

Migration as Hope

Space, Time, and Imagining the Future

by Frances Pine

In this paper, I look at different contexts of economic migration in the Polish highlands in the cities of Łódź and Lublin. I consider what social and economic factors make migration an investment and a belief in a better future and what other factors may lead to rejection of the possibility of migration. The periods I am considering are the years of crisis during the late socialist era, the period of structural adjustment following the end of socialism, and the period following accession to the European Union. I focus on kinship and households and the way in which formal and informal economic activities, networks of care and reciprocity, and the possibilities of migration are negotiated within and among them during these very different economic periods. I argue that migration is both a future-orientated and a backward-looking process and one that involves movement between different temporalities, spaces, and regimes of value.

New inventions or creations are not about replacing the old with the new, but adding to the old, producing new articulations. (Stengers 2003:264)

Introduction: Old and New Pasts, Ruptures, and Utopias

In the past few years we have witnessed an enormous and widespread intensification of levels of anxiety and uncertainty and a sense of precariousness. The threat of economic collapse is seen to be looming over almost all of the major and minor world economies, and both local and global capitalism appear to be caught in a crisis that shows little sign of abating.¹ The particulars and the locations of the crisis change from day to day and week to week, but recovery remains a hope for the future countered by predictions of impending breakdown and chaos. To draw on Guyer's (2007) nuanced perceptions of past, present, and near and far future, we seem to have slipped into a "time that is punctuated rather than enduring: of fateful moments and turning points, the date as event rather than as a position in a sequence or a cycle, dates as qualitatively different rather than quantitatively cumulative" (Guyer 2007: 410). In retrospect, despite the enormous threat of nuclear annihilation that cast a shadow over the cold war years, the postwar Fordist period seems to represent a time of economic calm and certainty.

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But other pasts are also being reviewed and at times reinterpreted. It is relevant, I think, that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist states of Eastern Europe was initially seen, at least in Western Europe and North America, as a triumph of capitalism, free-market economy, and democracy over the tyranny and the inefficiency of a centralized command economy, where surveillance society was dominated by a corrupt and oppressive one-party state. What was overlooked in this triumphalism was that socialism is as much a utopian ideology as a modernist one and one underpinned by a strong element of hope—the state will eventually wither away, leaving an egalitarian order where people are free to be both poets and builders. Or, in the vision of Emma Goldman, and of the striking Polish textile workers in Massachusetts in 1912, socialism should bring both bread and roses.

The Western triumphalism that erupted in 1989 was rather short lived. A series of economic and political crises erupted that were to mark the following decade of global capitalism—giving birth to the current age of uncertainty, which bears little resemblance to the prosperous future that many had anticipated. If capitalism as a source of growth and hope for the future is no longer credible, are there any memories of socialism, utopian or otherwise, that leave us something on which to build?

This article is concerned with the concepts of hope, value,

1. I think it is important to recognize here, however, that the financial collapse of 2008 was a crisis generated by and experienced most strongly in Western Europe and North America. In many other parts of the world, what was considered a sudden crisis in these Western countries was closer to the ongoing, normal condition of life. Nonetheless, the economic collapse that followed 2008 had and continues to have repercussions in terms of employment, work opportunities, economic migration, etc., throughout the entire world economy.

and future in different political and economic contexts, times, and places. I focus particularly on migration, which I argue can be both a symbol and an enactment of hope and of faith in the future and an act of or a reaction to hopelessness, despair, and acute loss in the present.

Hope

Hope is a complex, many-layered notion resting on the capacity for imagination, on a sense of time and of temporal progress, on a desire to believe in a better future or in the possibility that something can change, and to some extent on uncertainty. Hope is also always mirrored or shadowed by its opposite, despair. We hope for a particular future, but we do not know with certainty that it will take place or take place in the way we desire. We fear that the outcome of this uncertainty may be despair or what will happen if hope diminishes and fades away.

Ernest Bloch, in his wonderful work *The Principle of Hope* (1986), evokes a range of images of foreign lands, travel to exotic places, hidden treasures, and day dreams—day dreams are the things that are a bringing into, but not yet an achieved, consciousness. The past contains the lessons we live by—the aspects of life that we want to maintain or to bring back if they have been lost and those that we want to eliminate and reject. The future is imagined through reference to both “good” and “bad” pasts (see also Pine 1998, 2002) and to utopian dreams of what might be.

