense of distinction rather than vice-versa. People do not have to know their historically distinguished family members in Poland personally. Neither do the family members have to be alive. The aura of distinction embedded in genealogical ties transcends time. In the new historical context, dead bodies become publicly "reworked" and signify social status as much as the live ones (see Verdery, 2000, on "the political lives of dead bodies" in post-communist Eastern Europe). As to various degrees public figures, distinguished family members are remembered and immortalized through books, mass media, medals, inscriptions on gravestones and school patronages. The distinction of history often overlaps with other dimensions of high status. When my interlocutors talked about their distinguished family members, their accounts smoothly lapsed from evoking the classic elements of social status (education, occupation) to historical participation, corroborating that the "oppositional" field is often part of the "intelligentsia" field (Zarycki 2008, see also Żarnowski 2003). Where it is not, historical participation can compensate for the lack

⁸⁵ Participation in the underground resistance under the People's Army nowadays yields less legitimate symbolic power, given the Army's support by the Soviet Union.

of other forms of legitimate capital. Aleksandra and Mariusz's accounts quoted at the beginning saliently exemplify the overlap. Henryk provides the opposite example:

My father worked in the construction industry. He worked hard, but since he did not want to join the Communist Party they victimised him (*zgnoli go*). Only after Solidarity won [1989] did they make him the Craftsmen Cooperative's chairman. He also launched his own company. Only then could he build himself a house. Because our old apartment was dreadful. [...] He could only build the house after Solidarity won. [...] Absolutely not during communism (*nie za komuny*). When Kwasniwski became president, my father even got a medal from him. Because my father was even in the Grey Ranks, nom-de-guerre "Czarny" ("Black"). [Henryk shows me the picture of his father's grave]. You see the words on the gravestone? "A scout of the Grey Rank scout. Nom-de-guerre "Czarny".

As Henryk mentioned, historical participation does not have to be well-known to be noteworthy. It is important to follow "morally right" values and stand on the right side of the historical barricade, here meaning to fight Nazi Germany and oppose the communist ideology. Such opposition justifies or even constructs as morally superior the shortages of Henryk's father's occupational and economic position during communism. For Henryk, the legitimacy of his interpretation is assured by the institutionalized recognition of his father's action by the President of post-communist Poland.

A very similar argument was made by Piotr, whose father also refused to join the Communist Party. Piotr mentioned it in the context of his father's salary which was lower than Piotr's salary when he worked manually in Finland. This in itself indicates the importance and a certain autonomy of cultural capital, here in its embodied form of "anti-communist" and religious values (often overlapping), which could serve as a factor making up for shortages in other dimensions of transnational status, including occupation, salary or education:

My father was terribly anti-communist, terribly anti-communist. [...] He refused to accept the Party membership card, though he could have used one for sure. In the state enterprise where he worked there were ten thousand employees and whoever had a party card was able to be promoted – even if one was not an activist. My father, on the other hand, managed to reach a certain level, after which they told him "Edward [...], why don't you join the Party? We kindly ask you". But my father persistently refused. So I was brought up in that kind of atmosphere. It was not a wealthy nor a poor home, but a very religious one.

Because the making of legitimate history in the above accounts specifically concern the Polish nation, being symbolically or actually part of such a process brings my interlocutors the highest distinction with regard to a Polish audience, whether residing in Poland or abroad. Well socialized in the legitimate Polish historical narrative, I reacted to many accounts with spontaneous and instant recognition. Katyn, the Warsaw Uprising, the Grey Ranks, the Home Army, the Solidarity movement and fictional trials are the emblems of Polish 20th-century martyrology which, I would argue, resonated

with me in the way my interlocutors intended. I not only recognized the prestige of their transnational family ties but also their tacit message of patriotism. Their cultural heritage was to suggest to me that they are morally committed to Poland – that they are dedicated to the national cause despite living abroad and their dedication runs in their blood through genealogical kinship. Recent Polish popular discourse refers to the above as “genetic patriotism” (Dziedzic 2013). In this sense, dead kin are materialized transnationally through the bodies of their decedents, and genes become “us”.⁸⁶

Although the recognition of the historical distinction of my interlocutors’ transnational ties may mostly be lost on a non-Polish audience, the gradual inclusion of the Polish “oppositional field” into legitimate world history promises more ubiquitous recognition. A reverse trend is also possible when Finns are included in the Polish legitimate national or even family history and awarded with relevant Polish distinctions. For instance, in 2005, over twenty Finns were awarded with the Polish Order of Solidarnosc for their support for the Solidarity movement in the 1980s. At the intimate – although still cultural elite – level, a distinct story is represented by the old-timer to Finland, Zdzisław Mackiewicz, who is a member of the Katyn Association in his Polish hometown and whose father died in Katyn in 1940.

Mackiewicz, prompted by his family history and the opening of the Soviet Archives, investigated the Finnish national “link” to Katyn on the pages of *Kontakt*, a bulletin published by the Polonia Association in Finland (Mackiewicz 2008). The link was embodied by Arno Saxen, a Finn who was part of the medical commission examining the bodies discovered in the Katyn Forest in the 1940s. The final report of the Commission’s investigation suggested the Soviet’s responsibility for the massacre. After the war, the Soviets and the Finnish authorities continuously monitored and pressured Saxen to change his statement. Saxen consistently declined and disappeared to Sweden. Mackiewicz concludes his account as follows:

My interest in the issue comes from the fact that the body of my father, Waclaw, a chief of the Border Protection Corps campaign of the rank of captain, was found in Katyn. When I came to Finland, I became interested in Arno Saxen’s life. During my research, I discovered an amazing twist of fate. It turned out that the great grandson of Arno Saxen and the son of my daughter, that is the great grandson of my father murdered in Katyn, are close friends. None of them was aware that their great grandfathers had met in Katyn. One of the great grandfathers was a scientist studying the graves, another was a Polish officer found in them!” (2008, 4)

In 2007, on Zdzisław’s initiative Arno Saxen was posthumously awarded with the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland. The ceremony

⁸⁶ In the context of kinship and technology, the argument that “genes are us” was made by Donna Haraway (1997, 56).

was held in the Polish Embassy in Helsinki. The same year, Zdzisław's father was posthumously promoted to the rank of major in Poland.

Zdzisław's story renders the past relived in the transnational present as a distinction. It symbolically connects and gives recognition to people who without Zdzisław's physical and mental movement across Poland and Finland would never have been connected, or even as regards Saxen, would never have been properly recognized by the Polish state. A new prestigious family narrative has emerged which includes a Finnish presence. To draw on Kathryn Verdery's (2000) idiom, the publicly "nameless" and nationally-rooted dead bodies become transnationally connected and "named" dead bodies.

Up to this point, I have discussed transnational family member ties which embody legitimate Polish history. A question emerges about transnational family members with less "legitimate" past; people whose actions do not correspond to the system of values symbolically dominant in the post-communist period. Definitely, most of my interlocutors have such connections. They did not necessarily reveal them to me, which is already telling. For instance, I participated in conversations in which speculations were made about which of the Poles living in Finland was hiding family connections to the communist political elite which allowed him or her to come to Finland during the Cold War. Ironically for the theory of distinction, admitting relationships with the upper political echelons, people in power during communism, may be fairly difficult nowadays. There is however one person, Jakub, whose account stands out.

As I already mentioned, I met Jakub on the recommendation of my grandmother living in Poland. My grandmother and Jakub's mother were on common ideological ground. They supported the system and had husbands in powerful positions: my grandfather was a high-ranking Party member and worked in the military; while Jakub's father worked in the Party Committee. My grandmother realized that Jakub was in Finland when she met Jakub's mother at the cemetery. As distinctions are reproduced posthumously, their deceased husbands were buried in the vicinity of each other, in the section of the secular cemetery which before 1989 was devoted to the "highly meritorious" people for the Polish People's Republic (where now "oppositionist" and "communists" lay side by side, as the information about cemetery states). Thanks to that, one can say, our families have become eternal neighbours.

In our conversation, Jakub resented the post-communist reinterpretation of Polish history, which has essentially delegitimized his family's system of values and past status. If my other interlocutors see their families as – to paraphrase Maier (2002) – communities of "shared historical recall", shared "by virtue of their being targeted as victims" of the communist state, Jakub also sees his family as a community of victims, only here of the post-communist transformation. For Jakub, his father's devotion to the previous system was righteous and moral, for his father was not an opportunistic

bureaucrat, but a person who believed in communist ideas. Jakub stressed, “all his life, my father was ‘allergic’ to social inequalities” and to the “subjugation of the poor by the rich”. Likewise Jakub was proud that his father had a proletarian background and that thanks to his personal resilience and the opportunities offered by the communist system he acquired higher education. Jakub juxtaposed it with the growing inequalities emerging in contemporary Poland, which are nearly impossible to overcome. He pointed to unemployment and poverty on the Polish periphery. Ironically though, Jakub has made an important contribution to the development of Polish capitalism from the bottom-up. Although he has never “lived” in capitalist Poland, as a Finnish resident he has worked in Poland by providing consulting work, bringing Finnish know-how and professional expertise. He knows and appraises the Polish small business sector. Jakub is thus the epitome of the contradictions pervading post-communist reality, encompassing symbolic struggles over legitimate values which exist side-by-side as opposites (one could say similarly to the “oppositionist” and “communists” buried side-by-side at the aforementioned cemetery). The contradictions, visibly, do not omit transnational actors and their self-definitions.

On an interrelated, personal note, my grandmother also experienced the above contradictions after 1989. Her father was a wealthy entrepreneur who owned several plots of land before World War II. After the war, they were nationalized by the communist authorities. When the system, changed my grandmother fought in the court to get the land back. She (and thus me in the long run) succeeded for the most part. Thus, my grandmother, through legal acts of retribution, denounced the Party’s nationalization policies fundamental to the communist order. Simultaneously, she always resisted, as Jakub did, the symbolic delegitimization of the Polish communist past and thus my grandfather’s status. Thus, the family as a community of “victims” always seems to be an appealing narrative, even if the suffering family members appear to be suffering for contradictory causes.

Concluding remarks

Living transnationally, family members are faced with the necessity to revise old and address new stratification inequalities of their relationship. Thanks to the multidimensionality of social stratification emerging across borders, transnational family members can draw upon different sources of distinction to negotiate inequalities, likewise introducing more balance into their transnational relationships.

Money appear the most tangible, but also most conflict-ridden dimension of transnational inequality. During the Cold War, it often seemed “natural” to transnational family members that those in Finland would provide help and through remittances and material goods express their care and commitment to transnational family making. In the context of the dire economic inequalities associated with the Cold War divide, the Finnish salary, access to dollars and Western commodities brought

instant distinction in Poland. The hierarchy seemed obvious and since having its source in the system differences – outside of people’s own influence. Material goods, although in a smaller and rather symbolic amount, also travelled in the Poland-to-Finland direction, reducing the inequality of economic exchanges. After the introduction of capitalism in Poland, economic exchanges have become more uncomfortable and the hierarchy more difficult to read. In the context of contradictions, transnational family members engage in elaborate discursive and practical strategies to navigate inequalities and material transfers, either in order to limit them or to make them more acceptable for the recipients. Paradoxically, while some of my interlocutors have the problem of how to limit their transnational contributions, others have the problem of how to expand them. I would interpret the continuous conviction of the unchangeable West-East economic divisions expressed by those in Poland as the conjuncture of Cold War imaginaries with the heightened material desires stimulated by the transition to capitalism, desires which the capitalist system in Poland, as yet, has failed to deliver to everybody. It is thus not a matter of an out-of-date perception, but a historically-informed interpretation of the present (cf. Burawoy and Verdery 1999).

Money is important but not the exclusive source of distinction stratifying transnational family relationships. In a peripheral⁸⁷ country of limited economic possibilities such as Poland, where since the 19th century the intelligentsia has played an important role and symbolic importance has been ascribed to standing on the “right” side of the political barricade (to put it crudely, with or against the Tsarist regime, with or against the Nazis, with or against communist power), legitimate cultural capital has the power to make up for transnational economic shortages. I indicated the importance of cultivated, cultured behaviour, the participation in elite sports, education, prestigious occupational positions and distinctions stemming from participation in legitimate historical events. They are subtle but still visible and emphasize ways of locating oneself transnationally. Transnational life may help family members acquire certain forms of legitimate cultural capital but it also may stimulate conviction of one’s own cultural superiority against the Others from Poland and/or Finland. The cultural field thus becomes useful when family members have to deal with new forms of hierarchies emerging across borders. My interlocutors in Finland can also draw upon their cultural capital to address the symbolic disempowerment they face in Finland. The next chapter will further elaborate on these issues.

⁸⁷ Peripheral in terms of the global distribution of economic and political power.

Chapter 9 Merging networks and multiple anchorages

During the course of our first meeting at his home in Tampere, when we discussed his relationship to Poland, Krzysztof told me about a dream he had had during his recent visit to Poland. After a night out with his old friends, he came back home exhausted – he stays at his family home where his mother still lives during the visits– and immediately went to bed. “I woke up the next morning”, he said, “and I was still half asleep, or maybe I still had a hangover from the night before, but I woke up and semi-consciously thought ‘Damn! Is it possible that I have spent the last thirty years of my life in Poland and nothing has changed? I still live in the same apartment, everything is the same. Nothing has happened in my life, nothing has changed’”. “It was a kind of nightmare (*mały koszmarek*). Luckily, I quickly woke up from it”, Krzysztof concluded. He followed up on this experience when he told me about the “stupid” question he often gets asked in Finland. Finns often ask him, “So how do you like it here? Do you like living here?” The sarcastic answer which he has started to give and which he finds the most truthful is, “Well, and how do YOU like it here? From the perspective of your twenty years here, how do YOU like it here?”

The question irritates Krzysztof because it has primordial overtones and naturalizes his Polish origin. Finns who do not know Krzysztof assume he is not from Finland, at least is much less “from Finland” than they are, even if they have lived in Finland shorter than he has. For Krzysztof, Poland is important as a country of identification and family ties. He travels to Poland several times per year to take care of his elderly mother. Although he is a Finnish citizen, when Finland permitted dual citizenship in 2003, he reapplied for Polish citizenship. But as his “nightmarish dream” indicates, Finland has become a major part of his life as well. In migration studies vernacular he has integrated to Finland socially, culturally and economically.

In the previous chapters, I mentioned many of the elements that tie my interlocutors to Finland. I hinted at emotional, social and material links. In this chapter, I want to elaborate on their presence in the process of family transnationalism directed towards Poland. I look at how my interlocutors are socially embedded in Finland and how this is played out from the transnational perspective. I argue that ties to Poland and Finland are not created in parallel as disjunctive processes, but rather intersect and merge with each other, creating what could be called a multiple-anchored transnational space. Like Krzysztof's nightmare dreamt at his family home in Poland, they are the

entanglement of transnational Polish-Finnish reality. Such an argument further shows the blurring together of the “here” of Finland and “there” of Poland.

Throughout the chapter I discuss the creation of multi-anchored transnational space from the perspective of the homemaking practices in Finland and the social networks which tie people to different places and merge during visits to Poland and Finland. In particular, I point to the transnational participation of Finnish people. I indicate how they, as the social actors who “receive” the Polish “Other”, themselves participate in Polish transnational ties and how this is mediated through the exchange of material objects. My attempt is to indicate that “the opposition between here and there is itself a cultural construction, a consequence of thinking in terms of fixed entities and defining them oppositionally” (Carter 1992, 101, cited in Sørensen 1998).

"Little Poland": a transnational home and house

In my study, transnationalism is the process of multiple emplacements⁸⁸ in which the continuous effort of remaining part of old places is combined with forging embodied relations to new places and claiming them as, to various extent, one's own. In other words, emplacement entails converting the alien space into a physically lived-in and familiar place. Whatever place people create in a new country is usually the effect of cross-fertilization bearing transnational marks.

For my interlocutors, a physical home embedded within a local community can be considered the point of departure of their emplacement in Finland. The immediate living environment constitutes the significant locus of affiliation for people deeply attached to Finland as much as for those who particularly long for Poland. Acknowledging that helps to understand why even the persons seemingly most disenchanted with Finland engage in contradictory statements and practices of being and not-being at home in Finland, and accordingly, in Poland. I shall start from my meeting with Hanna and Tadeusz, a couple who are both musicians.

Hanna and Tadeusz came to Finland in 1988 with their daughter. Initially, I heard of them from their friends as people who have still not “found themselves” in Finland and whose life is focused on Poland. When I met Hanna and Tadeusz personally, I saw their lives in more ambiguous terms. I realized that despite their continuous trips and attachment to Poland, they feel more at home in Finland than their friends or even they themselves would always be ready to acknowledge.

In Finland, the couple lives in a small rural town, Virrat, which is located 90 km from my place of residence, where we also frequently met to attend Polish Catholic mass. When they took me to their home by car, they immediately began an intensive narrative of the “demythisation” of Finland as a clean and people-friendly country to

⁸⁸ On the concept of emplacement in the transnational context see Huttunen (2010).

live in. They drew upon what they considered to be their failed expectations and the misleading popular imaginary of Finland. They criticized the health, educational and social systems. When we arrived at their house late in the evening, the atmosphere changed slightly. They intertwined their negative stories of Finland with more affective and positively charged stories and practices of homemaking.

Hanna started preparing dinner. We ate tripe soup and Polish *pierogi*, both considered Polish delicacies. Hanna and Tadeusz emphasized they brought all the basic meal ingredients, including onions, from Poland. Polish ham and cucumbers were also served for breakfast the following day. Hanna and Tadeusz also bring all other possible goods which can be found throughout the house from Poland; from the bathroom to the living room. As Hanna pointed out, when they arrived in Finland they only had two suitcases and every subsequent trip filled the interior of their house up with Polish books, paintings and family mementos. During dinner, we watched Polish news and the popular Polish TV series “*L*” for Love (*M – jak miłość*). Hanna and Tadeusz call watching the series their “evening-of-tears” ritual. Like most Poles I met, they have a satellite TV at home. Hanna and Tadeusz’s children speak Polish fluently and the couple’s house is recurrently visited by their *close ones* from Poland. They stress, “There is no year somebody does not come. That is, of course, if we are not in Poland at that time ... Everybody has been here”.