The postindustrial, post-Fordist era of globalization and fragmentation marks the beginning of a new or much intensified flexibility in the organization and valorization of labor vividly described by Harvey (1992) as the “condition of post-modernity.” More recently, Harvey (2000) has revisited the ideas of hope and utopia. Struck by the lack of expressions or discourses of hope at the beginning of the twenty-first century, he proposes a rethinking of political and economic practices, both spatial and temporal, that could generate new ways of being in the world, confronting both the inequalities inherent in advanced capitalism and globalization on the one hand and the degradation of global ecology on the other. Harvey suggests a radical rereading of Marx; his proposals for a new order, presented as a futurist vision in his final appendix, show us what he imagines a utopian world might look like but does not quite show how we might get there.²

How can we unravel the entangled processes of global flows of capital, labor, technologies and materials, migration, and uneven development in order to facilitate the possibility of a more equitable and less degraded and degrading world? One possible route might entail a revalorization of human labor and production linked to a more responsible approach to consumption and a rebuilding of increasingly fragmented la-

bor and productive processes. Another might involve new systems of care around generations, neighborhoods, and kin or friendship networks in response to the decline of the welfare state.

Another question altogether is whether the economic, political, and military structures of global power are so deeply entrenched that only a major disaster or war could now generate major change. These are hypothetical questions, but they directly address the problems and concerns that people everywhere encounter today, and they try to resolve or at least come to some kind of uneasy terms with their daily lived-in worlds.

One thing I want to consider here is whether, and if so how, people are able to draw on aspects of the past in creating imagined futures. I think this is particularly pertinent in relation to the former socialist countries for reasons I will develop below. Isabelle Stengers (2003:244–272) calls for a new optimism, a focus not on limitations of thoughts and possibilities and what cannot be done but rather on what we might be able to accomplish if we open our minds: “Crushing capitalism or destroying capitalism or whatever is a dream, but as such it is not a very interesting dream, because nobody on earth is able to imagine what we would do if that suddenly happened. We live in a very complicated world; we have to learn and become able to dream other dreams” (Stengers 2003:256). Stengers’s musings remind us that the (social) world is neither magical nor natural; we make it, and we can strive and fight to make it in different ways (see also Gibson-Graham 2006).

Postsocialist Realism

Anthropologists working on and in the postsocialist countries offered strong and convincing critiques of the “transition” model of restructuring and development drawing on ethnographic detail and emphasizing historical perspective. Accounts of closing factories and deindustrialization, the collapse of collective farms and the impoverishment of state farm workers, the loss of social entitlements ranging from jobs and housing to health and child care, the growth of new mafias and sex work and the drug trade, violence against Roma, war, and forced migration dominated the anthropological work of the 1990s situated in the postsocialist region. Threading through much of this research was a theme of loss of opportunity and abandonment of hope for entire populations of workers and citizens who had under socialism lived in a relatively calm, secure, and settled world where the future had been, or had seemed to be, certain. Recurring themes of extreme loss haunt this literature, and it was often difficult for either the people themselves or the anthropologists taking account to see how anything could be redeemed after such extraordinary change.

Some ethnographic accounts, however, focused on generations and change and the hopes, dreams, and fears that people entertained for their children. The most desperate ac-

2. In Harvey’s imagined utopia, as in other recent discussions of hope (e.g., Zournazi 2002), the emphasis on femalecentric or feminist-inspired social forms is striking.

counts were those involving abandonment of children—work from Siberia, for instance (Vitebsky 2002), documented parents voluntarily giving up their children because they had no hope of providing them with a future. Other stories were more optimistic; encountering the loss of their own worlds, parents still imagined a better future for their children (Pilkington 1997; Pine 2002).

Studies at this time also documented the extraordinary growth of national and transnational migration. Much of the research focused on those who had been school children in the late socialist period and had come of age in the 1990s. Here, ethnographic focus had shifted to the next generation, many of whom did not look back with longing and nostalgia to the past but rather forward to a new and different world characterized by mobility and movement across spaces and temporalities very different from those of their parents and grandparents.

In Eastern Europe, after the fall of socialism, borders, nations, states, and localities all were destabilized. After decades of highly controlled movement, people began to make spatial shifts. Some movement and migration took place in the turmoil or aftermath of war, some in the face of unemployment and deindustrialization, and some in direct response to ethnic or racial exclusion or violence; increasing numbers of people were also choosing to go abroad temporarily for work or study.

With European Union (EU) accession, eastern borders hardened, resulting in a growth of illegal border traffic (Follis 2012) while softening border regimes to the west facilitated legal migration. Migrations are often circular, or repeated, and involve long-term comings and goings (Grill 2011). Many of the highly mobile young women and men have little or no personal memory of socialism; what they have is a post-memory received through their parents' and grandparents' accounts.