Hanna and Tadeusz call their home in Finland “little Poland”. The metaphor is unsurprising, reflecting a widespread discursive trend to mark certain spaces as the reproduction of the migrants’ national homeland in a micro-scale. The metaphor of “little Poland” (like the metaphor of “little Italy”, “little China” or any other “little” country) is to some extent misleading though, as it implies the impenetrability of borders and cultural homogenization. It draws upon the nationalist imaginary of bounded and fixed national culture, disregarding the incorporation of sociocultural elements from the country of destination into the home environment. Correspondingly, it projects the notion of extended-across-borders nationalism rather than multiple-anchored transnationalism. In contrast, against the bounded metaphoric representation, Hanna and Tadeusz’s “little Poland” is constructed upon plenty of Finnish influences. Likewise, it cannot be reduced to the straightforward reproduction of Poland in a foreign place.

To begin with, “little Poland” is influenced by the materiality of life in Finland. For the aforementioned dinner, we not only ate Polish food, but also drunk home-made beer brewed personally by the couple in Finland. The home-made beer is the legacy of the impoverishment Hanna and Tadeusz initially experienced in Finland and is unequivocally preferred to Polish beer even by guests from Poland (“when they bring Polish beer from Poland, it stands untouched”). After dinner, we went to the sauna several times. We cooled down by going outdoors into the minus-25-degree Finnish winter night. Hanna contemplated on the serenity and wilderness of the Finnish

countryside. “The house has an excellent location, the best in the whole area”, she said. She also added, “A sauna is the first thing we will build after returning to Poland”. Many of the couple’s guests from Poland consider the sauna their favourite pastime in Finland. Many artefacts embodying the couple’s ties to Finland can also be spotted around the house. Books in Polish, English and Finnish stand on the shelves, for Hanna and Tadeusz cherish the principle of reading books in the original language. There is a photo of Hanna’s mother, but taken in their garden in Finland; a photo of their dog who came with them from Poland, but died and was buried in Finland; finally the photo of their son in a high-school graduation cap, which manifests the Finnish tradition of the end-of-high-school celebration absent in Poland.

In the Polish language, the categories of house and home are expressed using the same term, *dom*. The affective *dom* for Hanna and Tadeusz is in Poland. Simultaneously, their *dom* is also in Finland and provides the sense of safety and a physical framework for the things they have collected in Finland and for the guests they have hosted. “Our beds are here. We feel safe here”, they said. In practice, the materiality of their house and emotionality of their home are hard to disentangle. Similarly, the boundary between the “old” taken from Poland and the “new” assimilated in Finland is difficult to mark, since the latter has gradually become old and familiar as well as absorbed by the transnational networks. One could call such objects hybrid ones, but I would prefer to interpret them as transnational objects appropriated and re-defined through intimate transnational engagements; the meaning of objects changed as the consequence of the transnational travel of things and people.

Hanna’s and Tadeusz’s “little Poland” is also deeply enmeshed in the local community in which they reside in Finland. When we drove to Virrat, we made a detour especially on my account. The couple wanted to introduce me to all the places which are meaningful in their lives in Finland. I was shown where they worked, dwelled and spent their free time; where their children played and went to school. We took a route across a frozen lake, since they learned I had never done it. Hanna also took me sightseeing the next day. She showed me around the town with nostalgia and regretfully conveyed the picture of gradual community collapse: depopulation, closing of the local health centre and school, and deteriorating job opportunities. Although she and Tadeusz want to spend their retirement in Poland, Hanna remarked: “Still, it is awful to see the decline of this town”. With the material and social decline of the town, it seems as if part of them is being lost as well. They do not have much fondness for Finland in general, but Virrat has gradually become “their” town. It is their “private homeland” against their lack of identification with Finland as an “ideological homeland”, to use the classical distinction in Polish sociology made by Stanisław Ossowski. Ossowski argued:

The private homeland and the ideological homeland brings out, among other things, the question of the specific character of the local homeland. The local homeland, in this sense, is a homeland stemming from the closer milieu. It is born

in the conditions of continuous and durable contacts with the area of reality, where the life of a local community and its members is directly rooted. It is a set of real places and conditions in which the life is taking place. The tie between the man and this homeland is to a considerable degree habitual, being a result of fixed pattern of relations with various elements of environment. (Ossowski 1967, English translation after Pucek 2009)

This form of categorical distinction helps to stress that transnationalism spanning national borders is also a trans-local experience, with attachment to local communities helping to offset its potential lack at the national level. From Ossowski's perspective, many of my interlocutors have some form of homeland in Finland, even if they would say that Finland itself is not their proper homeland. For my interlocutors, the ideological homeland understood in terms of "convictional and ideological ties connected the man with the broader, more distant milieu" of national territory (*ibid.*) is often Poland. It is manifested in people's discursive assertion that their immediate home environment in Finland is indeed the extension of Polish national territory – "little" Poland. Simultaneously, in their lived experience it is the space embedded in local conditions, marked by the process of cultural inclusion and accumulation rather than cultural uniformity and isolation from Finland and everything that is considered culturally Finnish.

One could say that Hanna and Tadeusz, when talking about "little Poland" continuously "performed" their "Polishness" by drawing upon an established set of elements and stereotypes of what "Polish culture" is. Whenever they acknowledge the sneaking in of "non-Polish" elements and the materiality of their house embedded in a local landscape, they also make a claim for their "Finnish" belonging and Finland as their "private homeland" – for being part of two worlds which in their everyday life merge into a single, transnational one.

At the same time one should not consider everything that people do as a planned strategy of resistance or the need for the conscious manifestation of Polishness for the sake of an external audience. In the process of homemaking, keeping ties with Poland comes often naturally and spontaneously to my interlocutors, in the sense of not being a pre-planned act of national identity performance. People want to make their home familiar and cosy, have useful and practical things, eat food that they like and meet the people they miss. For the same reason, ties to Finland accumulate as new tastes and pleasures are discovered and often become part of the everyday life routine without much deliberation on it. An embodied habitus inclining people to desire the inevitable things is more dynamic in a transnational context than in Bourdieu's initial theorization, whereby "the practices produced by the habitus [...] are determined by the past conditions which have produced the principle of their production" (Bourdieu 1977, 72). The embeddedness in new social structures modifies old – apparently inevitable – habits, making new things desirable and inevitable. The habitus gains a new history of past practices to draw upon, a new "yesterday man" (*ibid.*).

In Finland, the most temporary of Polish dwellers, that is temporary labour workers also carve out a space for themselves. Hanna and Tadeusz identify themselves with the Finnish “Polonia”, by which they wish to differentiate themselves from Poles staying in Finland only for short-term labour, people who can “eat anything and sleep anywhere”. As Hanna and Tadeusz suggest, the transnational household’s strategy of financial saving apparently precludes leading a “normal life” in Finland, which for Hanna and Tadeusz means the inevitable building of material anchorages, starting from owning a car and a house. Temporary workers indeed do not have a house or a car of their own in Finland, but they still try to create makeshift homes for themselves in the spaces available to them, in an attempt to establish a degree of physical and emotional safety. Personalized intimate places within their temporary apartments, around their beds and on the bedside tables, extend to the outward Finnish environment which they explore and sometimes grow fond of. It is also the materiality of their intimate surroundings that bothers their wives in Poland, suspicious and afraid that perhaps their husbands will build too much of a “home” in Finland.

Transnational encounters in Finland

Gaining social acceptance is an important part of the emplacement in new locality and another indication of the permeable borders of the “Polish” home worlds of my interlocutors in Finland. In Chapter Seven I indicated that it is possible for my interlocutors to feel at home in Finland without having extensive social networks or an intensive social life. It is a certain specificity of their Finnish place of residence that a sense of good social embeddedness can be produced with a relatively small amount of tightly knit relationships. My interlocutors ironically notice that they themselves have sometimes more intensive social lives than their Finnish neighbours or colleagues, and tacitly suggest that Finnish society is loosely integrated in general, likewise challenging the idea of “immigrant integration” to a coherent “host” society. “In Finland, people function around “their own orbits” and “one should get used to it if one wishes to lead a satisfying life here”, one of the old-timers told me both as information and personal advice. What my interlocutors find important nevertheless, is the sense of being accepted as part of the local community. Hanna and Tadeusz expressed it well when they said that after initial years of rejection and discrimination they finally feel respected in Virrat. “Finally (...) we have gained some position here. Everybody knows us and knows that we are somebody here. That means first of all, that we can be trusted. And that is an extremely important thing”. Hanna considers an incident that happened in my presence an example of the above. Hanna went to buy a tracksuit from a local shop. The shop assistant gave Hanna the suit without payment so that she could decide at home whether she wanted to buy it. “You see, that is trust”, she told me. “The shop assistant knows me and knows I am not a thief”. Another salient confirmation of her position is an article on the occasion of her 50th birthday published in a local

newspaper. Becoming somebody thus ensures the couple with the sense of home in Virrat and is related to gaining prestige and trust afforded to people treated as “one’s own”.

The couple’s aforementioned trust-building practices can also be conceptualized after Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) in terms of “frontiering”. The authors define “frontiering” as:

the ways and means transnational family members use to create familial space and network ties in terrain where affinal connections are relatively sparse [...]. Frontiering denotes the encounter between people, and hints at various ways of encountering that may be more or less amiable, creative and fulfilling or conflict-ridden. (ibid., 11)

Hanna and Tadeusz’s “frontiering” in Finland encompasses interactions with Finns, Poles and few other foreigners. Social circles of other of my interlocutors in Finland have a similarly heterogeneous composition. Even if for some persons Poles constitute the majority of their friends, they usually constitute bridging ties to the Finns. People who are married to Finns have extended Finnish family members and can also relate to them through children after divorce. Many friendships made in Finland have a familial character. Close friends together spend “family” holidays like Christmas or Easter, celebrate birthdays, confirmation and matriculation exams. Formalization of new friendship relationships takes place through the practice of god parenting.

Social networks established in Finland always constitute an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, cultural practices and objects. Importantly from a transnational perspective, they also enable persons living in Poland to build social bridges to Finland which go beyond their immediate Polish transnational family circle. This happens primarily through transnational mobility, when people from Poland come to visit their *close ones* in Finland. In the course of visits to Finland, two strands of social networks meet. Frontiering in Finland is thus a series of encounters in which transnational family members from Poland participate as well, fortifying the merging of habitats into a single transnational space. During each visit to Finland, guests from Poland interact with and engrave in the memory of an increasing number of people, develop personal likes and dislikes towards them and judge for themselves the quality of their *close ones’* social relationships in Finland. In transnational families with (mostly Finnish) family members, visits to Finland always involve getting to know the new family members better. It is an interaction across cultural difference, or to put it in Bryceson’s and Vuorela’s words “agency at the interface between two (or more) contrasting ways of life” (2002, 11), involving different social habits and value systems regarding family life, interpersonal interactions, consumption and gender roles.

As I was told about and observed, activities aimed at the Polish guests’ wider social inclusion into Finland are not only initiated by the Polish hosts themselves, but also by their Finnish and Polish friends and colleagues. It is common to organize

different celebrations together during visits. For instance, thanks to such celebrations, all of Hanna's and Tadeusz's friends in Finland know their *close ones* from Poland. There are also social situations in which the guests enter spontaneously, building relationships on their own in Finland. Spaces of independent encounters include shops, streets and bars. Zofia's sister, for instance, feels so comfortable in Finland that she ventures into clubs by herself. "She has always managed to communicate [with newly meet people], even without the language", Zofia told me. Dagmara reported with satisfaction about the meeting of her parents and her Finnish boss, which signified the bridging of both ethnic differences and professional hierarchies:

Once, when my parents came [to Finland], my boss asked me whether it would be possible to meet them. [I told her] 'Why not, why not.' So I remember we went with my parents to see my company's workshop. My father was surprised that all the tools were just hanging there, without any supervision. He himself used to work in a factory which manufactured various machines. There all the equipment was locked up, so that nobody would steal anything. And here everything was neatly arranged, all the tools were signed. They had these kinds of comparisons. They also met my boss. So my experience [with the Finns] was a positive one.

Intimate interactions result in the tightening of transnational bonds. Those from Poland acquire new friends and family members in Finland or strike up relationships of a less profound but often more memorable kind, significant if only for the element of novelty and cultural exchange. Even fleeting encounters with Finns stimulate new knowledge and cosmopolitan consciousness. They suggest that not only Poles' residence in Finland, but also their transnational ties are accepted or even supported. Positive reactions of the Finnish social environment towards family guests from Poland help those in Finland achieve positive identification with their new places of dwelling. Meeting new people also adds to the sense of uniting and expanding rather than a curtailing and shrinking of the social world as a consequence of separation, and reassure family members that transnational life has its benefits by enabling new social encounters.

However, the mutual entanglement of social networks in Finland also has its less encouraging effects. Firstly, some of the Finnish spouses do not like it when the Polish guests come for too long. Krzysztof, for instance, indicated that his mother and his Finnish wife did not get along too well, and his mother's long stays in Finland created tensions. "This might have been a factor contributing to our divorce", Krzysztof concluded. Hanna has continuous problems getting her Finnish husband to consent to her brothers' extended presence at their house due to their work in Finland. Kuczynski (2007) who studied Polish-Finnish couples in Finland, notes that lengthy visits by family members from Poland cause "an imbalance in the togetherness and space between spouses". The extensive physical merging of Polish and Finnish ties under one roof in Finland might thus work to the disadvantage of the Finnish partner, even if it brings satisfaction to the Polish one. Furthermore, the family guests

themselves might gain negative impressions from social encounters (see also Chapter Six). The accounts of my interlocutors in Poland and Finland suggest that family members from Poland dislike some of the people they meet in Finland or at least have an ambiguous attitude towards them. Therefore, the process of frontiering in a foreign environment is ridden with ambivalence and the understanding across difference is not always easy, especially giving that the expectations for the meeting with family members are always higher than with non-related persons. For instance, while Dagmara's parents were positive thrilled when they met Dagmara's Finnish boss, they had more mixed feelings when they met Dagmara's Finnish in-laws. Dagmara recalled:

My mum and dad came to visit us for two weeks. [...] Sure, there are many great things in Finland, many great things. However, when we went to my mother-in-law for dinner: silence, silence. My parents asked me, "Can we talk?" I told them, "Yes, yes you can talk. But in this home you tend to eat in silence" [laughs]. [...] So yes, they had a lot of positive impressions. Nonetheless, it was an encounter with a totally different culture. Polish people dine and talk. On top, my in-laws don't drink alcohol so there was no way to facilitate the communication [laughs].

Thus, whereas in certain contexts casual but relatively shallow transnational encounters in Finland are acceptable, they are deemed insufficient in a strictly family space, where genealogical relatedness is expected to be filled with more profound interaction to bring positive transnational experiences.

Finns in Poland

As can be concluded from the previous section, from the perspective of contacts between various strands of social networks in Finland, social bridges to Finland take people back to Poland. A similar phenomenon can be observed when Finnish friends, colleagues and family members of my interlocutors participate in transnational visits to Poland, whereby they are introduced to people, places and culture formative for the "Polish" biographies of my interlocutors.

Finns' visits to Poland are often initiated by the Finns themselves and their desire to get to know Poland. If not, they are equally eager to go there. Mariusz, for instance, has visited Poland gradually less frequently in recent years. His new Finnish wife, though, prompted him to more intensive transnational mobility. Piotrek's Finnish wife – despite their divorce – still visits Piotrek's mother in Poland and (according to Piotrek's daughter) remains in better relations with her than with her own mother in Finland, disturbing the conventional pattern of post-divorce mixed-marriage relationship, whereby both spouses retreat to their family of origin. Close relationships with Polish people who maintain transnational ties offer Finns the opportunity to access Poland through its "back regions" (MacCannell 1989) and participate in and co-construct the transnational space themselves. Instead of being mere tourists who perhaps look for life "as it is really lived", but find it deliberately staged by the tourist

industry nevertheless (ibid.), they can be part of a somewhat ordinary Polish life with scrambled eggs made by the friend's mother for breakfast or go on a sightseeing trip across Poland with the friend's family. Through intimate encounters, they become the "moral fabric" (Crick 1989) of local sociocultural landscape and Polish family life. Family members in Poland on the other hand, without moving from home, get an unexpected glimpse of their *close ones'* life in Finland, including the pains and pleasures of their adaptation to life abroad. Among others, interactions with Finns in Poland can help to uncover the emotion work of concealment practiced by family members in Finland. Władysława, Jacek's mother, with whom I talked in Poland, recalled:

Years ago Jacek called asking whether his friends could stay at our place for several nights. One of them, Jukka, helped our son a lot during his first year in Finland. We agreed. Jukka came with two men. He spoke Polish a bit, so we managed to communicate. I rose to the occasion and cooked a hearty dinner. We sat around, Jukka was driving the conversation and translating for us. They came with presents: he took perfume, chocolates and some headscarves out of his suitcases for me. They took pictures. Jukka has stayed at our place several other times. It was then I found out about our son's difficulties during the beginning of his stay in Finland, problems he had never mentioned. Jukka told us how he once visited Krzysztof and saw that he was only eating bread with margarine for supper. Jukka asked him, "Don't you have anything else?" Jacek said he was fine with what he had. So Jukka sometimes brought him some food, "How was I supposed not to help him? Not to invite him for Christmas?" Jukka told me. So I'm grateful to Jukka for showing such a good heart to our son. Jukka said Jacek was studying Finnish the entire time: the other time they were sitting in the sauna; Jacek looked at his watch and said to Jukka, "I have to go home now". And he went to study Finnish and eat his piece of bread and margarine.

Arguably, Władysława remembers the above transnational encounter as particularly satisfactory because she and Jukka had a common language (Polish) to communicate in. Thanks to that, they still exchange Christmas postcards and can continue their acquaintance independently, without the mediation of Władysława's son. Apart from Jukka, though, only a minority of Finnish guests have some rudimentary knowledge of Polish. Communication takes place in English, Russian or German, but most frequently Polish family members assist in translation. Despite the prevailing language barrier however, people also manage to "get their message across" through direct interaction. The common consumption of alcohol, particularly, becomes a perfect medium for transcending cultural barriers. As Wilson (2005, 7) pointed out, "alcohol is one of the ingredients in social cement, but also one of the means to remove such adhesion". Drinking is a platform for cultural exchange and the transcendence of differences at the same time. For instance, Edward, when we met in Poland told me with amusement of his (and his father's) meetings with his Finnish brother-in-law:

Matti speaks Russian with such a strange accent that it's hard to understand him. But we manage somehow. The best thing is when we get to drink together. Then we can talk in all the languages of the world. [laughs] [...] When my dad was still

alive, Matti laughed that when he drank with my dad my dad would always say, “Look, amazing. I understand everything he says”. And Matti would say, “Me too!”

Since the prestige and power of people, as I indicated in Chapter Eight, partially stem from the imagination of places with which they are associated, the above transnational encounters are nevertheless not a hierarchy-free process. From the Finnish perspective, Poland – despite the capitalist changes – continues to be closely associated with the Russians, towards whom negative attitudes and a sense of civilizational superiority prevail in Finland (Jaakkola 2005). Consequently, Poles also use the presence of Finns in Poland as the opportunity to symbolically elevate their own position, taking the most out of their temporary host status. During the visits, they embark on a “patriotic” mission of showing their country in the best possible light. They choose which places the guests will “gaze upon” (Urry 1990), recommend food and entertainment. They often very consciously use their capacity as “experts”, mediators and managers of meaning (Hannerz 1996). They try to create the type of Polish culture from which they can benefit. As in other contexts of transnational family life, my interlocutors emerge as the “creators” of culture rather than as its creations. Polish “culture” is here an “active verb, not a noun” (Conquergood 1989), with no qualities that can be regarded as inherently authentic (Crick 1989). The underlying aim of my interlocutors’ endeavours is to counter the stereotypes of Poland’s backwardness and civilization inferiority and, possible, to introduce balance into an intimate relationship whereby “I know and have travelled around your country, but you know nothing about mine”, to quote one of my young interlocutors married to a Finn.

Edensor (2002) in his work on national culture in everyday life, argues that visiting ideological national sites is one of the main mediums of achieving “national self-realization”. Through interaction with the material landscape labelled as nationally significant, people are socialized into a particular national membership. When, along with Finns, Poles participate in different social activities and visit Polish ideological national sites the “national self-realization” which they achieve, is always an attempt at the “self-realization” of their own national superiority or at least equality, in a transnational space. A counterpoint is constituted by the characteristics imagined as pertinent to Finland’s geography and culture: peasant origin, homogenous rural landscape and limited sociality.

Certain aspects of Poland have always seemed to be worth highlighting. The historical architecture of Krakow, Gdańsk or Warsaw has a long-standing appeal. Castles, palaces and old towns suggest the noble origin of the Polish nation. The culture of hospitality and intensive sociality marked by festive drinking and food consumption is widely enjoyed. Wedel (1986) remarked on her continuous surprise with the ability of Poles always to manage to get foodstuffs despite shortages during communism. When parties were held, people managed to rise to the occasion. For instance, Lucyna

indicated how whenever her close friend and her Finnish husband visited Lucyna in Poland, Lucyna always managed to “arrange” meat from the village. Still, the collapse of the communist regime and the introduction of a market economy have had a tremendously positive effect on the possibility of promoting Poland. As Bronisław idealistically remarked, “I do not have to say anything. Poland will defend herself”. With the political transition, national landmarks have gained a new modern framework and the Polish consumer commodity market has reached levels of choice far exceeding the Finnish market. Owing to the latter, the notion of festive eating, drinking and conviviality as central to “Polishness” can now be realized more easily.

The Polish wedding, including especially its celebratory reception the *wesele* (the term derived from *weselić się*, that is “to rejoice”, “to be merry”) is a source of particular cultural pride. Polish wedding seems to convey in a nutshell what my interlocutors consider positive in Polish culture and what is lacking in Finnish culture: religiosity (matrimonial vows in Church), familism, sociality and festivity. Weddings are thus imagined to convey the cultural “rifts” (*kulturowa przepaść*) (to use one of my interlocutor’s phrasing) between Poland and Finland beyond the weddings themselves. The below quote, coming from my conversation with Jolanta and Waldemar regarding their daughter’s “double” wedding to a Finnish man is a good example of an empowering wedding narrative:

Jolanta: You couldn’t sit through our daughter’s wedding in Finland. Because the Finnish wedding party (*wesele*) looks a bit different. It’s completely different from the Polish one. There is almost no dancing. It is rather a reception (*przyjęcie*) than a wedding party (*wesele*).

Waldemar: Everybody leaves before midnight.

Jolanta: The wedding reception is usually co-organized by the friends of the bride and groom. It’s sort of a show. Every person can present something. Maybe it’s interesting for young people but we aren’t used to it.

Waldemar: The Finns only got a chance to see a Polish wedding when we organized it the next year [in Poland]. [...]

Jolanta: They were so surprised! They were surprised that there was so much food and that the waiters were constantly removing the plates and bringing clean ones with another course. There was constantly new food coming in. The Finns said they weren’t able to eat any more. The groom’s father’s partner (*kobieta*) said she ate so much and felt so terribly bloated that she wasn’t able to move. The Finns are not used to such weddings.

Waldemar: And they wanted to be polite and ate everything that was served. And in our culture (*u nas*) you don’t have to do that. You only eat what you like.

Jolanta: There was heaps of food.

Waldemar: There was also plenty of alcohol.

Jolanta: The funniest moment was when we were cheering at the newly-weds “*gorzko, gorzko*” – obviously this is the moment when the newly-weds are supposed to kiss. But the groom’s dad did not know that. He asked me why they were shouting. I said that this was the tradition that you should kiss. So whenever people were calling “*gorzko gorzko*” he took his partner and kissed her [laughs]. Because he thought he should also do that. What else? Obviously there was a

band and dancing. At first, the Finns didn't dance but then they went wild and it was fun. Everybody enjoyed themselves. They still reminisce that it was their first wedding of this kind – in a positive sense.

Weddings are a popular theme in a transnational migration literature. Usually though, the type of transnationalism which they serve to maintain considers a single “ethnic” group. A good example is Olwig's (2002) account of a wedding in a Caribbean transnational family. The wedding she describes took place in a village in Nevis, from where the bride and the groom originated. The majority of guests were constituted of globally dispersed kin who also traced their roots to the same village. Thus, through the wedding, the “common origins” and “shared kinship” of the transnational kin were validated and celebrated. “The wedding celebration underlined the significance of the home as an anchoring point and shared source of identification for family members”, Olwig concludes (*ibid.*).

In contrast, in the weddings of my study, often between Poles and Finns, multiple origins and cultural backgrounds are played out and negotiated, while shared kinship and in consequence possibly shared “European” belonging only starts to unfold. The “anchoring points” that emerge are only rooted in Poland for some of the participants, and for others, the wedding is supposed to be the first step in their creation, underpinned by new kinship ties. For Poles, the national and thus interpersonal hierarchy also are at stake at transnational weddings. A successful wedding in Poland means a symbolic elevation in the eyes of the guests from Finland, and the temporary reversal of the “host” role, that is the role of power.

Nonetheless, certain aspects of Poland complicate the shunning of the old Cold War hierarchies. During their visits, Finns are “impressed” with food, commodity market and the atmosphere of sociality, but also notice the shortages of material public culture. They point to uneven pavements, dirt, lack of different facilities or their low quality and distrust of public safety. One of the Finnish husbands of my interlocutors told me he disliked Polish trains because the space between the seats was too narrow. Another criticized Polish driving culture and road infrastructure.⁸⁹ Ula told me that her Finnish friends were afraid of their car being stolen, and kept their car in Ula's sister's garage whereas Ula's car was parked outside.

Many of these “non-acceptable differences” (Binnie et al. 2006, 28) are arguably considered to represent the woes of Eastern Europe and the incessant Eastern-Western rift. As such, they are part of Poland's political economy culture, which has proven to be advantageous for the Finns in other dimensions, especially in terms of the low prices of commodities and services. During the Cold War, Finns, owing to their capitalist location, were by default associated with the better and richer Other. Finns' symbolic

⁸⁹ Not to be mistaken, Polish people also criticize the same things in Poland, but they do it from a different position of power.

and actual power also elevated the status of the Polish people who were associated with them. Nevertheless, the prestige gained with respect to the external audience was accompanied by an inner, intimate inequality. Thanks to the Finns, Poles could participate in lavish consumption and had access to shops and restaurants out of the reach of ordinary Polish citizens. Simultaneously, the hierarchy was reified. The power shift linked to the shifted role of the host was curtailed. This is well represented by the incident described below. It refers to the visit to Poland which Henryk made with his Finnish friend Petri in the 1980s. As Henryk told me, during the visit they stayed at Henryk's parents and travelled across Poland with Henryk's family – they went together because somebody had to be the “designated driver” while others were drinking the ample stocks of alcohol Petri bought for dollars in Pewex shops. In Krakow, they wanted to go to a famous restaurant:

Henryk: We wanted to take Petri to a nice Polish restaurant, for a good dinner. We decided to go to Wierzynek: a famous and very expensive Polish restaurant. We entered and my father asked for a table for four people. The floor manager said, “But all the tables have been booked two months in advance! There are no free tables, please leave”. So my father turned to me and said, “Son (*synku*), please tell our Finnish guest that there are no free tables in this restaurant”. When I started talking to Petri in Finnish, the floor manager dashed after us and said, “I’m sorry, so sorry! There’s always a table for foreign guests”. He elegantly showed us to the table. We sat and noticed that at the adjacent table there were also Finns. We exchanged pleasantries. Everything went well, but you see: they let in the foreigners, but when a Polish person wanted to come in they said, “No, everything is taken”.

Henryk acknowledged that the above situations belong to the past. In a wider Polish circle, we once discussed a well-publicized event, where a young British tourist in Krakow started to be denied access to certain restaurants after engaging in brawls and excessive drinking. We met the denial of service with positive feelings, since it gave us, as Polish people, a symbolic boost. At the same time, though highly unnerving, was the fact that Ryanair airline advertised Krakow as a city where one can enjoy cheap food and alcohol and glossed over the city's less commercial aspects. Such branding tends to resonate (at least partially) with the experience of foreign consumers, Finnish one included, but it also reifies the old hierarchy. Given the above, Poles' empowerment through Finns' encounters with Poland continues to have its limits.

Material exchanges in transnational encounters

Daniel Hiebert (2002), in an article on transnational cosmopolitanism, writes about the residents of a multicultural neighbourhood in Vancouver who grow plants brought from their respective countries of origin in their backyards. Hiebert treats it as a starting point for a discussion on everyday, cosmopolitan hospitality and cooperation between people of different cultural backgrounds, who simultaneously maintain intensive

transnational ties. Also in my fieldwork, I noted the incidence of growing plants acquired through transnational practice. I heard it from Marzena, my interlocutor in Poland, whose sister lives in Finland. When I visited Marzena at her hometown in Kraśnik,⁹⁰ we went to see her family's garden plot (*działka*), where Marzena and her family grow different vegetables. Looking around the plot, Marzena remarked:

When my sister comes, we spend our time at our allotment. We have a barbecue. When Finnish friends of Judyta visited us last year, they took a great liking to the broad beans we grow here. They don't have them in Finland. So last year when they were here they took broad bean seeds back to Finland. It was June. When they arrived in Finland, they immediately planted the seeds, only beforehand they had put them into water so that they would grow faster. And the seeds sprouted. They sprouted and even grew a lot. (Fieldnotes, April 2008)

Marzena's experience poses Hiebert's example in a different light. It exemplifies the form of material exchanges which are constitutive for the process mentioned in the previous sections, in which the "host society" members participate in the transnational ties of the foreigners "integrating" with them. Contrary to Hiebert, I point to the emergence of a single transnational family space in which different "national" sides are involved, rather than of persons who independently pursue ties to their respective "countries of origin" only to meet in the "country of destination".

Material objects have a particular power of manifesting and symbolically perpetuate intimate transnational relationships. Objects give the possibility for a durable display and collective sharing. When they are exchanged between different strands of social networks, they fortify the unbounding of national containers and stress multiple anchorages and the affiliations of transnational actors. The aforementioned broad beans or wedding vodka given to Finnish guests in Poland are not merely commodities to be bought and sold, but items of personal value; gifts carrying the mark of a donor (Mauss 1990), embodying transnational ties to people and places across borders.

I am not arguing that ties between Poles and Finns emerging during the visits have to be permanent to matter. They matter even if they are fleeting, but if they involve the exchange of material gifts, they retain something of a long-lasting quality. Intimate material exchanges have the capacity to transform incidents which could otherwise be forgotten into meaningful and memorable interactions. To come back to Jacek's mother who hosted her son's Finnish friends at her home in Poland, she does not remember the names of all her guests, except for Jukka's, but she remembers the gifts they brought her: perfume, chocolates and headscarves. Arguably, they symbolize for her the acceptance and reverence that the guests had for her (and her husband) and her son in Finland. Gifts help guests negotiate their entrance into intimate transnational relationships and facilitate working across cultural difference, having the potential of

⁹⁰ A small town located in south-east Poland.

building more permanent transnational ties, like in the case of Jukka and Jacek's mother.

Material exchanges can also tie Finns to Poland indirectly and without their personal mobility. This happens when Poles bring commodities to Finland and give them as a gift to their Finnish friends or co-workers. Ida, for instance, "familiarised" her Finnish friends with "a Polish set of vodka and *kabanosy* [Polish dry sausage]. Now they ask her for the "set" whenever she travels to Poland. Another of my interlocutors, Kazimierz, brought his closest Finnish colleague a Polish sausage from his last visit to Poland. "He [the colleague] could not believe this was an ordinary sausage. So much meat. He thought it must be from a special shop". Similar examples could be multiplied. In the absence of Polish commodities on the Finnish market, Poles' personal transnationalism remains an undefeated source of such commodities for the Finns themselves. For my interlocutors, it is also another way of negotiating the hierarchy of their intimate relationships. The exchange of gifts is therefore the example of "eating of the Other" (Hooks 1992), whereby the Other retains the agency of construction and objectification of his/her own "cultural difference", and uses it as a source of symbolic empowerment. The recipient, on the other hand, through the personal knowledge of the benefactor can go beyond "a little taste of something more exotic" (May 1996) in experiencing the Other.

Finally, items which are not necessarily exchanged but nonetheless objectify the merging of different networks are photos and videos taken during visits to Poland or Finland. They also long-lastingly commemorate the encounters and embody the negotiation of hierarchies. My interlocutors would show me the photos and tacitly suggest that one cannot deny the objectified reality the photos represent: photos are tangible proof that Finns enjoyed themselves in Poland. To exemplify, Hanna showed me with pleasure a professionally-made photo album of Hanna's choir's trip to Poland. Hanna received the photo album from one of her choristers as a thank-you gift for organizing the trip. On one of the most transnationally-meaningful photos in the album, the choir performed a serenade under Hanna's mother's balcony. Hanna is proud of the album, treating it as the simultaneous evidence of her social significance in Finland and the Finns' appreciation of Poland and Hanna's Polish ties, and therefore of Hanna herself – a sign of the positive merging of her "private homeland" in Finland with her "private" and "ideological" homeland in Poland.

Concluding remarks

Ties to Poland are a vital part of the transnational lives of my interlocutors. However, as this chapter suggests, they do not exist in isolation from the process of emplacement in Finland. Likewise, the latter does not exist in isolation from ties to Poland. Transnational family members in Finland gradually appropriate and rebuild the physical world around them, take upon new mundane habits, establish affective attachments and

new social networks, which take them back to Poland. The transnational family gives an opportunity for the exchange (and construction) of cultural knowledge and material objects, and building affiliations across ethnic boundaries. Finns themselves become mobile subjects, visiting Poland and establishing new intimate ties. Thus for transnational family members visits to Poland also mean getting closer to Finland and radically shift the spatial and cultural stage of encounters. During the visits, the Poles become temporary “hosts” for the Finns.

Following from that, emplacement in Finland also takes place, paradoxically, through visits to Poland, while Finland itself changes under the transnational influence. It is difficult to talk about the unidirectionality of transnational movement and relationships as exclusively towards Poland or Finland: the either/or. What emerges is a multi-anchored transnational space where the division between “there” and “here” is blurred. The “Polish” (versus “Finnish”) social and material culture, as a constitutive aspect of this transnational space, is depicted in essentializing and homogenizing tones by my interlocutors, both for the purpose of identity politics and because these are the constructions people know best. At the same time, its boundaries become blurred in everyday life. Transnational space thus emerges as a process of continuous blending and merging – performing boundaries and taking them down.

Nevertheless, the above is not a smooth or equal process. The intimate hierarchy of Polish-Finnish relationships is negotiated in the context of transnational encounters. My interlocutors, through bringing Finns to Poland, introducing them to their Polish *close ones*, providing with various gifts and constructing a particular Polish culture narrative pursue an empowering strategy of shifting the symbolic hierarchies rooted in Cold-War East-West divisions. Success is usually limited as, firstly, Finns seems to have their own, less prestigious, counter narrative about Poland, embracing Poland only partially, and secondly, continuous economic differences tramp upon the possibilities of hierarchy reversal. It is here, among others, that past history makes a (hierarchical) difference. The merging of “here” and “there” is always performed within and affected by particular moments in the history of power inequalities, interpersonally and at the national level.

Chapter 10 Transnational second generation

Until now, I have mainly discussed the transnational practices of the first generation of Polish transnational family members, that is persons who came to Finland as adults and their adult family members in Poland. In this chapter, I would like to shift the focus to children of Polish parentage who were born or grew up in Finland. I ask how they, as the transnational second generation, engage in building their transnational families and how transnationalism affects their sense of belonging and identification.

The shift in generational focus allows the addressing of issues of the future and the endurance of transnational families. Since people who come to Finland as adults grew up in Poland, their transnationalism may appear as an expected continuation with the past. People who grow up in Finland, on the other hand, have the opportunity to get to know Poland and their family members by living there practically only through transnational means. By virtue of growing up in Finland, they have little or no memories of their pre-Finland Polish past which they could draw upon in their transnational life. Thus, their transnationalism is more doubtful and if absent, may let us to speculate that the transnational family is a short-lived phenomenon limited to the first generation. In this view, I concur with a number of transnational scholars (see Levitt and Waters 2006, among others) that for the theory of transnationalism to develop it is important to investigate how transnationalism is reproduced down the generational line and what its content and intensity is.