Periods of Change and Rupture

What I want to suggest here is that looking at ethnographies of both socialism and postsocialism can help us to understand how ideas of value, hope, and future develop and sometimes transform at times of social and political turmoil, economic restructuring, and general fragility. This is particularly clear if we look both at diverse regions—rural and urban, incorporated and marginal or excluded—and at different historical moments. What this multilayered perspective shows is that local cultures of value, of valorization of persons and work, are variable even within what appears from the outside to be one relatively homogeneous political economy. Further, it allows us to see how different concepts of work, of value, and of the place of the individual in a wider social or political collective allow or even generate different imaginings of possibilities and of hopes and desires or conversely of loss and despair in relation to the past, the present, and the future.

Socialism is an interesting backdrop for this discussion be-

cause it had such a strongly utopian imaginary and was based on such a powerful and encompassing futurist ideology (Buck-Morss 2002). But in real time, in the lived world, it was a system characterized by contradiction, providing social and economic certainty and security on the one hand and lurching precariously from one political and economic crisis to the next on the other. The result was often bipolar—a world that people occupied with both commitment (see, e.g., Hann 1980; Humphrey 1983; Swain 1985) and cynicism (see, e.g., Ledeneva 1998; Yurchak 1997) simultaneously.

Further, within the socialist states, there were some workers deeply committed to building the socialist future—for example, miners, steelworkers, and those in other heavy industries (Kideckel 2008)—and some members of the intelligentsia who at least for some years tried to create a new society (Bauman 1988). There were also others, often marginal people such as Roma (Stewart 1997) or Górale (Pine 1999), who actively engaged in imagining and sometimes pursuing alternative strategies outside the strictures of state socialism.

Finally, historical events, policies, and the often harsh hand of the state combined to create an environment into which precariousness could suddenly and unexpectedly be interjected. People who had imagined a socialist future in the late 1940s and who had believed themselves to be building it may well have become deeply disillusioned and alarmed by the mid-1950s. Out of that disillusionment could come counter discourse and movements for change, such as the Prague Spring, or the Solidarity movement. Despite the presence of highly militarized and intrusive states, at particular critical moments ordinary people felt able and morally entitled to challenge those states and felt enough hope to imagine and offer up visions of alternative futures.

Contradictory Socialist Worlds

These different kinds of trajectory are illustrated beautifully in Andrzej Wajda's film *Man of Marble* (*Człowiek z marmuru*). Made in the late 1970s at the height of the economy of shortage that marked the Gierek years in Poland, it tells the story of Agnieszka, a young film student, clad in American denim and chain smoking Marlboros,³ who decides to make her diploma film on Mateusz Birkut, a Stakhanovite hero. Her research takes her back to the end of the war and the time of almost innocent hope when thousands of citizens made their way to Warsaw, the capital city almost totally destroyed by the retreating Germans, to rebuild it. The enthusiasm and the naivety of this generation of workers are all the more striking because we know that in the previous six or seven years they had witnessed the worst possible kinds of violence and destruction. But somehow they maintained a sense of hope and a belief in their ability to build a future.

3. American denim and Marlboro cigarettes were among the most important, if not the two most important, signifiers of status, street chic, and either money or contacts (ideally Western) during the 1970s.

The young Stakhanovite marries a beautiful young gymnast and sets national records for brick making in the construction of the gigantic modernist steel works, Nowa Huta, outside the all too bourgeois city of Krakow. The beautiful young couple gets the dream apartment, the flowers and medals and accolades, and up until this point they retain their innocence and their ability to dream. But then of course it all goes horribly wrong. Birkut has set standards so high that his fellow workers resent him, and sabotage him, causing terrible burns to his hands (the embodiment of the value of his labor), and then the heavy hand of late Stalinism, fueled by envy and dangerous rumors and generating arrests on fabricated charges, descends on everyone, with disastrous results. Birkut is discredited and spends time in prison; Hanka, his champion gymnast wife, moves on to live with a corrupt party official and subdues her painful memories with vodka, and things fall apart. The beautiful couple is in effect erased from history.

However, Agnieszka eventually tracks down the story of the worker hero. Birkut ended up working in the Lenin Shipyards in Gdańsk and was killed in 1970 when government troops fired on protesting workers in the shipyard. His son has meanwhile become a worker in the Lenin Shipyards. The film moves from bleak loss and despair to a final scene of hope manifested in the meeting of the two members of the younger generation, the Stakhanovite's son and the young filmmaker who has, during the course of the film, remembered her own working-class origins.⁴

Man of Marble was released in Poland in the late 1970s. I saw it in the cinema in Nowa Huta itself. We were the only people in the audience, I think, who were not steelworkers or members of steelworker families. The atmosphere was electric, and I understood viscerally for the first time that things could not continue as they were in Gierek's Poland and that something enormous was going to happen very soon. This was a year or so before the occupation of the Lenin Shipyards and the birth of the independent trade union Solidarity.