I address the lives of second-generation persons from various family configurations. During my fieldwork, I met children from Polish and mixed Polish-Finnish marriages and children with biological Polish fathers brought up by Finnish fathers. These mixed family life situations do not fit easily into Rumbaut's (2006) division between the "1.5" generation – children who migrated under the age of eighteen, the "2.0" generation – children born to two foreign-born parents, and the "2.5" generation – children born to one foreign-born and one native parent. Since I have found children's parents' backgrounds to be "ethnically" and "genealogically" (in terms of ties to their children) diverse and having a heterogeneous impact on children's transnational engagement (children of "mixed" parents sometimes being more active transnationally than children of two Polish parents), I use the term "second generation" in reference to children from all the aforementioned parental configurations.

Against Rumbaut's definition, I also use the term "second generation" in reference to the transnational engagement; not the order of migration. The literature often refers to second-generation persons as "second-generation (im)migrants". If from a transnational anthropological perspective the term "immigrant" is misconstrued, the more it seems improper regarding children's lives, for whom the primary country of origin is usually where they grew up, not where their parents grew up. Second generation in my study is therefore "transnational" rather "immigrant" second generation and potentially may share its second-generation status with its peers from Poland, sharing with them the historical conditions of living and transnational family membership. In this conceptualization, I incline towards the Mannheimian vision of generation. Mannheim (1972) discussed "generation" as a group of contemporaries who share the same historical and social location. His definition was nationally-bounded, but useful in pointing to the importance of shared historical circumstances in forming the generation, which, I would argue, can also be applicable transnationally. Simultaneously, I see the role of more conventional intergenerational family dynamics in shaping the second generation's transnational experiences. I use the term second generation and children interchangeably, children denoting their generational position vis-à-vis their first-generation parents, not the age.

The chapter includes material from my interviews and participant observations among the second generation and is complemented by observations made by their parents and other family members residing in Poland and Finland. I usually interviewed children after I had met and talked to their parents. Two interviews were held in English. One of them took place in Poland. The chapter also includes my reflections on persons whom I met but did not interview formally. The youngest second-generation person I talked to was 16, the oldest 27 (I give the age of quoted children in brackets). Due to the young age of my interlocutors, this chapter relates to the period from the late 1980s to the present. In this respect, this chapter is the most rooted in the present.

I start the chapter with the stories of growing up in households with transnational ties and the significance of parents' attitudes on their children's transnationalism. I point to language and religion as distinct resources transferred along transnational family ties. Subsequently, I talk about the importance of grandchildren-grandparent relations and the sense of transnational togetherness and family belonging encompassing numerous family members. I point to the importance of horizontal kinship ties for the persistence of transnationalism. Finally, I discuss the reproduction of children's social status across borders and their national identifications and belonging reaching above family ties. I conclude with the prospects for their transnationalism in the future.

Parental strategies and children's sociocultural transnationalism

I met Ursula (25) in Krakow, Poland, while she was doing her master's degree. Even though Krakow is the hometown of Ursula's father, who moved to Finland in the 1970s to marry Ursula's Finnish mother, Ursula does not feel comfortable either in Poland, nor with the Polish language. As we met in a café, she talked to our waiter in Polish and finished our conversation with a Polish "*dziękuję*" (thank you), but preferred to talk about her life in English. She spontaneously compared herself to a female friend of hers who like Ursula is "half-and-half" [having a Polish and a Finnish parent] and studies in Krakow. The friend – contrary to Ursula – feels at home in Poland. As Ursula said, they have different feelings despite "apparently having the same genetic make-up". Ursula argued that the reason for difference was her friend's Polish mother who taught her Polish and regularly brought her for visits to Poland. Ursula's Polish father, on the other hand, never encouraged Ursula to get to know Poland or study Polish – Ursula started to do it only on her own when she reached adulthood, to the great surprise of her father (as he personally told me).

From the viewpoint of Ursula, all children with at least one Polish parent have the potential to become active transnational agents, given their genealogical "link" to Polish nation via Polish kinship. What she indicated, though, is that parents have a pivotal role in translating their children's genetic potential into actual transnational ties. The lack of a large Polish community in Finland, which at the very minimum would enable children to spontaneously practice Polish language, heightens the importance of parents for the second-generation's transnationalism. Many Polish parents I met in Finland encourage or even enforce the active transnationalism of their children. There are also some parents, Ursula's father included, who let their children find their own way to Poland. My fieldwork indicates that at least three factors are important for the parental strategies of upbringing: emotional closeness and vibrancy of parents' transnational family ties, support for transnational upbringing from Finnish public institutions and Finnish spouses (in the mixed Polish-Finnish marriages), and parents' attitudes towards what they consider as the Polish vs. Finnish way of upbringing, entailing a different valorisation of religion and control over children's lives.

My study corroborates a common finding that tight transnational family ties are the most natural and historically least changing factors encouraging children's transnationalism (e.g. Olwig 2007). When parents actively stay in touch with their family members in Poland, travel to Poland and invite their family members to Finland, children grow up immersed in the transnational family environment, gradually absorbing the language, traditions, and national and family history. Visits to Poland are crucial in developing the sense of "feeling" Poland (to use parents' expression) and claiming it as one's home. They also allow children to forge positive memories related to Poland and Polish family members, which can help children to sustain the transnational sense of belonging even when their active transnationalism diminishes.

Memories of people, voices, tastes and smells can be used to maintain intangible transnational links.

Until their adolescence, children usually accompany their parents on journeys to Poland. When parents are not able to come, some children are sent to Poland on their own. The travel alone is one of the experiences – and a skill – which is fairly unique to children of that age in Finland. It is a rite of passage marking children's emergence as independent transnational actors at a very early stage in life. On the parents' part, it shows their conscious commitment to transnational upbringing and keeping transnational family ties alive. As the following quotes indicate, the parents' transnational desires often become the children's own:

Klaudia (27)⁹¹: I remember when my parents were putting me on the plane so I would fly by myself to Poland. I was around ten years old. I had to have a piece of paper attached with the information who I was, whom my parents were and our contact data. They sent me like a package to Poland. I used to go to my grandma for three weeks in summer.

Anna: Did you want you to go or rather did your parents pressure you to go?

Klaudia: I think both. Both. They wanted but I also wanted to go to Poland myself. I was longing to go. [...]

Anna: Why do you think parents wanted you to go?

Klaudia: Surely to maintain the Polish language and family contacts. Because our whole family is in Poland.

Drawing on my interactions with parents and children, I would consider Polish language skills as a vital tool for socializing children into transnational life. Speaking Polish helps children to develop intimate transnational relationships, feel comfortable in Poland and access other dimensions of Polish national culture. “[Polish] language is a central key, which reveals [Polonia's] regional origins, social background and education. It is an archive of culture, a tool and transmitter of values, as well as a repository of information about the values”, Chodubski (1998, 15) argues. The family in Poland serves as the motivation for and the instrumental tool in linguistic development. “I can't imagine my children being unable to talk with my family in Polish”, I was told by Teresa, a woman who “taught” her children to “love Poland”.

The mastering of the Polish language usually starts at home. Parents who decide to teach their children Polish do it against the dominance of Finnish in kindergartens, schools and in the playground and the limited availability of Polish language courses, especially for persons living outside major Finnish cities. Teaching Polish demands discipline and a time sacrifice from both parents and children. For instance, when I visited Iwona, her ten-year-old son had just returned from school. We had a late lunch together and at 6 o'clock Iwona took him by car to a nearby city for two hours of Polish lessons. She acknowledged that while her son is studying Polish,

⁹¹ The interview was conducted over Skype, when Klaudia was on a lengthy business trip in Poland.

his Finnish friends are probably enjoying free time. As in Iwona's case, teaching Polish is habitually also a woman's domain, whether in mixed or exclusively Polish families. Steering children towards Poland is the fulfilment of the "Polish Mother" (*Matka Polka*) ideal, an ideal rooted in Poland's 18th-19th-century history of partition, when women were considered responsible for keeping Polish national culture alive in the absence of institutionalized state support. At that period, the Polish language as the key Polish cultural repository was also reinforced.

The parallels of Polish women's situation during the partition with their situation as mothers bringing up children in a foreign environment abroad are salient. Although from the feminist perspective fulfilling the *Matka Polka* ideal means the reproduction of the patriarchal division of labour, the mothers I met see it as tangible proof of their ability to resist the hegemony of Finnish culture and the assimilation pressure. It is considered a source of pride and empowerment, rather than a symbol of women's subjugation to men. Polish course books lay on the kitchen table in a few houses I visited. My female interlocutors always pointed to them with a sense of satisfaction, as a tribute to their own determination, patriotism and resistance to assimilation.⁹² Interrelated with this is a (sometimes very harsh) criticism towards parents who only speak Finnish to their children. Only speaking in Finnish is seen as synonymous with subservient behaviour and the forsaking of Polish one's roots. To quote Aleksandra, and her fourteen-year-old son who sat next to us:

Aleksandra: The children of my Polish friend [living in the United States] do not speak Polish. They always talk to her in English. I think it's because she has never made an effort to teach them Polish. When I listen to my children who speak Polish to each other, when I read messages from my son in Polish, I'm proud, but I know that it is the effect of my hard work. It was hard work. In my opinion, the mother's role in maintaining the language abroad is really difficult. My friends [from Poland] say: "But you speak Polish at home, it shouldn't be a problem for them to speak Polish". But I tell them that speaking, writing and reading are different things. Our everyday language is not enough. That is why it's crucial to read books and to write. I go through the Polish school curriculum for the Polish language [subject] at home with my son. Now we're doing the fourth grade. We read all the books the fourth graders are obliged to read.

Anna: Tough life [comment directed towards Aleksandra's son].

Aleksandra: Yes. But thanks to that he speaks better than his cousin who lives in Poland and attends the Polish school. What did you tell me she said last time? How did it go?

Karol (14): When she was washing something, she said "To foam the foam".

Aleksandra: "To foam the foam", isn't it nonsense (*masło maślane*)?

⁹² In this context, the intersection of ethnic and gender produces women's contradictory position in the Finnish social hierarchy, Polish women considering themselves in the equally inferior position as Polish men.

The parents who do not talk Polish with their children in at home or at least do not undertake the effort akin to the above, told me that they wanted to ensure children with better prospects for integration and school achievements. They are afraid that the stress on Polish would hold their children back in the ethnic and educational hierarchy. Until the 1990s, the reluctance to teach children Polish was also generated by various “experts” advising parents to speak only Finnish at home for the sake of the children’s development. My interlocutors’ recollections⁹³ indicate that in the face of lack of official policies and information campaigns regarding multilingualism, Finnish institutional representatives were guided by their personal convictions on the appropriateness of a monolingual upbringing. To quote Bogdan, with whose daughter, Satu, I spoke English:

When my oldest daughter was born, initially I tried to talk to her in Polish. But when we went to the local health centre for a check-up, the nurse told us that it would be better not to talk to our daughter in two languages so that she wouldn’t get confused. But that was misguided advice coming from the health professional’s lack of knowledge and limited experience with foreigners. Now I know that, that is I read and met people whose children are five or six years old and speak both maternal and paternal language perfectly. Whereas I, due to misinformation, didn’t teach my daughters Polish. When I started later on, they laughed, so in the end I preferred to stick to Finnish.

The influx of foreigners as well as the internalization and globalization of Finnish society in the 2000s has prompted a change regarding official support for immigrants’ children’ bilingualism (Latomaa and Suni 2011, Latomaa and Minna 2010). As Latomaa told me, nowadays it is easier to convince teachers about the idea of bilingualism than when she was giving lectures on bilingualism for kindergarten and primary school teachers in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the changed policy has not undermined the prevailing importance of Finnish as the mainstream language for the “integration of immigrants”. This is visible, among others, in Finnish schools where, according to Latomaa and Suni (2011), despite the official policy stating that “all pupils must be able to maintain and develop their mother tongue in addition to learning Finnish or Swedish”, administrators still have “nationalistic and restrictive” attitudes. The unfavourable conditions for teaching children Polish are also influenced by the low position of Polish in the global hierarchy of languages and its resemblance to Russian; Russians, as I have already mentioned, being one of the most disliked ethnic groups in Finland.

Consequently, I personally observed how some newcomers try to speak to their children at least partially in Finnish (especially in public), even if they themselves have

⁹³ Confirmed by my personal communication with Sirkku Latomaa, a scholar studying issues of immigrants and language in Finland.

poor Finnish language skills and how even those of the parents who are very eager to speak Polish to their children are continuously afraid of their children's inadequate Finnish and their sense of inferiority thereof. In mixed Polish-Finnish marriages, Polish parents also face more intimate language pressure from their Finnish spouses, who either explicitly do not want their Polish spouses to speak Polish at home, or the Polish spouses themselves want to speak Finnish for the sake of their Finnish kin and faster learning. Some Finnish spouses I met studied Polish, and some could even communicate with me at a rudimentary level, but most spouses did not speak Polish or gave up studying Polish quickly⁹⁴. Thereby, parents (Polish and Finnish) may perpetuate the nationalist public hierarchy and tacit exclusion of particular, inferior languages, even if official policies at least in theory open other possibilities.

Nevertheless, the issue of language also reveals the possibility and power residing in transnational family networks. Even if parents decide not to speak Polish at home, contacts with the family in Poland are able to supersede the effect of monolingualism. A perfect example is Iza, whose mother is Finnish and father Polish. As Iza's father told me, he has decided to speak to his children in Finnish for the sake of theirs and his own adaptation. He wanted to become "Finnish" and understand "Finnish" ways as quickly as possible. He has, however, remained in close contact with his family in Poland. In consequence, Iza (26) told me in fluent Polish: "My Dad and I have never talked in Polish at home. We [Iza and her sister] only learnt Polish thanks to our grandmother, when she came to Finland or when we went to Poland". Iza's example shows that even the seemingly clear-cut and explicit parental commitment to cultural assimilation in Finland does not negate the parents' (and their children's) close ties to Poland in practice. From the parents' perspective, there is no contradiction between a cultural commitment to Finland and a cultural commitment to the family in Poland, and since nobody expects the family in Poland to play by Finnish language rules, the family may freely exercise its cultural influence on the second generation. Therefore, even those Polish parents who may seem to embody the ideals of assimilation, are also more disruptive to the national cultural order than they think they are through their commitment to transnational family membership. This echoes, in a reverse manner, my argument from the previous chapter, whereby even the most "Polish" homes are always infused with Finnish influences.

⁹⁴ I met one of my interlocutors through her Finnish husband whom I chatted to after a Polish language course. I knew about the course from another Finnish husband, who had resigned from the course after one month. However, I met one Finnish wife (and heard of two more) who spoke Polish fairly well. There seems to be a gendered pattern to these differences, but due to lack of space I will not discuss them in length here. Nevertheless, the wives who knew Polish spoke with their children in Finnish.

The potential power of transnational ties in children's linguistic development is also corroborated by negative cases, that is when neither transnational ties nor parents' effort in teaching Polish are present. The children of such parents find themselves in a sort of vicious circle in relation to Poland: their lack of language skills increases estrangement from the family in Poland and Poland itself, whereas the impeded family contact does not allow for the gradual overcoming of the initial sense of alienation and Polish language difficulties. Ursula, whom I mentioned at the beginning, recalled her childhood moments from family visits to Poland as at best annoying:

Staying with friends and family in Poland was pretty much the same thing: at every place that we went to they would talk and I couldn't say anything because I didn't speak Polish at all. It was kind of frustrating because [...] so yeah I usually just sat there next to my mum and waited for everything to be over.

Ursula, who has only recently started to study Polish and intensified the contact with her family in Poland, indicated that she still finds it difficult to overcome the distance that emerged between her and her family when she was a child. "Now that I have family here [in Poland], cause I know that I can depend on them, it's nice, but yeah, I don't, yeah it's not that important. I mean I just I don't really know how to relate to them", Ursula told me. Poor Polish language skills from early childhood thus have long-term implications beyond the practical inability to communicate and affect the ability to relate to one's family in a meaningful manner.

Polish upbringing model vs. "(Finnish) no model at all"

In parental attitudes towards maintaining transnational ties and its consequence for children one more factor must be given attention. No pressure to speak Polish and maintaining ties to Poland as well as pressure to do so should be seen in the wider context of the modes of upbringing parents pursue. The active shaping of ties to Poland is usually intertwined with parental interference into other areas of children's lives, whereas little pressure for transnational participation is related to a more laid-back parental attitude – differences which my interlocutors relate to the differences between the "Polish" and "Finnish" model of upbringing.

Non-incidentally, the aforementioned Aleksandra who laboriously taught her children Polish, opts for more control of her children's lives than takes place, in her and her children's opinion, in Finnish homes. Teresa, another Polish mother, regards the "Finnish upbringing model" as "no model at all", whereas Aleksandra calls her and her husband's approach to children "Polish, that is conservative". In such a model, there is more parental interference and less freedom. Parents influence their children to organize leisure time in a particular way (to study Polish, visit Poland and Church services, among others), to uphold particular values and to behave in a "cultured" way (*być kulturalnym*). One of the children brought up in such a model, Dawid (25), telling

me about his Polish language skills, recalled the overall pressure his parents imposed on him and his brother to do things they did not want to do:

Anna: So how it has happened that you speak Polish so well? Did your parents make you speak Polish?

Dawid: Of course. They made us speak Polish. There was no speaking Finnish at home. Only Polish. They pressured us to study music, go to Church, and stuff like that. Everything that stimulates your brain.

As Dawid mentioned, the Catholic religion is usually one of the central elements of the conservative model. Practicing Catholicism imposes on children further discipline related to studying the Catholic Catechism and attending church services, which sometimes entails driving several dozen kilometres to the nearest Catholic church.

Practicing Catholicism intimately overlaps with and simultaneously reinforces children's transnational involvement.⁹⁵ First of all, the Catholic Church in Finland has strong links to Poland. Many of the Catholic priests in Finland come from Poland and until recently, the archbishop of the Catholic Church in Finland was Polish. The language of children's education in Catholicism at home and in Church is Polish (although my interlocutors also attend masses in Finnish and English, but still often held by the same Polish priest). In their sermons, priests address issues pertaining to events in Poland or involve prayers for Poland, thereby encouraging long-distance nationalism. Until recently, there was also the intimate link between the Catholic religion and Polish nation embodied by Pope John Paul II – himself an “emigrant in the Vatican” – who paid particular attention to the moral issues of Polish emigration and the family, and after his death remained a moral authority for many Poles in and outside of Poland. I spotted his biography at Dawid's place, and heard about him with reverence from other children. Alicja (18) did not manage to see John Paul II, but went to Germany to see the new Pope, Benedict XVI. She said that it was only thanks to her Polish Catholic family ties that she gained such an “opportunity”. If religious at all, children in Finnish families usually follow Lutheran traditions.