During this period, I also heard Leszek Kołakowski give a talk at the London School of Economics. He argued that it was not appropriate to speak of socialist ideology, because ideology had to be believed, and at least in Poland, nobody, not even the highest officials of the party, believed it. Yurchak (1997) later took a similar position in his account of the cynicism of everyday life in Russia. I think this argument is slightly problematic, because people were both cynical about the socialist regime and believed that some aspects of the socialist world were good and inherently moral. It was this

4. Birkut's death is actually explicitly revealed in a second film, *Man of Iron*, which tells the story of his son, still working in the Lenin Shipyards and marrying the (very pregnant) Agnieszka under the benign eye of Lech Wałęsa. While *Man of Marble* is a strong political and historical critique of the past and a foreshadowing of political activism in the (then) immediate future, *Man of Iron* is a utopian imagining of the future, from the perspective of the present, of the possibility of a populist hope emerging from decades of loss and despair.

bipolarity that made the system so precarious but also gave it the flexibility to survive as long as it did.

Although most people were highly skeptical about state socialism and about the motives and behavior of political leaders and bureaucrats, many still believed unquestioningly in, and took for granted, the stability and permanence of work and employment, housing, and basic social services. And I would argue that this uneasy coexistence of hope and cynicism continued well into the first decade after socialism and perhaps still continues in many quarters, allowing a response to capitalist markets and free-market ideology that is simultaneously one of resigned pessimism and hopeful optimism. While the former often results in a kind of economic and social paralysis at both the individual and community levels, the latter may allow the development of alternative strategies.

Migration: Pasts and Futures

I now turn to migration, one of the most common alternative strategies in the postsocialist world and beyond since the collapse of the socialist states and the simultaneous acceleration of globalism and fragmented capitalism. I am particularly interested in migration as a strategy that is future orientated and embodies hope in the context of the socialist and postsocialist states, because socialist ideology was so firmly linked to nation building and modernity—to a future to be built through labor in its proper place—in the socialist nation-state. At the same time, both during and particularly after socialism, working abroad appeared to be the best strategy for earning money and accumulating goods in ways that could substantially change the quality of life of the entire household back home. So migration was often developed as a household strategy, sending some household members away in hope of ensuring the future of others. And this in turn often meant, for the migrants, working in conditions and socioeconomic contexts that were not only not highly valued but were in fact undervalued, both in the host country and at home. In a sense, migration takes the moral or social value out of work; labor, rather than being valorized as it takes place, becomes something to be endured in the short-term present for a greater good in the long-term future. The near future “becomes reinhabited by forms of punctuated time,” while the more distant future is a place of hope, dreams, or intimations on some possible utopia (Guyer 2007:210). These are ideas I want to examine now.

Ethnographies of Migration and Change

Particular ethnographic examples allow us to consider in more detail the points I have raised above. I shall look first at some of my own research in Poland, which spans the period from the Gierek years in the late 1970s to the post-EU accession period at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In my consideration of these cases, I want to explore migration as a process that is both future orientated and (nearly always)

backward looking. In other words, by its very nature it involves the migrant in different temporalities of past, present, and future and different spaces of home and elsewhere.

I should make it clear here that I am not making a straightforward comparison between these case studies, and I am not trying to make parallel analyses. The situations I am considering are different in many ways. In my own work, I am looking at three specific areas of Poland, in each case at a distinct time. Each period of research spanned a particular critical period in Polish recent history: the 1980s in the Podhale, marked by the economy of shortage of late socialism, martial law, and Solidarity; the early to mid-1990s in Łódź, framed by massive unemployment and fragmentation in the wake of postsocialist restructuring; and the early 2000s in Lublin, the period just before and following EU accession. Rather than follow any one region through time, I want to consider each in terms of one particular critical moment of fragility and change and the strategies that local people developed in response.

Three Polish Settings

Of the three regions of Poland I am considering here, one—the Podhale—is an area that has been politically and economically marginal and excluded for much of its history. Marked by movement and migration on quite a large scale since at least the seventeenth century, migration from this area reached mammoth proportions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during years of plague and famine and as massive segmentation of farms due to partible inheritance took place. The area continued to be associated with poverty until well into the socialist period, and even then, despite strict state controls over movement, people from this region continued to travel to Chicago as migrant workers (Pine 1999). In both its marginality and the long-established mobility of its population, it is very different historically from the second region, Łódź and its surrounds.

The city of Łódź was the site of early industrialization, particularly in textile production, in the nineteenth century, which made it more a destination of local (rural-urban) migration than a source of extensive out-migration and secured its central and incorporated position in the national political economy. Known as “the city of working women” (*miasto kobiet pracowniczych*), during the socialist period it had a female working population fiercely committed to the socialist state but also fully capable of chastising it when it failed to uphold its part of the moral contract between workers and management. The textile workers of Łódź comprised a highly politicized, extremely militant work force and were active players in the different periods of industrial unrest and social protest that erupted nationally between the 1950s and 1980s.⁵

5. In fact, the textile workers' reputation for militancy extended into the postsocialist period, and it was said that when American companies wanted to open textile factories in Poland in the 1990s, they rejected Łódź as a site because of the workers' politics.

This was an area where people stayed and worked in industry and agriculture rather than moving away (Pine 1998).

The third field site, the city of Lublin and its surrounding areas, situated on the edge of the Kresy, the borderlands between Poland and Ukraine, is different again. An early political and religious center, it was the site of the capital of the short-lived Polish Lithuanian Union in the mid-seventeenth century and still is home to the famous Catholic University (which remained open throughout socialism) and major automobile and helicopter factories as well as extensive lighter industry. Although Solidarity had a strong presence in the area, and in fact in 1980 the strikes in the Świdnik auto factory preceded those in the Lenin Shipyards, the region is better known for being conservative and strongly Catholic, with a long history of ethnic tensions and violence across borders as well as forced movement and resettlements during the Second World War and the early socialist period.⁶ Thus, these three regions have different social, economic, and political histories and quite varied histories of migration.

Case 1: The Effervescence of Migration: Podhale

I did my first fieldwork in Poland in the late 1970s,⁷ in a small Górale village in the Podhale, the foothills of the High Tatras. Gierek, a former miner, then headed the socialist state in a rather flexible way, borrowing large sums of dollars and then, in desperate need of hard currency to service his rapidly growing foreign debt, allowing a softening of border regimes. It became slightly easier for Poles to obtain passports and apply for visitors' visas to the United States or another Western country and travel abroad. Most frequently, from the Podhale at least, they went to America, where local authorities, cognizant of local need for cheap unregistered labor, turned a blind eye to their presence in factories and on construction sites, while the Polish government, when they returned, welcomed their dollar earnings and turned a blind eye to their source. In the late 1970s there was almost no house among the 250 or so in the village without at least one member in Chicago.

This pattern was not new. In fact, it far predated the socialist period, beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when famine, plague, and land fragmentation sent Górale abroad “for bread,” most lucratively to North America. It still continues today, although there is now an increase in shorter migrations, to destinations such as Italy and Greece, and opening of new migratory paths, for instance to the United Kingdom and Ireland. Chicago remains an important destination, but migration now tends to be permanent or until

6. In 1939 Lublin's population was more than half Jewish. During the war the city held the largest death camp, Majdanek, and there is now very little visible trace of the city's Jewish past.

7. My research in the Podhale was funded by the then Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) between 1978 and 1991. The ESRC also funded my research in Łódź (see below).

the age of pension (a pension goes a lot farther in rural Poland than in Chicago).

In terms of this discussion, the Podhale case is interesting because movement and migration characterize economic organization from the seventeenth century, when Górale shepherds migrated from Wlachian regions along the Carpathian Mountains with their herds, until today. So, unlike the other cases I consider here, migration is not a practice emerging from the collapse of the socialist economy or the opening up of new economic markets in Europe. Rather it is one of a bundle of strategies historically elaborated by households and kin groups outside the context or beyond the reach of the state. As I have discussed elsewhere (Pine 2008), villagers derive their senses of identity, belonging, and personal value from their land and their farming and craft labor. Waged labor is consistently undervalued, although since the early socialist period, nearly all villagers have been involved in it for at least part of their working lives, and throughout the socialist period it was actually the main source of regular income for most houses. The valorization of migrant labor, however, is much more complex than that of local waged labor.

The successful migrant brings home earnings far greater than any local income. Because of its potential for generating (relatively) enormous income, migration is highly desired, sought after, and valued. It also exacts a high price, both from the migrant her/himself and from their kindred. Often the work abroad is hard and lacking in prestige. Often the living conditions are bleak and difficult, and often employers are harsh or dishonest. Young female migrants tend to work as au pairs or housekeepers, and when they talk to their families by phone or return to visit, they complain about being lonely and homesick. Looking after other people's children, they miss months and sometimes years of their own children's lives. Similarly, caring for the elderly, ill, or infirm abroad often means that they miss the last years of their own elderly kin in the village. All of these factors generate real pain and emotional hardship. However, migration continues to be central to village life, and to a great extent kinship obligations and household economies revolve around it. It is negotiated within the immediate and extended family who will go abroad and who will stay behind, who will look after the children or the elderly parents, and on what the remittances will be spent. In this sense it is a project of hope and is geared toward the future, toward building a new house, investing in more land or other property, providing dowries for daughters, and generally building the prestige and the future of the house. It is always a risk, of course. Some people are unsuccessful and return empty handed. Occasionally, a migrant breaks contact with house and family and makes a separate new life abroad. Sometimes children whose parents are working abroad run wild, get into trouble, or are not cared for by their kin; sometimes elderly parents become ill, isolated, and neglected. But despite these risks, wage migration remains the most valued strategy in nearly all village houses.