Secondly, parents bringing their children up in a Catholic spirit continue the family tradition and are themselves under moral pressure to do so by their religiously devoted family members living in Poland. When the religious rites of passage like children's baptism, first communion or confirmation are carried out in Finland, at least several family members from Poland are usually present. I also documented instances when baptism or first communion was held in Poland. The carrying out of religious rituals in Poland is always prompted by a concern for family members in Poland who are unable to travel to Finland due to financial or age reasons. In religious families, during visits to Poland children attend Catholic masses with other Polish family

⁹⁵ According to Statistics Finland (2011), Roman Catholics constitute less than two per cent of population in Finland.

members. The Catholic religion thus positively intersects with the development of Polish language skills, transnational family and Polish national ties.

Catholicism is the most meaningful to children's transnational engagement when children treat their participation in religious rituals as a manifestation of their own deep-seated religious conviction. If children find the religious rites empty, there is a high probability they will abandon them once they move out of the parental home, likewise forsaking the religion's ability to reinforce transnational practices and Polish heritage. Even within the course of my fieldwork, I observed how some children stopped going to church the moment they moved out of their family home. However, I also met children who are devoted believers, trying to follow Catholic rites and dogmas (such as negative attitudes towards abortion, pre-matrimonial sex and divorce) independently of their parents, despite peer pressure and the dominance of the less strict, Lutheran religion in Finland. Children from mixed Polish-Finnish marriages may be baptized in the Lutheran church and still be culturally Catholic following the heritage of their Polish family. Iza told me:

Being Catholic and Lutheran are two different things. Because my dad is Catholic, my priorities in life are a bit different. For instance, marriage is very important to me. My dad, grandma and all my family in Poland never told me openly that first I should get married and then have children but I knew it. I was just raised that way. Now, as an adult, I came to understand that nobody had to tell me anything explicitly, but it was just obvious to me that first I should get married and only afterwards have children.

Given the gradually declining influence of religion on people's lives in post-communist Poland, I was surprised to what extent some parents, with the support of other Polish family members, have managed to instil in their children Catholic faith and dogmas. Arguably, even parents living in Poland nowadays have difficulties in instilling this type of religious commitment in their children. Therefore, I would argue that religious-based decisions made by the children particularly reflect their consciously pursued religious values and the moral influence of the Polish transnational family. Similarly, as in the case of the Polish language, parents – through explicit and implicit cultural shaping – manage to exercise influence on the second generation despite Finnish cultural countercurrents.

The stories of children whose parents do not abide by the above “conservative” upbringing model and impose far less rules on children's lives are also fairly different. There is no mention of Catholic religion, little of parental intervention in children's affairs and life choices, and little mention of the laborious study of Polish. The aforementioned Bogdan, who did not teach his children Polish, said that in his mode of upbringing he emulated the “Finnish” rather than “Polish” system:

I brought my children up according to the Finnish system. I didn't know such a system from Poland. [...] In Finland children have more freedom. They can make choices on their own. In Poland, parents often impose things, forbid things. [...] I

do not impose anything on my children. I let them make their own choices and whatever they chose I try to help them.

This model also means not intervening in children's ties to Poland.

As a post-factum reflection, though, some parents express regret that at least in terms of ties to Poland they have let their children's lives follow their "own" course. They notice that children of their more conservative Polish friends in Finland have eventually accepted parental interference and embraced its outcomes. Children's dissatisfaction or rebellion towards an exceedingly Polish upbringing has not led to the estrangement from their overly-imposing parents. Dawid told me, "Before I hated my parents for pressuring me to do all that stuff [study Polish, go to Church etc.] Now I am grateful". For the same reasons though, Ursula told me quite the opposite: she stressed she appreciates that her parents had a more laidback attitude towards her upbringing:

Anna: Would you have liked your [past] contact with Poland to have been different?

Ursula: Well, if it would have been different then my dad would have to be more conscious about educating me in Polish culture, and although I do sometimes admire the parents who make a conscious effort to teach their children the language, I really liked the fact that my parents, my father, didn't try to impose anything. That my dad didn't pretend he didn't understand Finnish or didn't try to force me to learn Polish. That he didn't tell me about the great historical victories of the Polish nation. Some parents teach that much more consciously.

Ursula sees a great value in her independent exploration of Polish roots. She does not see her parents' non-interference as a cultural capital irrevocably lost, but as an opportunity for deciding on her own whether she wants to pursue the Polish part of her life or not.

Notwithstanding Ursula's appreciation of her parents' attitude, it would be a mistake to take her claim of their "non-imposing" attitude at face value. Socialization always takes a particular cultural course, which seems the most natural and spontaneous when it is supported by the state institution and follows the "national order of things" (Malkki 1992). For instance, speaking Finnish at home appears to children like Ursula as something obvious, that is "not-imposed", whereas speaking Polish is enforced. This leads to the reproduction of "the myth of the socio-political disinterested language user" and implies the possibility of "unpositioned knowledge" (Kroskrity 2000), rather than acknowledging that any language use is ideological, that is, it overtly or covertly serves the interests of particular groups. Taking communication in a single "national language" as the obvious cultural practice, obscures cultural power hierarchies in the household and naturalizes the relationship between particular cultural practices and the nation-state within which they are enacted. The national order of things invisibly becomes the "natural" order of things.

Grandparents as the core of transnational family

Alicja (18): I was happy to go to Poland because it's boring to stay in Finland all year. Here I only have friends, but my whole family is in Poland. That's the greatest about travelling to Poland – that I can see my family. (...). My family in Finland is like a group of strangers to me. We rarely meet. For instance, I saw my cousin like three years ago, when she still lived in my town. She only recently moved out. She has two children and when she gave birth, she did not even invite us to the baptism. My uncle and I also very rarely meet. It is the same with my grandparents. (...) So here I feel like in a foreign land. I don't have anybody here.

Cultural grounding, belonging and, ideally, the sense of togetherness can be considered as the most appealing features of family membership. For Alicja quoted above, they are also crucial aspects of her transnational ties to Poland. Visits to Poland make sense because her “whole family” is there, which means that basically only there does she feel her family ties to be real and emotionally meaningful. In contrast, the Finnish branch of Alicja's family seems to her as a little more than a group of loosely connected strangers. Simultaneously, an important feature of the “whole family” in Poland is that it is a community extending far beyond the nucleus. Alicja's immediate family in Finland gives her the sense that she has a family, but without other family members, it seems to her like an incomplete family.

Belonging to a wider family network is an important appeal of transnationalism for many of my second-generation interlocutors. The transnational “completing” of the nuclear family starts with the grandparents. It is usually the relationship with grandparents which accompanies children from the earliest days of their transnational lives and which is particularly precious for its affective content and fragility in time.⁹⁶ “Every time I travel to Poland I am aware it may be the last time I see my grandmother”, Alicja told me.

The grandparents' role has a symbolic and practical dimension. Many parents rely on grandparents' help in childcare. Grandparents provide on-hand care when they visit Finland or when their grandchildren come to Poland. Face-to-face meetings give children the opportunity to gain memories and the embodied knowledge of their grandparents, thanks to which their relationship may symbolically continue after grandparents die. As the core of children's vertical kinship line, the grandparents also root children culturally in Poland. They teach them Polish and cook Polish meals. They are the repository of stories about Polish national history and are often able to give intimate accounts of major historical events in which they personally participated. Their wartime experiences mix the blood of kinship with the blood, sweat and tears “poured”

⁹⁶ The role of grandmothers in the transnational family making was recently comprehensively dealt with by Tatiana Tiaynen (2013) in her ethnographic study of Russian “babushkas” living between Finland and Russia.

into creating the Polish nation. Grandparents are also representatives of the Catholic religion and moral conservatism, as well as everyday-life or academic wisdom. Through being buried in Poland after they die, grandparents also constitute an everlasting physical anchor and a reason for transnational visits. One of my second generation interlocutors, Julia (19), told me out of the blue at one of our casual meetings, “I have to go to Poland this summer. I have not been there for three years. I want to visit the grave of my grandfather. He died when I was seven. We were very close”. Until then, I was not aware that she had any feelings for her grandfather, although I knew about her grandmother, who circulated between Poland and Finland and helped bringing her up.

As the above already suggest, gender is a significant organizing feature of transnational intergenerational relations. Grandmothers are generally more actively involved and for a longer period in the lives of the second generation than grandfathers, partially because of the earlier deaths of grandfathers, partially because of the gendered division of care. Grandmothers are expected and particularly desired to participate in on-hand upbringing, whereas grandfathers may maintain limited involvement without disappointing their adult children and grandchildren. This does not mean though that the grandfathers are totally absent, as Julia’s quote suggested.

Grandfathers may themselves desire to carry out care giving responsibilities or be asked by their adult children for help when the grandmothers cannot come to Finland. In the previous chapters, I argued that transnational life has the potential to bring particular family members closer. Sometimes it entails a grandfather’s increased involvement in his grandchildren’s affairs. “My father has never been in a situation that he has come to visit us without my mother. Never. So I am curious how it will work out”, Damian told me when his father was about to come to help with caregiving and household responsibilities when Damian’s younger son was seriously ill. After the visit, I saw the pictures of the grandfather with both grandchildren. “They got along great”, the parents told me and children confirmed. Parents’ and grandparents’ initiatives aside, grandchildren themselves may also look to overcome the gender bias and try to get to know their grandfathers better. Klaudia recalled:

I don’t remember well either my paternal grandmother or my maternal grandfather, because they both died very early. But I am very close to my maternal grandmother. Three years ago, I also became very close to (*zaprzyjaźnilam się*) my grandfather on my dad’s side. I lived at his place when I was in Poland and we became very close. Because during my visits to Poland I usually stayed at my grandma’s place. [...] That time I wanted to stay with my grandfather to get to know him. And it was great. [...] He was very wise. He knew a lot. We always had interesting discussions while drinking tea. We always had morning or evening tea. We talked about very interesting things. He told me about his garden, what he planted there, how he took care of it. He told me about his life philosophy. [...] He had an amazing amount of books. He told me a lot of interesting things. And when he died, I was sad.

As suggested by Klaudia, those grandparents who manage to befriend their grandchildren and bestow knowledge on them not as the superior kin demanding respect, but as close friends with whom one is able to talk about almost everything have the greatest transnational impact. A good relationship with one's grandparents is expected to exceed every day, shallow talk and the convention of meetings reduced to the common consumption of food (as food helps but is unable to create kinship affinity on its own).

From the grandparent's perspective, on the other hand, a good gauge of emotional quality of their relationship with grandchildren in Finland is it to place such a relationship in the context of their relationship with their grandchildren living in Poland. Again, the observation from Chapter Seven holds true as transnational intergenerational closeness not always follows the national order and few grandparents reported being closer to their grandchildren in Finland than with grandchildren from Poland. It is the effect of time spent solely and intensively taking care of them as well the closer relationship some grandparents have with their adult children living in Finland than with their adult children living in Poland. A noteworthy reflection was made by one of the grandmothers, Jadwiga, who I met in Finland when she visited her daughter and grandson for a winter break. Jadwiga is close to all her grandchildren, but a special kind of intimacy underlines her relationship with her grandson living in Finland, which is enabled by a more liberal approach to body and sexuality in Finland. Jadwiga tacitly suggested that cultural differences associated with transnational life work to the advantage of her grandparental relationship, although certainly this is precluded by Jadwiga herself being open to such difference:

Ernest (12) comes to my bed, kisses me and tells me how much he loves me. He changes his underwear in my presence. I tell him: "Ernest you should not do it! You are a man already. You should not do it!" He tells me: "Grandma, but you know that I have a willy".[laughs] [...] My other grandson would not do that. When I take a bath, Ernest always offers to wash my back. I tell him: "Wait I will cover myself". He tells me: "No. There is no need". Whereas Janek would not have even let me into the bathroom. My both grandsons are very different. Ernest is brave, he is not afraid to say anything. [...] He takes after his father. I would tell his father "Heikki, put on some underwear. I can see your balls through your bathrobe". And he would tell me "So what? Everybody knows I have them".

Anna: I think that in Finland people are generally less ashamed [of their bodies], don't you think?

Jadwiga: Yes. Ernest explains to me: "After all I go to a sauna. I go to a sauna with my other grandmother and my grandfather" [...]. On another occasion, three years ago he came to me and started to explain: "The way children are born is that there is sperm, insemination, pregnancy". He went to show me the book: "You see, this is how butterflies do it, how bugs do it, this is how people do it. He has to impregnate her, what else?"

Positive experiences like the above allow grandparents to accept or even embrace the transnational context of their grandparenthood. Certainly, not all grandparental-

grandchildren relationships are successful and sometimes grandparents may have an overtly optimistic view of their transnational position. Paulina, for instance, told me how in spite of the outward signs of good contact, she feels distant from her grandmother. She pointed to the shallowness of their relationship and their inability to go beyond established convention. As she suggested, they perform prescribed social roles instead of becoming intimate friends. Paulina is also frustrated by her grandmother's moral judgments and conservatism regarding female roles, which does not agree with Paulina's feminist worldview. Grandparents may thus appear not only as a revered source of wisdom, but also as an out-dated moral compass. Grandchildren may not accept all the knowledge and affect that grandparents offer their grandchildren unconditionally. As a consequence, it is sometimes good to have grandparents at a convenient transnational distance.

Experiencing family togetherness

Grandparents are important figures in the second generation's transnational lives. Nevertheless, such ties have the immanence of ending due to grandparents' age and furthermore, are short on providing children with a sense of community and truly vibrant family life if not embedded in larger, vertical and horizontal kinship networks. The romanticized idea of "family spirit" entails different aunts, uncles and cousins to be present and interact closely, and children derive a lot of emotional satisfaction from belonging to such a family – a trope mentioned already by Alicja at the beginning of the previous section. Accordingly, grandparents are not the only family members from Poland to whom children are close and who provide children with transnational care. Uncles and aunts are usually there to help and often become children's godparents. At least two of my first-generation female interlocutors who married Finns mentioned brothers as the dominant male figures in their children's life. The brothers stepped up in the place of children's biological fathers and also maintained social parenting after the women moved to Finland. The presence of cousins with whom children can engage in common activities outside of the parental purview during visits to Poland or Finland is very important.

The second generation's sense of togetherness experienced in a large transnational family circle is reinforced by their participation in small and large-scale family celebrations in Poland, including the aforementioned weddings and religious rituals. When children partake in the above events not merely as guests but as conscious key participants, brides, grooms, bridesmaids or godparents, their inclusion in the transnational family becomes particularly powerful. By performing key ritual roles, they constitute central agents around which the transnational family revolves and through whom it is united at a given moment. To come back to Alicja, one of Alicja's disappointments with her Finnish side of the family is that her Finnish cousin failed to invite her to the baptism of her child in Finland. Alicja conceived it as exclusion from

the active involvement in central family events. Arguably, she was considered part of an “extended” family, which was genealogically “extended” too far to matter. In Poland, on the other hand, she has recently become the godmother of her Polish cousin’s child. Her cousin in turn is Alicja’s godmother, who took care of Alicja in Finland when she was little. The godparent bonding and ritual participation in Poland helped Alicja feel an essential part of her Polish family rather than of an extended branch of it, in contrast to the experience from Finland.

A particularly effective social stage for the inclusion of the second generation into transnational family is weddings organized in Poland. Second generation’s weddings in Poland are always a conscious way to create the link between children living in Finland and their large families from Poland and a unique possibility to create the sense of large-scale and festive transnational togetherness. As in the case of Gosia quoted below, the initiators of weddings in Poland are usually transnationally-oriented parents:

We wanted to have a great wedding party. We organized one in Finland [...] and then my parents made us a wonderful gift and organized us a *wesele* [wedding party] in Poland. It was great. I love Polish traditions; it is part of what I miss about Poland. I saw relatives I hadn’t seen for many years. When I visit Poland, I only meet our closest family: grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins. But at our wedding there were many people I hadn’t seen in years. So it was great.

Discernible from the above, celebrating family togetherness is easier if parents have a large circle of siblings, nephews, nieces and cousins in Poland and stay in touch with them actively. Consequently, the transnational family life of the second generation is one of the contexts in which the importance of the conventional blood family comes to the fore. Children make friendships outside of the blood family in Poland less often than their parents make and are less prone to become close with the children of their parents’ friends –non-blood aunts and uncles. Given the importance of blood ties in the transnational life of the second generation, it is difficult for the latter to create alternative transnational family ties if their biological families in Poland are small (when the parents do not have siblings or the siblings are childless) or loose-knit. A good example is Alina’s son. In Poland, Alina has several close friends and a brother, with whom she has a fairly distant relationship. Although Alina’s son knows Alina’s female friends (who are “aunts” to him) and their children well, and spent a lot of time with them during his childhood visits to Poland, his transnational ties became fairly passive when he reached adulthood.

The explanation behind the importance of blood ties for the second generation seems to lie in the higher frequency of their meetings with blood family members than with non-blood ones, as the latter participate less often in transnational family meetings which second-generation people attend (like Christmas), and rarely visit Finland with their own children. Nonetheless, I have also met children who have managed to

emotionally capitalize on their own or their parents' non-biological relationships. Some of the children have non-biologically-related godparents in Poland, who perform their transnational role despite the lack of a blood connection. Several children who moved to Finland in their childhood still have old friends there. Particularly Iza, when talking about her transnational family togetherness, made little difference between her blood and non-blood aunts and uncles, cousins and friends and treated them all jointly as a community to which she belongs.