One of the most interesting aspects of economic migration

is that it involves people in very different temporalities and regimes of value simultaneously. As with transnational citizenship more generally, migrants exist in, or sometimes between, two worlds. They work, in the present, in the host economy. There their work is undervalued and underpaid, and they are often the most exploited of workers, at the bottom of all social and economic piles (see Kaneff and Pine 2011). This sparse existence, however, is hidden from the present in the village. As family and village continue in their absence, the migrant occupies a kind of future position or vague point in the future—the point of their return, of receipt of remittances, of future investments, and of reunification of families. In this future position, the poorly paid earnings are transformed into immense social and monetary value in the village. In the migrant's present, she or he often lives in terrible housing, eats badly, buying only the cheapest food, and works two or more jobs. But in the imagined future, back in the village, they have created from this suffering a new affluence for themselves and their dependents.

I would argue that this kind of endemic migration—migration as a way of life, as a major strand in house and kin strategies—that has deep historical roots, is different from what we might think of as crisis migration—migration that takes place as a response to war, economic collapse, or other trauma.

Case 2: Łódź: Working Women Out of Work

In Łódź and its surrounding areas, where I studied the collapse of the largely female textile industry after 1989, it was striking that migration was seen as an act of hopelessness and of abandonment of the future. Textile workers were grounded firmly in their work, and as I have argued elsewhere, it was a major source of their identity and value (Pine 2002). In the early 1990s, in the middle of the most brutal period of economic restructuring, I talked to women about the possibility of moving elsewhere, either within Poland or abroad, to find work after the factories closed in Łódź. Their reaction was uniformly one of horror. Their imagined future lay not in new worlds or opportunities but in restitution of the lost order. They wanted their own work back, they wanted socialism back, and they wanted to be valorized for their skilled labor. They could not imagine leaving their tight networks of kin and friends. By the mid to late 90s, however, some of the women were considering moving within Poland, although no one I spoke to contemplated going abroad. But on the whole, the focus of their imagined futures and their hope was the next generation. As one woman phrased it, at the end of a long, tearful interview in the mid-1990s, "Of course I still have dreams. We have to have dreams, don't we? Or we have nothing. But our dreams are for the children now. We have to keep going (living) for the children" (see also Pilkington 1997; Pine 1998).

In this region, belief in the socialist present had been strong, if critical, and it was hard for people to leave that certainty

behind, even when it became ruptured and uncertain. It is the next generation, the children of whom this woman spoke, who became the migrants. The ethnographic documentary *Our Street* (Nasza ulica) made a few years ago followed the lives of a family living near one of the biggest nineteenth-century textile factories in Łódź. It was a factory that had employed many of the women I interviewed in the 1990s. During that period of restructuring, under the Balcerowicz Plan, there had been major redundancies. The factory had then been sold into German ownership and finally closed down. A decade later, when the film was being made, it was being turned into an enormous shopping arcade called, I suspect without irony, *Manufaktura*. The film follows the members of this particular family while the arcade project is being developed. The flat where they live is down the street from the factory/shopping mall. Living in the flat at the beginning of the film are a widow, who had been a textile worker in the factory, her middle-aged son, who had also worked there, his daughter, who was unemployed and pregnant, and her boyfriend. Over the next 3 years, the old woman is the main support, emotionally and financially, of the whole family. She works as a cleaner. Her son drinks a great deal and from time to time tries to get work as a guard or construction worker on the developing *Manufaktura* site. He is never successful. The daughter has her baby, and her boyfriend becomes involved in petty crime and goes to prison. At the end of the film, the (great)grandmother is raising the baby, the men are unemployed, the younger still in prison, and the granddaughter has migrated to Germany. My impression is that this is not an unusual story for former textile families. The older woman, like so many of her generation to whom I spoke more than a decade previously, never worked in her own field again and felt that she had lost her place and her value. She also felt she had to remain where she was, to hold the family together, which she did. It was the young woman who was able to imagine new beginnings and to make plans for a future that could provide a way out of poverty, unemployment, and petty crime. Unlike Górale migration, however, this seemed to be less of an investment by several generations into the growth of the family/house than a bid for personal, individual freedom, probably at the cost of losing her child. The grandmother, of the generation who felt they had been thrown away and had no future except through the children, continued to hold the present together, but with few prospects in her own future.

Sites of Change: EU Accession, Migration, and New Futures

After EU accession, the situation regarding economic migration changed considerably for new member states. Although only the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Ireland granted citizens of the countries from the first (2004) expansion full rights to work and reside, they had limited rights throughout the entire union. Interestingly, not all migrants welcomed this new legal status. Górale villagers I spoke to at that time who

were working in Italy, for instance, had no intention of becoming “legal” or getting proper papers, as they felt it would allow the state to gain too much information about them, and of course it would subject them to income loss through taxes.

Again, I think this refusal reflects migrants’ simultaneous occupation of two or even three different regimes of value: their local one, where they expect to be visible, known, and recognized and to carry out their financial obligations to kin and community; that of the Polish state, where they have to be visible as citizens in some contexts, such as education or taxation, but may try to limit the financial implications of this involvement, and where they want to be visible and financially supported in others, such as pensions or health care; and that of their migration place, where they exchange their unvalorized present labor for economic value in the future and try very hard to stay invisible in the meantime.

Case 3: Lublin and EU Accession

For other categories of Poles who have perhaps less complicated relations with the state, however, the laws of EU expansion provided a new vision of hope and new possibilities in imagining the future. In the period leading up to and following accession, I conducted research in Lublin and the eastern borderlands on EU membership and new patterns of exclusion. In research sites ranging from NGOs aimed at facilitating participation in EU projects and funding for agriculture and small businesses to unemployment offices and claimant groups to charities for the homeless, we looked at the strategies that people were developing and pursuing in response to the changing political economy.⁸ It was clear from interviews and life stories that in this region, after a long history of migration and displacement, often forced and usually political rather than economic, the socialist period had on the whole been a time of little movement. Most older people to whom we spoke had kin in other parts of Poland or Europe, but on the whole these moves had been made before or during the war years. It was only among the age set from late teens to late twenties that nearly everyone, male and female, employed and unemployed, rural and urban, had close friends or relatives working abroad, mostly in the United Kingdom or Germany, and they intended to go abroad themselves. For nearly all of them, migration represented a temporary interruption in their Lublin lives and a tool to enable them to make better lives for themselves and their families. Some planned to earn as much money as possible, as quickly as possible, and return to Lublin to set up a small business. Some concentrated more on training, hoping to study at university, to learn computer skills, to improve their languages. Most arranged their migration through networks of friends,

8. This research was funded by the Volkswagen Foundation and supported by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. I worked closely with two research assistants, Ania Witeska and Kinga Sekerdej, and the findings are as much their work as mine.

not through kin (which is the normal form of Górale migration). Several young people we interviewed had already been abroad and had made connections to temporary jobs—as waitresses, nannies, construction workers, agriculture laborers, and factory workers. Some had already made several short trips, while others intended to return at intervals. Depending on the kind of work they were doing, some felt visible and valued and not much worse paid than local workers, while others, particularly those working in agriculture, meat packing, or informal care, felt vulnerable, exploited, and underpaid.

Those who felt that they had been or were successful migrants clearly saw themselves as participating equally in two different labor markets, in each for different reasons. At the time, this region of eastern Poland was officially the poorest and most economically “backward” area in the entire EU, and unemployment, by both formal and informal estimation, was very high. So here again, migration became an act of faith and hope in the future, reflecting a belief that by going away and participating in a different economy, it was possible to put on hold present difficulties and, ideally, overcome them on return.

Where this migration is different from the Górale pattern is in relation to kinship obligations and exchanges. It is very common in this area for parents or grandparents to pay for travel or for English lessons or IT training. I was told by several grandparents that in the past they would have helped to pay for a flat, house materials, or a wedding; a plane ticket to the United Kingdom or English language lessons are the contemporary equivalents. The young people were not expected to send back remittances to the senior generations, at least not those in the city.⁹ Nor were the senior generations expected to look after small children in the parents’ absence; this is rather a very modern kind of migration, often repeated, by young people who are attempting to build new and very different lives from those of their parents and grandparents. While they bring back individual presents, they only rarely hand over their earnings either as regular remittances or when returning. Rather, the elder generations are consciously helping them to build these new, different, and often far more individualistic futures. There may well be an expectation of care in old age, of course, but in the present what is emphasized is the hope that the children will be able to build something new. And what is seen as new, and valued, is not the manual labor in industry and agriculture from which many of the senior generation drew their value and sense of identity

9. I suspect that this may be more common in the countryside, although I did not encounter it personally, and it is clearly nothing like as widespread as this practice in the Podhale. What is more common is for one parent, either the father or the mother depending on who has more marketable skills or who has a job in Lublin, to go and leave the other parent working and caring for the house and children. But this is a practice of the elder age group—those in their 30s or 40s. Unlike Górale practice, it is usually a project involving primarily the nuclear family, not more extended kindred.

but nonmaterial labor in IT, language, and other nonmanual skills.