Second generation “here” and “there”

After the end of summer I met Julia (20) for a beer. She reported that in July, her 18-year-old cousin had come to Finland for a holiday. Julia took a couple of days off work to take care of her, take her to the pub and show her around the city. Julia said her cousin was very cool, but she listens to metal music, which Julia does not like. They went together with Julia's [Finnish] boyfriend to the concert of a Finnish band. (Fieldnotes, September 2008)

I visited Jarek and Natalia. Their nine-year-old daughter, Maja, came to the room with a shop folder. She wanted to make sure they would buy her all the accessories necessary for Hallowe'en. I (almost) sure remarked that here [in Finland] Hallowe'en is such a big thing, while in Poland All Saints Day still holds. Natalia said that no. When they lived in Poland [they moved to Finland nearly two years ago], their children also celebrated Hallowe'en. They would dress up in costume and collect candy. (Fieldnotes, October 2008)

Until now I have talked about second-generation children referring to their place within a family's biological order and their spatial location, as the children of Polish parents living in Finland. I discussed their ties to grandparents and family in Poland in general. In this section, I would like discuss their relationship with their cousins and other peer *close ones* in Poland more specifically. A closer look at peer transnational ties provides an insight into how transnationalism may evolve once the older generation passes away. Addressing this issue poses a conceptual problem, however. One stumbles upon questions as to how the first and second generation residing in Finland actually differ from each other and how they differ from their generation counterparts in Poland. Visible from my fieldnotes, I realized that whereas I, as a “first generation”, have much in common with second-generation Julia and her cousin from Poland, I have little in common with nine-year-old Maja whose life is culturally more similar to her peers' life in Finland or Poland than mine now or back in my childhood in the 1980s. Arguably, Julia herself would also find more in common with me or her cousin than with Maja, even though Julia and Maja both apparently fall under the same category of “second-generation immigrants”, sharing the same order of migration and the biological position in an “immigrant” family.

The question of commonality of experience is also relevant to second-generation children themselves and the type of ties they can forge with their peer family

members across borders. “We want to keep the family bond for our own sake and the sake of our children, so that the contact between them would be also preserved”, older transnational family members in Poland told me. The preservation of such ties is not necessarily easy though, for the expectations the children have towards the relationship with each other are in a sense higher than regarding grandparents or other older family members. Whereby in the contact across generations different historical and personal experiences are presumed or even given a positive value as a source of wisdom, the relationship between children is expected to take its particular value from similar historical location and experiences. Children would like it to be based on the commonality not least of age or gender, but of values, worldviews and personal styles. Drawing on interviews and my observations, I would argue that the changes after 1989 have gained paramount importance.

The closer to the new millennium, the more cultural influences and life conditions children share in Poland and Finland. These include the domination of capitalist consumer society, the ubiquity of information and communication technologies, the European Union as the common polity, and finally, the Anglo-Saxon cultural hegemony. We are all partially “American subjects” as Grewal (2005) indicates, the evocations of which are English as the common language to communicate if children lack Polish vocabulary and the common celebration of the aforementioned Halloween (among many others).

Milieus where young transnational family members can bond together without the supervision of the older generation, that is where they can perform independent kinwork, are also indicative. The places include concerts, parties, pubs and discos. The flourishing of the latter in Poland is a specifically post-1989 phenomenon. Internet, predominantly social networking sites and online games have become a new space for meetings. On Facebook and Nasza-Klasa, second-generation family members can exchange pictures, relive the time spent together, communicate about the present and plan for the future. In all the above spaces, they can easily meet peers who are not members of their transnational families, but who nonetheless share with them various cultural and social traits. This group includes recent Polish newcomers to Finland, me among others.

Given the above, I would argue that the category of second generation is far more fluid and spatially extended than the common understanding of the category of “second-generation immigrants” suggest. In their study of Haitian transnational fields, Fouron and Glick-Schiller (2006) indicate how Haitian youth in the United States and Haitian youth in Haiti are bounded by similar transnational forces which shape their identities, consciousness and ideas for the future. Consequently, Fouron and Glick-Schiller (*ibid.*, 193) propose to redefine the second generation as “transnational second generation”, which would “include the entire generation in both homeland and new land who grow up within transnational social fields linked by familial, economic,

religious, social and political networks". I conceptualize the life of my second-generation interlocutors in similar terms. I see them as belonging to a single, historically grounded "transnational second generation" which encompasses parallel generations of transnational actors in Finland and Poland, linked by the dwelling in the common space of transnational influences of social, cultural and political kind. Not all of the second-generation members conceived in such way are transnational family members. Some of them remain on the fringes of transnational family life as friends and acquaintances; others are socially more distant and have fewer immediate transnational contacts. Nevertheless, their transnationalism can quickly intensify when they become an active part of the transnational intimate fabric through friendship or kinship. In my understanding, transnational second-generation members can also have different ethnic origin (Polish and Finnish, among others). A good example is the English-language-based social contact between Iza, her Finnish fiancé and her Polish cousins and friend, as opposed to the fiancé's alienation from the older generation in Poland. Iza told me:

I know that my fiancé would like to be able to communicate more with my family in Poland but the problem is language. They do not have a common language. My grandmother does not speak English and knows only a few words in Finnish. Antti learns Polish but he cannot really communicate yet. It is easier with my cousin or friends, though, because Antti can speak English with them. It is easier for him to communicate with the youngsters than with the older kin. When, for instance, we are in the cottage with our friends in Poland I do not have to sit next to him and translate all the time because he can talk with them in English.

A common language emerges here as a metaphorical and literal reflection of a shared cultural means to bridge cultural differences between young people of different ethnic backgrounds within transnational family space. The transnational second generation is here clearly demarcated from the older one; the generation that, as other examples of my interlocutors suggest, communicates easier in German or Russian (as the provenance of the World War II and Cold War history) than English.

The similarities notwithstanding, I recognize that transnational second-generation persons are nevertheless anchored differently in a transnational space. Most noticeable are different paths to adulthood. Growing up in Finland entails a quicker road to independence, supported by the Finnish cultural atmosphere and social welfare system, as well as allows for gaining more "multicultural" experiences (as my interlocutors in Finland would say) to both, children of Polish parents and "ordinary" Finnish youth. Finland is also more liberal than Poland in terms of gender roles and tolerance to sexual differences. My female interlocutors would especially stress the Polish female model entailing the imperative of getting married and having children as well as maintaining a "feminine" outlook. The above differences are certainly not unbridgeable and at times may seem marginal, nevertheless they can effectively contribute to the hindering of transnational contact among the second generation. For instance Dawid, describing the distance between him and his cousins in Poland,

pointed to differences in their growing-up histories and relationship to the world at large. Dawid's childhood was marked by difficulties related to growing up as one of the few foreigners in town. "This taught me a lot", he said. Additionally, he has travelled around the world since his teenage years. Thus, he has little to talk about with his cousins. They have conventional topics like "vodka and cars", which are enough for several meetings per year, but are not enough to develop a profound relationship. Nevertheless, Dawid also has close "worldly" friends in Poland with whom he is "on the same wavelength". The same goes for my other second-generation interlocutor, Gosia. Gosia while disliking her Polish female cousins' conservative desires and worldviews, recognizes as well the contradictory trend. "Of course I know that not all women in Poland [of our age] only think about having children and getting married", she said. "They want to get educated and have interesting work". As an example Gosia brought her close friend from Poland, but saying this was arguably also a nod in my direction. In our meetings, I was the on-hand testimony that young women who grew up in Poland may have similar ideas on life to second-generation women who grew up in Finland, even though their paths to adulthood, and to Finland accordingly, might have been very different. As is clear from the above thus transnational second generation implies shared transnational influences, but it does not promise an immediate sense of closeness.

The status benefits of transnationalism

Anna: Was your family home different than your [Finnish] friends' home?

Dawid: Oh yes. We had a totally different culture. Especially since we have been living in Hankasalmi which is a very industrial town. There are few educated people. Working class culture dominates. People live in a forest, they don't travel anywhere. (...) My parents, on the other hand, are second-generation University graduates. They have travelled around the world, studied, you know – they present a completely different model of life. (...) My grandma is also a university graduate. She was a Russian language teacher. She is an intelligent woman. You can talk with her on any subject.

Second-generation persons in Finland, as mentioned in the previous sections, put much weight on their multiple cultural experiences, "living between two cultures", to restate Dawid. It affects their peer relationships in Poland and Finland and their attitude towards the world. Transnational life is, however, not simply a matter of accumulating cultural experiences. It is the accumulation of experiences which very easily leads to a sense of tacit (or very explicit, like in the case of Dawid) superiority. Close friendships and a sense of togetherness aside, transnational family membership also provides the status gratification of a symbolic and material kind.

Firstly, second-generation children can identify with and actively draw on the elite cultural capital embodied by their parents and family members from Poland. The value of such capital especially increases if they positively contrast with the children's

immediate Finnish social environment. Growing up in an atmosphere of high culture and cosmopolitan values, and with the conviction of the superior capital lying in family networks allows the second generation to symbolically elevate themselves. Since the prestigious education and esteemed professional careers of (blood) family members are part of the timeless kinship lineage, children do not have to know their esteemed family members to be inspired by and identify with them (see also Chapter Eight). A good example is Ursula, who recalled her grandmother from Poland and grandmother from Finland (in a sense confirming Poles' perspective on the Finnish social stratification system mentioned in Chapter Eight) in the following way:

Ursula: My grandma passed away when I was only 13 so I didn't really know her. And it's a shame – it seems she was a really interesting woman. She was with us mostly when I was younger so I don't remember her all that well. [...] She just had a very colourful life and she was incredibly ambitious and very, very intelligent. She was a history professor at the university here [in Krakow].

Anna: How about your Finnish grandmother then?

Ursula: Well, I know her much better. She has had a very different life than my Polish grandmother. She briefly went to school and started to work when she was 13 years old. She worked on a farm. [...] She has had a very hard and tough life. She often says that she couldn't have imagined that her life would turn out to be so good. She came from such poverty. She had like twelve siblings or something.

Anna: So your mother and your father are actually from different families?

Ursula: Yes, very different. The Polish side belongs to the intelligentsia, educated several generations back, and my mother was the first one in her [Finnish] family to complete high-school.

Ursula's ties to her grandmother were symbolically enhanced when Ursula started to study at the same Polish university where her Polish grandmother used to teach.

Studying or developing a career in Poland or in close connection to Poland is another benefit of transnationalism. Ursula is one of several second-generation persons I met, and many of whom I heard, who have studied or worked temporarily in Poland. Going to Poland to study or work combines instrumental and emotional reasons. On the one hand, it allows one to acquire professional experience and education useful on the international labour market. Poland is a feasible alternative for second-generation children from Finland due to their language capabilities, social connections or legal status (if children are still Polish citizens). They can try their chances in Poland after failed exams in Finland, inability to find good employment or internship. In this sense, they always have options which persons without transnational ties to Poland do not readily possess.

On the other hand, working or studying in Poland always involves a desire for cultural exploration and trying to live an everyday life in Poland, not just spend holidays there. It allows for deeper social immersion and access to sides of Poland unknown before, including particular professional cultures and bureaucratic institutions. In addition, it always involves getting to know one's family in Poland better and draw on

its help regarding accommodation, work or other practical problems. The Iza quoted above lived with her grandmother throughout her studies in Poland. Klaudia, who as I mentioned in the context of transnational grandparenthood decided to get closer to her grandfather by staying at his place, did that during her summer internship in Poland. After his death, she studied briefly in Poland and lived in his apartment. Later on, her uncle arranged for yet another internship in Poland for her.

It is also worth mentioning here the most prominent case of second generation's transnational study choices. In 2009, the Finnish media reported that a daughter of Polish parents gained the best A-levels results in Finland ever as the first "foreigner". She was also the third person to achieve such high results in Finland's history. Although in the interview with the leading Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (15.05.2009) she did not want to disclose where she would study, in interviews for Polish newspapers she stated she had already been accepted at one of the Polish universities and would study medicine in Poland. *Głos Koszaliński* – a local newspaper from Magda's father's hometown – tacitly interpreted Magda's success as the continuity of the cultural elite, which bestows transnational prestige on Magda's parents and their Polish hometown. The newspaper wrote: "A few days ago the father of Magda, Bogusław Kobierski, a violinist and a conductor, came to Koszalin – his hometown, where he was born and taught in the music school – to perform a concert in front of a local audience. At that point he still did not know how big a success his daughter had achieved". The newspaper stressed with satisfaction that Magda "although living in Finland since early childhood, sees her future in Poland". Therefore, Magda, like her father, despite successful integration to Finland, did not forget about her Polish roots either, and consciously chose Poland over a Western country which has higher economic and cultural status. The underlying message was clear: Poland has something valuable to offer and it is only morally proper but also professionally beneficial to keep transnational ties.

The second generation's educational involvement in Poland is not only a bottom-up initiative. When children go to study in Poland under the Socrates/Erasmus programme, their intimate transnationalism overlaps with and is encouraged by the attempts at the institutional and cultural integration of Europe. In a sense, second-generation persons' intimate ties that span and bridge different European countries are what the Socrates/Erasmus programme aims to achieve "from above", providing young Europeans with the institutional opportunity for European mobility which the second-generation persons often already have as transnational family members.

Finally, second-generation persons by being brought up in a transnational atmosphere gain valuable cosmopolitan capital which helps them in their professional careers in Finland. They are used to travelling, living beyond national borders and have the ability to translate between different languages and cultural habitats. The transnationalization of Finnish and Polish economies and their growing

interconnectedness particularly works to children's advantage. At work, they can utilize what they have learnt by maintaining transnational family ties and profit from their position as a "Polish" insider. For instance, I gained access to some temporary workers through a second-generation person, Julia. She worked for a Finnish company that hired Polish workers, playing the role of an intermediary. Her mother once told me that Julia called her with a quick work-related question, "Mum, how do you say 'hammer' in Polish?" "*Młotek*", "Aha, Thanks". "I told her, 'Now, will you thank me for sending you for holidays to Poland, despite your protests?'" her mother recalled. She was satisfied that her insistence on a transnational upbringing paid off not only in the purely cultural dimension, but also professionally.

Given recent economic developments, business connections represents the type of transnational connections which the children of Polish parents who entered into adulthood before 1989 have very few, at least according to their parents. For instance, Bronislaw told me that the company where his son works has recently started to consider investing in Poland. Bronislaw's forty-year-old son had to ask Bronislaw to serve as an intermediary, because he himself spoke Polish poorly, let alone felt comfortable in Poland. From the career perspective, it is thus increasingly useful to keep transnational intimate ties as the globalizing world helps derive an instrumental value from them.

"Do you feel Polish?"

Ursula: All my friends know that I'm half Polish and so on. But when I came here [to Poland] I realized that I was not sure that there really was a Polish side of me. Lately, I have started to think that I'm a product of my family rather than Finnish or Polish culture. In Finland, I always felt that I'm not 100 per cent Finnish. I always clearly felt that I'm not 100 per cent Finnish, that there is something, a small difference that makes me look at Finnishness slightly from the outside – small enough that I don't feel excluded but [big] enough that I look at the Finnish slightly more objectively than every full Finn.

Given their mobile biographies and mixed cultural and biological ties, national/ethnic "identity" is one of the issues second-generation persons living in Finland seem to be forced to deal with, regardless of whether they want it or not. It is important for their parents who wish their children to have a coherent identity or even think that coherence is indispensable for their mental health. The national identity question is also important for bureaucratic purposes ("What is your nationality?", "What is your mother tongue?" are standard questions in administration forms) and new acquaintances who often curiously ask: "Do you feel Polish or Finnish?" My observations and children's reports indicate that the answer children are expected to give, at least in casual situations, may be that of being a hybrid half-and-half (a common mathematical language of "fifty per cent" of that and "fifty" of the other), but it should be some more or less definable identity category. Their non-standard life notwithstanding, they

should place themselves within the national order of things. Accordingly, my initial research desire not to discuss the issue of national identity as potentially producing too essentializing an analysis failed when I realized how inescapable this question is in children's lives and how it intimately relates to their transnational experience. For it is by looking at their symbolic and objective ties to Poland that children try to give an answer regarding their "identity" to themselves and others.

Physical contact with Poland offers children the opportunity to find out whether they feel at home in Poland and whether they can identify with the places and people there. It also gives them the chance to see how Poles living in Poland perceive them, making them feel more included or excluded from the Polish national community. As Ursula indicated, her trip to Poland with the attempt to activate her dormant Polish roots has made her aware that she does not feel Polish, although everybody knows she is "half Polish". She re-acquainted herself with her family in Poland but she does not feel very close to them. She finds many elements of Polish life alien. Even though communication in English becomes increasingly possible in Poland (as mentioned in the previous section), fluency in Polish is still considered a major index of Polishness itself, whereas Ursula grew up speaking Finnish and has only recently started to speak Polish more fluently.

On the other hand, Ursula does not feel fully Finnish either. As she told me, she started to recognize things she likes and can identify with in Poland. She has also started to develop belonging to Poland at the local level. When we met, she was studying in Krakow. Krakow is her father's hometown, where her paternal family still lives. She said, "I do not feel very much at home [in Poland], but I noticed that when I was in Warsaw for a couple of days I missed Krakow. So I already have some kind of belonging to this city". Thus, her experience of ties to Poland and Finland cannot easily fit into national identity categories, even if we agree that identity is fluid, contextual and ever-changing.

The second-generation children I met may engage in "identity talk", as much as their parents or others may try to fit second-generation persons in a definite national category. But to understand their lives it seems only half-way satisfactory. Julia perhaps expressed it most succinctly. On a few different occasions, I noticed that when a person asked her "Do you feel Polish?" she would tell her interlocutor, "I am Polish, Finnish and something else", or simply "I don't know". Once I heard her giving a short-story answer: "I was born in Poland. I came to Finland with my mother when I was seven years old. My step-father is Finnish. My family lives in Poland".

Vuorela and Rastas (2008) proposed the concept of "transnational subjectivity" to describe the experience of children with foreign roots. Transnational subjectivity, as Vuorela (2009a) writes, is

not a hybrid that is a combination of various cultural influences, or any kind of multiculturalism; rather it refers to a trajectory that combines living in different

places, and makes mobility an historical trajectory of one's own, always connecting to where one is located but simultaneously keeping oneself solidly anchored in one's own story and self.

I find Julia's self-introduction as a fitting corroboration on the validity of this concept in the context of my study. Looking at second-generation persons through their ties to different places and people and the history of mobility which leads to their forging, allows us understand their lives better than a discussion of their national identities alone. Julia and Ursula are not persons without a home in a transnational space, even if they have difficulty describing themselves in succinct national terms. Symbolic and physical travel across national borders and along transnational family lines makes up for their anchor in "one's own story and self", and promises the development of the story with new trajectories of mobility and living in new places.⁹⁷

This interpretation is especially compelling if one is to make sense of children's lives in the long run and understand the different turns their life takes. Ursula, for instance, told me that her father could not understand why she wanted to study in Poland. Knowing her father, I would say he was surprised because he thought Ursula was very "Finnish". Ursula herself has also never told him otherwise. What he failed to understand though, was that claiming to be "Polish" or "Finnish", or none of the above, does not mean that children do not have attachments to certain places or that these places are meaningless in their lives. These places are intimately linked with the family members who reside or resided there, whereas getting to know one's family better offers the promise for the sense of belonging and, in the Euro-American context, for getting to know oneself (Carsten 2004). It is a tie which, if followed, links children to Poland, but does not confine them to it.