Critical Moments and Migration

These three periods I have been discussing were all times of marked economic and social uncertainty, and each generated adaptive strategies to some extent at least peculiar to the specific time and region. However, an overall pattern emerges in which the work done by the migrant abroad involves being temporarily part of a quite different value regime from the one at home, but it is undertaken in order to maintain the one at home or to improve or change it. So, for instance, young people from the Lubelskie countryside may do agricultural labor in the United Kingdom, filling a gap created by the refusal of British workers to perform agricultural labor for low wages. This allows the Poles to fund leaving agriculture and setting up in a quite different kind of work when they get home. In all of these cases, present hardship is countered by future hopes, and strategies are developed that play on and take advantage of the distances and differences between the home and destination political economies and markets.

I began this paper by talking about socialism as both an often repressive modernist movement and an often failing utopian one, but I argued that in both cases human value and social personhood to a great extent were made through labor. I suggested that the losses experienced with the fall of socialism were most clearly manifested in the dismantling of labor—both labor practices and markets and the physical places where labor could be carried out. Górale, who operated both within the state as wage laborers and outside it as migrants and informal entrepreneurs, saw little difference in their value regimes with the fall of socialism. In the other regions I discussed, generations were thrown away, and new attempts were made to change the future by entering temporarily into other economies.

Olena Fedyuk (2011) has demonstrated brilliantly how much migration is a future-orientated process that in the present extracts enormous personal cost—leaving one’s own old and frail parents in order to look after someone else’s, leaving children and grandchildren in order to care for those of others—that can only be vindicated if it generates profit and reward and growth. In this discourse, the Ukrainian migrant woman is making present sacrifices for the future good.

Fedyuk shows that is often middle-aged women, professional by training but unemployed in Ukraine’s frail economy, who go abroad to find work so that their adult daughters can stay at home and look after their children. The mothers send remittances home, which allow the daughters not to work. However, these same migrant mothers often take their young adult or adolescent sons abroad with them because they believe that if these sons were to stay at home, they would be in danger from violence and alcohol abuse fueled by a climate of endemic unemployment.

So, in a sense, it could be argued that through the work

of their bodies—and care work must be one of the most intimate and embodied forms of paid labor possible—and through the act of migration, these women are attempting to create new “spaces of hope,” through new transnational bodies, for the next generation.

Reflections

Can these ethnographies of loss and change, migration and adaptation, help us to understand how new economic practices may emerge from both the demise of socialism and the ongoing crises in global capitalism? In many ways, it is the kin and friendship networks on which people relied during socialism in order to deal with the economies of shortage that provide a kind of template for entering into the new mobile economic processes around migration. The assumptions that value arises from labor and that frail and dependent people are entitled to care, just as everyone is entitled to work, underpin the new ways that many postsocialist actors articulate with the new economy. However, in the case of migration, it is the absence of the state in provision and regulation of labor, work, and care entitlements that creates both the driving and receiving forces around migration. The British agricultural economy relies increasingly on cheap foreign labor; the Italian family system relies on foreign care workers; the Polish and Ukrainian economies need these foreign markets to fill the gaps in care and provision left by the retraction of the socialist state. In many ways, acts of migration do represent spaces of hope; they also represent new “articulations” of old structures: as care needs at home must be met, as young people migrating abroad do so increasingly as individuals seeking to build new lives, new economic opportunities are sought rather than attempting to save those already lost. It seems that where migration and other economic activity beneath the radar of the state have been long established, as with the Górale, it continues with relative ease. Where, however, there is enormous rupture between the material and moral economy of socialism and the new individualism of global capitalism, the gains and losses are less clearly balanced. The young Polish girl who goes to London on a ticket paid for by her grandmother and returns to start her own business is one model of increased individualism; the middle-aged Ukrainian economist who leaves her own aging parents to care for someone else’s in Italy is rather different. And yet each is coping with the demands and vagaries of the international labor order.

Chantal Mouffe, like Harvey, has commented on the current lack of hope:

The problem today is not so much around the question of class but around a critique of the capitalist system. And I think that is where the analysis has to be done. One of the reasons why I think there is no hope today for future possibility is precisely because people feel there is no alternative to the capitalist system, and even more to the neoliberal form of capitalism which is dominant today. (quoted in Zournazi 2002:135)

Zournazi (2002) suggests a more anthropological perspective, calling for “a hope that does not narrow our visions of the world but instead allows different histories, memories and experiences to enter into present conversations on revolution, freedom and our cultural senses of belonging” (18). I have tried to show the way the problems of capitalism, combined with the failure of state socialism, create conditions of precariousness through which people must then try to navigate their way in daily practice. Ideas about hope, freedom, and the future are not absent from most lives, even those that are highly disrupted, but rather can be seen to be deeply rooted in household, kin, and individual strategies such as those that develop around migration as people move between different economic regimes and registers and different temporalities.

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