With its de-essentializing ambitions, transnational subjectivity also draws the attention to multiple meanings which stand behind claims for Polish identity made by different second-generation persons. For some children it evokes a vast array of affective and actual attachments to Poland, habitually alongside being well-rooted in Finland. For others, Poland is more distant. For instance, Iza who described herself as a "Polish person living in Finland", despite having two Polish parents, speaking fluent Polish, having some family contact with Poland and holding Polish citizenship, does not feel comfortable in Poland. Daria, on the other hand, also a "Polish person living in Finland" and the daughter of Polish parents, has very close family ties to Poland and considers Poland her homeland. Thus, behind the single category of "being Polish" stands an array of possibilities and diversified – even opposing – ties. It suggests that second-generation persons may not fit very well into the categories they use, but they

⁹⁷For the analytical benefits of the concept of transnational subjectivity in comparison to ethnic identity see also Rastas (2013).

use them because in popular (and to a great extent, academic) discourse there are no others available.

The verb “to feel” Polish or Finnish, which my second-generation interlocutors use, is a telling one, for it suggests a degree of choice children have over how they situate themselves within the existing categories. The “Polish” genetic make-up inherited after Polish parent(s) does not make for a biological prison here. Given that European culture gives a lot of weight to biology, biological ties cannot be dismissed. However “whiteness” and, in the case of adopted children, having a Finnish step-father, leaves children a degree of choice about whom they want to claim to be. As Ursula, quoted at the beginning of this section, said, despite having a Polish father she can easily “pass” for a Finn. Other children also suggested (and I personally observed) that for them being “Polish” in Finland is also not so difficult, even if Finns continue to associate Poles with the disliked Russians. Polish origin may be a source of shame during the childhood years, but in adulthood it can become an asset. Historically, it has become also easier to be Polish after 1989, when the material developments in Poland have given second-generation persons new reasons to be proud of their origins. The lack of harsh discrimination in Finland helps children to consider their Polish transnational ties in positive terms. They appear to children as more elective than forced or reactive to racism as documented by studies on the transnationalism of other ethnic groups (starting from the seminal *Nations unbound* by Basch et al., 1994).

To understand the second generation’s national identification or its lack thereof, it is furthermore important to notice that it is shaped in the context of their intensive international travel for work, studies or leisure. Many international journeys end with the children’s return to Finland, but some suggest longer, perhaps permanent stay abroad. They all stimulate the development of belonging to various foreign places and identification with Europe or the world at large. That suggests the ambivalence of the identification with a particular nation-state, but not a spatial detachment. The identification with and anchoring in particular localities is important as a desire to remain socially included and find one’s own place on earth, which in everyday life supersedes nationalist references. An excellent example is provided by the aforementioned Dawid, who when the below conversation took place, had just come back from Los Angeles:

I don’t have as they say the national identity: that you are Polish or Finnish, have your country somewhere (...). For me, Poland is not my homeland, although I do feel Polish. But when I come to Poland I don’t have that feeling that “Oh! I’m finally at home!” I feel that way rather when I come to Finland. That I am finally at home. I grew up and spent most of my life here. I love my hometown in Finland: nature, woods, lakes. Some of my old friends still live there. But under no circumstance do I feel Finnish. (...) I want to go and live in the United States. I liked it there. I practically fell in love with the States. Low prices, low taxes, great people, great weather. [When I was there] I lived on the opposite side of the Kodak Theater, my room overlooked Hollywood Boulevard. I drove through

Beverly Hills. I'm not saying that I would like to go and live there forever, but let's see. [...]

Anna: Do you think you will have contacts with Poland in the future?

Dawid: I hope so. My brother wants to come back, live in Poland. [...] I'd like to make some investments in Poland, establish new contacts, visit Poland. Maybe meet a future wife there.

Ironically, by the end of my fieldwork Dawid has already moved to none of the aforementioned places, but to Copenhagen. His brother had moved from Finland before Dawid, going to Sweden to do his Master's degree. From the perspective of transnational subjectivity, thus, every place where second-generation persons live adds to their open-ended trajectory of mobility and their sense of self. Poland and Finland as spaces which they intimately know and which are inhabited by people they care about (and who care about them), will remain important, but not the exclusive building blocks in their lives.

Concluding remarks

The discussion of the second generation helps us to understand the future of transnational families, their forms, intensity and temporal endurance, but also illuminates the driving forces of transnationalism. This, in turn, brings us back to the significance of transnational family ties, as the transnational family may get a helping hand from formal "from above" institutions in encouraging the second generation's transnationalism, but formal institutions are not able to create the level of intimacy and intensity of transnationalism ensured by transnational family membership.

Therefore, in my study, intensive contact with the family in Poland from early childhood emerges as the best assurance that second-generation persons will continue to live transnationally and consider Poland at least as their partial home. The embodied contact through visits, especially visits to Poland, is of central significance. They are children's transnational rite-of-passage, which allow them to become fairly independent transnational actors and experience their families in the all-encompassing Polish context. Through disembodied communication transnational family relationships of second-generation persons may be continued and reinforced but they will not start as easily (similar observation was made by Haikkola 2011, in her study of "second-generation migrants" in Finland). The initial family contact largely depends on parents, but contacts with other family members, especially with grandparents and cousins are also of major importance. Although none of the children I met had moved to Poland permanently (although a few stayed there temporarily), the three children who I heard had moved were heavily embedded in transnational family ties.

In accordance with the importance of family ties, transnationalism is weakest among second-generation persons whose transnational family involvement is negligible. Nevertheless, they are also linked to Poland at the very least symbolically as, according to the nationalist ideology which fuses biological kinship with national membership,

children with Polish parents are always biologically rooted in the Polish nation and, thus, can claim Poland as their home. In Euro-American culture the belief that a partial answer to who you are lies in the genetic make-up is strong. Therefore, if children decide to look for such an answer, they will look for it in Poland. However, I would not consider the second generation's potential turn towards Poland and Polish family ties as travel journey to the ultimate discovery of one's identity. Rather it should be interpreted as an opening and a constant journey (to borrow from Yngvesson's reflection on transnational adoptees and their search for the birth "roots", 2006), the possibility for an open-ended transnational trajectory linking second-generation persons to different places, which would not confine them to any. The importance of intimate ties indicates that home may be in social spaces, not fixed geographical ones. Second-generation persons will also get an incentive to maintain transnational ties from Polish newcomers to Finland and pan-national European institutions and international companies. The more public discourse will encourage "multicultural capital" and suggest its paramount role in the race for power and privileges in a competitive globalizing world, the easier it will be to overcome nationalist tendencies in children's upbringing, for the transnational family, along with offering emotional benefits, also increasingly offers practical and instrumental ones.

In relation to the above, the transnational tendencies of the world and post-Cold War Europe in particular, suggest a need to dispense with the nationally-bounded notion of second generation in favour of transnational second generation. By analyzing transnational peer relationships, I argue that we should not look at second-generation persons in a historical-generational vacuum, but look at their generational counterparts across transnational space for shared cultural and historical experiences. Only then can we understand what is unique and what is more general about the experience of children from mixed national backgrounds, and undermine the hegemony of a standard migration paradigm. The latter constructs them as "second-generation immigrants"; that is aliens in what they often conceive to be their homeland, or at least one of them.

Conclusion and discussion

I started this thesis with the question of how families enact and negotiate their lives across national borders. I investigated it from the perspective of Polish people living in Finland, their *close ones* in Poland and children of a Polish parent or parents who grew up in Finland, throughout and after the Cold War. Although the particular historical context and spatial-economic-legal conditions of mobility entail that no single template exists for how people make their families across borders, transnational families have a common denominator of separations and coming together in a world imagined as naturally divided into discontinuous national containers, with people and communities primordially linked to particular places (Malkki 1992). The transnational paradigm for the last two decades has attempted to change the theoretical optic of looking at people's social life, but arguably there is still a long way ahead.

Transnationalism, albeit having many followers, also has many sceptics, who consider the concept too vague, confusing and referring to a too-wide range of phenomena, as well as those who find it irrelevant to their research. The Polish academic discourse is populated by the categories of disorganized, incomplete and immigrant families, and transnational studies themselves still have not sufficiently challenged the conventional framework. The categories of immigrant/emigrant and non-migrant family members, host societies, first and second generation migrants, assimilation and integration still pervade the transnational debate. This thesis does not aim to discard the above categories altogether. Rather it argues that they are not necessarily relevant to all experiences, and that their assumptions as well as political and ethical implications must be investigated before they are given theoretical and generalized validity.

Throughout my fieldwork, I tried to explain the aims and ideas of my research to my interlocutors. Yet, although they found the topic of transnational ties relevant, they continuously associated my research with Polonia studies. The association my interlocutors made speaks of the long tradition of studying and talking about diasporic ties in Polish national culture, but it also speaks of the hegemony of particular ideas, which prevents researchers and ordinary Polish people from talking about their lived experience with less nationally-bounded terms. Polonia studies may acknowledge Polish people's mobility and the Polish nation's spatial reach beyond Poland, but they conceptually halt the transnational perspectives and freeze people's primordial origins

in Poland. Since Polonia studies are the domain of Polish scholarship, they can be called a variation on the nationalistic question of how “our” emigrated people become “their” immigrated people, and what we can do to prevent “our” people becoming “theirs” and thus prevent the loss of valuable human capital. Polonia studies can be considered the parallel to immigration studies conducted in the country of destination, which in turn are interested in how “immigrants” are different from “us” and what their future in the process of integrating with “us” will be or how they will contribute to the making of “our” multicultural society. Both of these perspectives involve the empirical recognition of people’s symbolic and actual transnational ties, but conceptually subsume them under a single national framework, often with the focus on the elements of “marked” national culture (Olwig 2003).

The discussion of transnational families in the historically changing Europe pursued in this thesis is part of the trend to re-shift the research focus. It brings attention on how people make their families across borders in particular historical and spatial conditions, releasing us likewise from the debate on the moral and social perils of emigration, immigration and family separations; of the questions of whether it is good or bad to migrate and to live apart. Such questions always run the risk of taking the sedentary life for granted and presupposing the ideal state of life in which everybody would stay put and be morally committed to their “own” country. The aim of the transnational paradigm, on the other hand, is to bring attention to the fact that social life often stretches across borders and to investigate how this happens. Theoretically and methodologically speaking, the point is to go against the “national order of things” (Malkki 1992), simultaneously not forgetting that nation-states still matter.

Transnational families may seem like insignificant players on the global stage of national and pan-national governments, agencies and transnational corporations. I argue, however, that intimate transnational life does not mean inconsequential as ultimately many people move because of those who stay behind and because the maintenance of transnational ties is possible. Consequently, intimate transnationalism shows that even people who appear as leading the most sedentary life may live within the transnational space through dreams, thoughts, values, moral commitments and consumption practices, which have physical repercussions. Furthermore, transnational families also are part of the making of history, not only of dealing with it. Transnational families are a good gauge of the extent to which states manage to contain people within state borders or hold them to their particular nationalistic ideologies, and how much agency and creativity people manage to exert in dealing with economic and political regimes in order to pursue the desired life.

Transnational families working through different historical conditions

Recent studies on family and kinship show that all families demand kinwork, but I would say that all of them entail different kinds of kinwork and different kinds of kinwork are enabled by particular spatial, legal and political economic conditions. My study allows for dissecting what is specific and what is more general to the kinwork performed across the Iron Curtain and in the post-Cold War present, with Poland and Finland constituting particular contexts from which broader generalizations can be made.

Most transnational studies focus on transnational families in the context of global capitalism, which since the 1970s has been driving people to look for their subsistence outside their country of origin. Transnationalism and global capitalism are also argued to be intimately interconnected. From the perspective of the Eastern Bloc, however, such an approach obscures the limited reach of “global” capitalism during the Cold War and the possible links between transnationalism and communist system. I would argue that the limited access of Western anthropologists to communist societies and the Cold War division of social scientific labour are major reasons for the analytical privileging of the link between transnationalism and capitalism. The flourishing of post-communist/post-socialist anthropological studies only changes the situation to an extent, as such studies fortify the new subfield of anthropology of Eastern Europe and Eurasia rather than transnational anthropology. The latter encourages one to think across regions rather than within them.

The possibility of discussing transnational processes enacted during the Cold War from the Polish perspective is related to the particularity of Poland’s Cold War policies. The Polish state, although abiding by the Soviet communist ideology of limited contacts with the West, since the post-Stalinist period followed its own national path to communism. This national path was essentially a “trans-national” path, which, drawing upon a long tradition of Polish mobility, involved selected exit from Poland and the building of a de-territorialized Polish state that attempted to follow and monitor its people wherever they went – a clear sign that de-territorialized states are not a novel phenomenon, and, by no means are limited to the capitalist political order. The political and economic West was a common direction of international Polish mobility and most Polish people created their transnational families stretching back to Poland from the West. Accordingly, it was not the global penetration of capitalism that undermined people’s livelihoods and instigated transnational families across Cold War Poland and the West, but rather the feeling that capitalism was not global enough. Its practical absence rather than the overwhelming presence in Poland was considered a problem, which could be addressed through westbound mobility and the maintenance of transnational ties. In the global capitalist context, transnationalism is often discussed as resistance to the oppressiveness of capitalist structures, which push people out of their country of origin and into discriminatory and inferior positions in the receiving

societies. If one can talk about transnationalism as “resistance” in the Cold War Polish-Western context, it would be “resistance” to the sense of economic and cultural deprivation which communism brought to Poland and the desire for the superior “modernity” represented by the West.

Transnational families’ survival in unfavourable conditions speaks of the power of families to maintain transnational space. Given the high politicization of contact with the West, families engendered intimate as much as economic and political transnationalism. The categories of intimate, economic and political transnationalism were blurred together as transnational families were an important element of the civic space and informal economy in communist Poland. Nevertheless, the transnational families living between Poland and the West not only worked against the Polish state but also exploited its weaknesses and contradictory desires: of keeping people in and out; of creating the image of all-encompassing bureaucracy and control but enacting it haphazardly and through officials with their own personal stakes; of opposing the capitalist system but needing its money, know-how and desiring its material life standard. Finland was only partially the ally in the transnational endeavours of my interlocutors, allowing Poles visa-free entry up to three months, but also helping the Polish state to exert its controlling influence from afar by rarely granting Polish citizens asylum status and opposing support for the anti-communist movement on Finnish territory. Other Western states including the United States, Canada, Austria, Sweden and France, were far more liberal in granting asylum and transnationally supporting the anti-communist opposition.

The intensity of transnational ties across the Iron Curtain may be a surprise to many transnational scholars who seem to take the mantra of the bi-polar Cold War antagonism and isolation between the East and the West at face value.⁹⁸ Certainly the physical transnational interconnectedness was limited and policies of transnational mobility unpredictable, but the transnational relations of my interlocutors and people who “governed” them persistently undermined and perforated the Iron Curtain, gradually depriving it of its iron-like qualities. The Curtain’s final political meltdown came at the end of the 1980s, bringing along a consistently better political atmosphere for transnational families.

⁹⁸ Ulf Hannerz (1996, 18), for instance, argues: “In the last half-century or so, the Second World, that of state socialism for as long as it lasted mostly had “its own globalization”: the media could to some degree slip in from the outside, but mostly not the material goods, and people could seldom get either in or out [...]. It has been the First World industrial and capitalist, that has been most intensely involved, within itself, in all kinds of interconnectedness, and sharing some of it with the Third World on those unequal terms which have made globalization seem in large part synonymous with westernization”.

Within the context of the new political economy regime, the Polish state has started to encourage transnational ties through the opening of borders for Polish citizens and financial capital, and the upgrading of technological infrastructure. The liberalizing moves were necessary if Poland wanted to join the capitalist race and attract foreign investments. Also Finland shifted its political alliances more decisively towards the West. Consequently, it has become easier for my interlocutors to connect across borders, but also tricky in new ways. The post-Cold War period is marked by changed expectations of how transnational families should function and what the responsibilities of particular family members are. Not enough contact in the previous period has sometimes transformed into “too much” contact in the present. The economic inequalities between the countries have started to level off, but have also become difficult to navigate, as the inequalities have not vanished completely although the communist-capitalist divide, which previously made them indisputable, has disappeared. Capitalist democracy in Poland is also accompanied by a new definition of a person, which puts more stress on independence, self-reliance and material expectations than before. The Cold War past has not been forgotten but functions in the new, post-Cold War transnational context as the repository of images and values, and a history of exchange and identifications that affect the inequalities and moods of transnational families.

Hence, the transnational present is based on the continuity with rather than a total break with the past. In addition, it cannot be seen as the unequivocal, teleological development from “worse” to “better”, that is the more capitalist the market and the greater the ability to contact, the more emotionally harmonious and equal transnational families become. I argue that transnational families are a matter of a deliberate and ordered making through the everyday and large-scale rituals of contact and support, flexible enough to adjust to current needs and historical circumstances when necessary. Simultaneously, they constitute power-structuring strategies, producing particular transnational inequalities which may shift historically, but do not completely disappear.

People appropriate and use the new tools of contact to pursue particular goals and desires in a transnational space, many of them seen as the extension of old ones, previously unrealized or unfulfilled: to communicate and visit more, to perform their family membership more actively and ascend to a particular modern class of transnational actors who stay up-to-date with the newest innovations and travel in a manner appropriate for the “developed” and “civilized” world. Having access to telephones, computers and plane travel in Poland not only entails easier negotiation of transnational distance, but also allows those in Poland to negotiate it from a more equal footing. However, even the appropriation of new technologies and political liberalization do not allow transnational family members to meet all their needs. People have increased expectations regarding the frequency of contact and continue to engage

in the emotion work of concealment and abuse. Those who wish to exercise a full transnational control over their family members, still are unable to do it.

Changes have not managed to annihilate geographical distance and national borders either. National borders matter in transnational family making for legal reasons, but also because transnational families actually value national borders as much as they enjoy crossing them; physically, culturally and economically. The simultaneous celebration of the existence and the transgression of national borders is one of the paradoxes of transnational family life in my study. The past and present compared, my interlocutors express the relief of the diminished oppressiveness of national borders. At the same time, they still think of crossing a border as an act of financial, physical and temporal effort and commitment to transnational family making, giving proof of one's creativity and persistence. Border crossing is seen to provide the type of knowledge and sensual and cultural experiences one might have not experienced outside given transnational families and allows for the stretching of family space into a new territory, in Finland, in Poland and on the route in-between. National borders also provide the means of escape and detachment from problems and enable emotion work unique to transnational families. Furthermore, they are considered as making cultural diversity possible. The transnational family members of my study in fact go to great lengths to construct cultural differences within national borders, which they subsequently transgress and strategically use in intimate power plays. Thus even nowadays, in politically and economically integrating and technologically-interconnected Europe, my interlocutors enjoy their family space as the trans-national not post-national space, for boundaries are imagined to provide escape, novelty and a break from the routine. One condition, though, is that they should be easy to cross, offering space for negotiation and flexibility. This way of thinking echoes the words of Zygmunt Bauman who in a recent interview for the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* described the potential existence of a single, global state as a "nightmare". "There would be nowhere to escape", he summed up (interview by Kwaśniewski 2010).

Given the above, my study offers a non-linear historical reading of family transnationalism. To paraphrase Manuel De Landa (2000), the author of the historical-philosophical work *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, a history of family transnationalism "does not follow a straight line" that leads to "progressively more sophisticated stages". Rather "each new layer of accumulated 'stuff'" simply enriches the reservoir of "nonlinear dynamics" and "nonlinear combinations" available for the generation of novel transnational structures and processes. The emotional, material and cultural "stuff" that transnational families accumulate today, will constitute a potential for the transnational families of tomorrow, but these are not going to be inherently more sophisticated and better transnational families, and having some ideas where they might be going, we will not know it with a teleological assurance.

The relativising of moral norms and family borders

Living across national borders compels transnational family members not only to negotiate border crossing and come up with new ways of connecting, but also makes them engage in a constant process of comparison and relativising, both in the sense discussed by Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) as the shifting of family boundaries depending upon given circumstances, and in the sense of negotiating moral norms and responsibilities. The Polish family ideal prioritizes close living and everyday face-to-face contact. If people do not live geographically close, they should at least live within Poland, not disturbing the reproduction of family as the channel for the reproduction of the Polish nation within Poland as the only state that has the natural right to represent it. When a family becomes transnationally split, it defies the established moral order. Thus, Polish nationalist ideology evokes particular emotional imperatives including guilt and *tesknota* (longing) on the part of those who left and the sense of emotional deprivation of those who stayed. Presupposed is the “loss” which may be compensated, but loss is the point of departure.

Dealing with all the above, my interlocutors engage in a discursive disruption of the moral hegemony of the single family model, and point to the diversified experience of families living within national borders and across them and divergent Polish and Finnish moral norms. They suggest that transnational life should be placed in the larger context of different cultural ideals and experiences, and the apparent superior quality of sedentary families should be questioned and investigated as well. They imply that close distance may obscure the necessity to work for the relationship, creating the impression that geographical closeness will fix the emotional closeness for you. My interlocutors learn to navigate family relationships through their own effort rather than take them as a given.

The everyday experience of my interlocutors also calls for the expansion of transnational family definition. I suggest we should think not only beyond nuclear families and transnational family households, but also beyond genealogical (that is in-law and in-blood) or even human family relationship. Recent anthropological theories of kinship aid such categorical flexibility and are useful in explaining why certain family members matter more than others in encouraging people’s transnational engagement. This includes the role of genes and kinning through everyday life.

In the Euro-American context, blood is ideologised as the unbreakable tie between people. Yet, transnational families visibly cannot be sustained by the sole power of primordial ties which no national borders and distance can break apart. Transnational family members have to ascribe relevance and meaning to blood connections with particular people to make them the relevant subjects of their transnational kinning efforts: to make attempts at staying in touch and exchange support with them. For those reasons my interlocutors often marginalize the importance of blood relatives whom they do not particularly like or even know, by

omitting them from their transnational rituals of visits, communication and support exchange, and focusing on the people to whom they are actually close. Through everyday practice, my interlocutors make distinctions between persons whose absence from the transnational family circle they do not consider as a drawback and persons whose presence is appreciated and thus should be continuously nourished. This is also the place where the Polish categories of *bliskich* (*close ones*) and *przyjaciele* (*close friends*) come in as spanning the transnational kinship-friendship divide. In these terms, Polish transnational families are less committed to the moral language of blood than, for instance the Caribbean families widely discussed in the transnational literature.

Simultaneously conventional genealogical relations still matter on various occasions: as a source of status distinction, potential material support or self-knowledge. Drawing on genealogical ties and in the response to current need, genealogical family members may appear on the transnational family scene and then retreat into a state of dormancy. They do not constitute the social core around which the transnational family life revolves, but they strengthen it from the margins.

Blood ties are the most important for the second generation of transnational family members. They are more prone to build transnational families following biology and in following it, they see the promise for identification and belonging, if not now, then in the future. It certainly happens that the second generation's transnational relationships exceed blood family members, but in Euro-American cultural context biological relatedness promises keys to self-knowledge and the eternal primordial connection which social relatedness still does not. Looking for the "identity" completion, the children of Polish parents in Finland will look towards Poland because of what biology promises, although is not necessarily able to deliver: biology promises completion but often opens up more questions. Nevertheless, it does support the second generation's active transnational engagement in the future.

Transnational families as trans-species families

Among the transnational family members for whom the ties of blood count the least (that is, do not count at all) in determining their family membership, are companion animals. Non-human family members seem to be the least studied members of transnational families. It is difficult to estimate to what extent they are just obscured in transnational studies, or to what extent they are not present because they are not part of the transnational lives of many people. In the light of my ethnographic data and new theories of kinship, however, there is no justification for excluding animals from the world of transnational kinship.

Companion animals matter in a transnational space. They are the source of affection and love, but also the object of manipulation and possible neglect. They are part of the moral universe of transnational families, and many people feel they have affective obligations and responsibilities towards their animals, and that their animals

have affective needs. Having an animal makes a difference when it comes to the tangible aspects of transnational life, including transnational travel and providing on-hand care-giving for another family members. In a transnational space animals also matter because political legislations makes them matter. To cross national borders, animals have to have a passport and meet a variety of regulations. Therefore, through the mobility of animals, states still maintain their regulatory power and perform national borders, making them quasi-national personified subjects

Transnational studies allow us to dispense with many types of dichotomies. To call for transnational studies as trans-species studies is not only to call for a more inclusive definition of transnational families. It is also a call to dispense with radical oppositional categorizations between humans and non-humans, and to acknowledge their mutual constitution, also as transnational family members.

The stretching of sociocultural family space

The power of family ties to drive transnational processes in my study is built upon the emotional and material needs the family helps to meet, the sense of belonging the family has to offer and Polish family ideology, which compels one to value family membership at all costs. As I mentioned, nationalist ideology discourages people from leaving Poland, but if separation with the country and family takes place, the nationalist ideology compels to follow the second-best alternative, that is long-distance nationalism. At the intimate level, this includes the reproduction of old cultural patterns in the new places of residence through symbolic and physical ties to Poland, in other words, staying within the Polish national orbit by cherishing the language, Polish “traditions”, maintaining active family ties with Poland and transferring all the above to the next generations. Nevertheless, this thesis shows that the effect is never the clear-cut reproduction of “Poland” in a new environment. Firstly, the everyday life is to a various degree embedded in local, social and material conditions and total isolation of the immediate “Polish” space from the “Finnish” space is impossible. By living in new places and more or less consciously incorporating new elements, transnational families expand their living habitat, rather than help its family members in Finland straightforwardly reproduce the old one. Secondly, transnational families build different narratives of family creation and enactment than local Polish families by the very fact of stretching into different social and cultural spaces and the necessity of crossing national borders to meet. Thirdly, the transnational family’s expansion brings attachment to and memories of new places outside Poland. Within the transnational family context many of these places will be related to the processes of kinning, since by being kinned into the transnational family people are often kinned into particular places (cf. Howell 2006).

There is also an important distinction to be made between links to countries as “ideological homelands” and particular places as “private homelands” (Ossowski 1967), which implies that many transnational actors may be more readily attached to the latter,

than fully committed to the former. For instance, there is a difference between being connected to Krakow as a place of study, leisure and family residence and Poland as the primordial homeland, but from the transnational perspective both of these entail transnational practices and help to build the transnational space of belonging and a particular life trajectory. Finally, along with the sociocultural stretching of family space, new people will enter it temporarily or permanently as new *close ones* or family friends, all with their own stories, cultural backgrounds and ethnic identifications.

Transnationalism, not to fall into the long-distance nationalist framework and reduction to ties with the country of "origin", should thus take into account all the above shifts in narratives, sociocultural borders and attachments to multiple, particular places. Following the transnational paradigm in the above mode, we notice the complication of the well-established dichotomy of countries of origin and destination, of here and there, of the host society member and the immigrant. Transnational processes teach us that people may have many places with which they want to identify as "coming from" and the division between "here" and "there" is sometimes very difficult to establish. Interrelated with that, there is a need to move beyond ethnic homogeneity in studying transnational space. Throughout the thesis, I have been careful not to talk about the transnationalism of my interlocutors as Polish transnationalism, since non-Polish persons have also been its participants. I have not focused on the latter's perspective, but future research should aim to expand research scope to avoid reproducing essentializing images of given transnational space as the domain of a single ethnic group, if that is empirically not the case.

Likewise, we should notice that transnationalism is a phenomenon that goes beyond transnational migration. An increasing number of people around the globe (if not all people) reside in a transnational sphere of influence and share various experiences with "obviously" transnational actors such as transnational family members. As Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2003) indicate, "social formations engendered by transnational migration are not unique", but are only "one indication, among many, that the nation-state container view of society does not capture, adequately or automatically, the complex interconnectedness of contemporary reality". This echoes Avatar Brah's (1996) concept of "diasporic space" as the entanglements of the genealogies of people on the move and those "staying put". In my study, the sharing of common transnational experiences is particularly visible among the younger generation who, despite different relations to transnationalism, can be considered part of the same historical transnational second generation.

From this perspective, there is a fruitful theoretical step to be made that would tie closer the concepts of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. The latter, however, should not be perceived as abstract world membership but as a "vernacular cosmopolitanism" (Werbner 2008) which recognizes people's membership in particular moral and emotional communities and which entails their openness to the world and

acceptance of cultural differences. The cosmopolitan seen as a person speaking from “somewhere”, is in the spirit of transnationalism a trans-local experience anchored in particular places. By looking through the cosmopolitan lenses, we can ask how transnational intimate life mediates meeting with the Other and aids in the negotiation of difference. In what contexts does transnationalism lead to a conscious openness to Other and in what, to a withdrawal from it? How does the transnationalism of different groups affect their cosmopolitan consciousness? Finally in what type of power relations are cosmopolitan encounters in a transnational space embedded? What are their hierarchies and historical antecedents? By linking cosmopolitanism and transnationalism, we can recognize that belonging to a transnational family is not synonymous with being a cosmopolitan, but it opens up new possibilities for becoming one.

Historically situated “national” in transnational

In the age of technological innovations, political integration and cultural convergence of particular geographical space it is tempting to talk about transnational families as families which are made primarily “across distance” (see for instance Wilding 2006, Baldock 2000) and working the distance is their major issue. Nevertheless, approaching transnational families as synonymous with families across distance undermines the conceptual power of the category of transnational.

Transnational studies often do not explicate what the “national” in transnational means, and as Olwig (2003) suggests, they often mistakenly imply the homogenous nation-state category, forgetting that the nation and the state do not always neatly overlap and that nation-states differ from each other. “State boundaries”, as Olwig (*ibid.*) writes, “are a legal fact that must be confronted, but the degree to which people have a national identity, or link that identity to a given state, may vary widely”. The tenuousness of the relationship between the nation and the state is saliently visible with regard to Cold War Poland, whereby the Polish communist state was only partially sovereign due to Soviet dependency and enjoyed little legitimacy from the people it governed; Polish people identifying rather with particular Polish territory than the state by which it was represented (today, the Polish state’s legitimacy among Polish people is much higher).

The differences between the experience of nation-states notwithstanding, what makes the category of “trans-national” continuously valid though, is that it reminds us that we still live in a world which conceives particular nations and by association particular “national cultures” and people with particular “national” backgrounds as belonging to particular states (Malkki 1992). Also “regulatory controls” of states did not disappear “as if by postmodern magic” (Sørensen 1998). States still hold a lot of power in organizing their political, economic and migration system.

Interrelated with the above, transnationalism brings attention to structural forces and ideologies pertaining to specific places and historical interconnection between these places rather than processes emerging at the abstract global level (cf. Ong 1999). I would thus argue that paying attention to the particular meanings and implications of the “transnational” in transnational families is still an indispensable research endeavour, even if the transnational processes that we investigate may at first sight run smoothly and without any state intrusion; be simply enacted across distance in a global space through cheap phone calls, Internet and fast transportation, and the only “problem” transnational family members face is that of longing related to physical absence. States are more often noticed when they are overtly present rather than when they are seemingly absent, but we should not take their invisibility for granted. Neither nations nor states are withering, but are changing, as Ulf Hannerz suggested at the beginning of 1990. There is thus a constant need to investigate how they are changing and what this change means in the context of transnational lives for different people in different parts of the globe. From the within-European perspective, paying attention to the “transnational” in transnational families is also about the explicit acknowledgment of the privilege of particular transnational family formations and the privileged conditions of mobility upon which such families are built. The case of Poland allows us to observe how things have changed in a short amount of time, and seeing that we can notice that certain developments, including technological ones, do not just happen but have particular political and economic contingencies and a particular past, which affects the present. Transnational families living across Poland and Finland have found themselves – within a very short period – in a privileged transnational space, and to take that for granted would be to forget history and the role of nation-states. Therefore, attention paid to national circumstances is also attention paid to history, not simply as a matter of noticing the temporal moment of the research but noticing the interrelationship between the present and the past of transnational space and acknowledging that something happens “now”, not accidentally, but with a particular link to the past.

However, we should think of history not in a deterministic manner in terms of its impact upon people’s transnational lives, but rather how people navigate the historical conditions they face. This includes taking a critical look at the questions of how technological developments “impact” “on many kinds of transnational communities” (to quote Vertovec, 2009, 54, as a reflection of the general trend). This type of language directs our attention towards not how people appropriate and use the historically-changing transnational tools of contact, but how these tools of contact “impact” on what they do, thus suggesting (something the authors may have done unintentionally) that technology is an independent phenomenon abstracted from its social embeddedness and negotiation by people. My ethnography shows the anthropological relevance of this type of approach. Different historical conditions offer different possibilities for transnational kinning, but from the perspective of my interlocutors, it is

a matter of how you deal with those conditions rather than how they control and leave you unable to act. It is a matter of how you deal with history in interaction with your social world and yourself, and by dealing with it, how you make it: where you put your loyalties, identifications and everyday efforts. The transnational family members of my study have waited out through the periods of limited contact when necessary and have picked it up when conditions became more favourable. When they have been unable to act within physical space, they always had the opportunity to relate to their *close ones* through imaginations and dreams, where national borders are easier to cross.

The “post-Cold War” ethnography of transnationalism

The importance of the Cold War past for the present analysis of transnational space is also important intellectually as a way of dismantling the Cold War representations and knowledge of the world in transnational studies. Throughout this thesis, my usage of the term Cold War and post-Cold War have seemed appropriate given Poland is one of the two main countries of my study. Yet, considering that the Cold War was a way of organizing the global world and not only Eastern Europe, all the transnational studies published after the Iron Curtain collapsed can be de facto considered post-Cold War studies. Nevertheless, transnational scholars focusing on the migration from the “Third World” would most likely consider themselves as studying the “post-colonial” world, to which, on the other hand, studies of transnationalism from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union seem not to qualify. As a result, transnational studies are one of the areas in which old Cold War intellectual divisions tend to be reproduced. Therefore, I would argue, in transnational studies there is a need for a “post-Cold War ethnography” in order to re-conceive “a singular world with differentiated histories”, to quote post-colonial/post-socialist scholars Chari and Verdery (2009). Chari and Verdery further suggest, “It is time to liberate the Cold War from the ghetto of Soviet area studies and postcolonial thought from the ghetto of Third World and colonial studies. The liberatory path we propose is to jettison our two posts in favour of a single overarching one: the post-Cold War” (ibid.) In the transnational context, a step in this direction was taken by Huttunen (2009) in her post-colonial/post-socialist analysis of transnational life of Bosnian refugees to Finland.

Traces of the “colonial” past emerging in contemporary post-Cold War transnationalism can be seen among others in the privileged location of Polish transnational family members. The “Second World”, it was assumed, could join the “First World” if only liberated from the burdens of communist ideology (Chari and Verdery 2009). Following this presumption, Poles after the communist collapse became part of the new, post-Cold War “white fortress of Europe”, which since 2004 has been gradually absorbing old “Second World” countries, simultaneously leaving the major part of the world outside. Poles have also left outside their former quasi-colonizing power, Russia, whose political-geographical status in Europe has always been particular.

Consequently, Polish transnational family members can move between Poland and Finland fairly unrestrainedly, visiting each other without a passport. Russians still need a visa to visit Finland. In my study, colonial influences on transnational practices are also reflected in the hierarchical relationship between Poles and Finns as the consequence of the similar ways in which the “Second World” and “Third World” have been imagined by the “First World” (Mulinari et al. 2009). As Wolff (1994) convincingly showed, Eastern Europe has been invented by Western Europe as its inferior “Other”– the Other within European boundaries. Hence, Finns often imagine Poland as a backward and culturally inferior country, while their involvement in transnational practices helps Poles to counter this negative image.

The bringing back of a “singular world with differentiated histories” in transnational studies should also entail an increased exchange of knowledge about differentiated contexts, conditions and local, academic discourses of mobility. Nowadays, Polish transnational studies are developing their framework by the adaptation of concepts devised in the West, although Polish studies also developed interesting tropes in the past, not all manifesting methodological nationalism. Transnationalism is a theoretical paradigm which was developed by scholars residing in the West and writing in English. A common language of analysis is certainly necessary for international comparison and knowledge dissemination, but the *sine qua non* of anthropology is the stress on local understandings of social life and the recognition of their historical genealogy. This may lead to a rethinking of the use of particular categories in transnational studies, including terms such as emigrant, immigrant, non-migrant and host society.

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