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Belonging Beyond Borders: Navigating Global Identities In Poland

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Abstract:

Poland has not traditionally been known as a major destination for immigrants compared to some Western European countries. However, migration patterns can change over time due to various factors such, as economic conditions, political developments, and changes in immigration policies. The globalized nature of contemporary society has led to increased human mobility, with Poland emerging as a destination for individuals from both the Global South and Global North more and more. Due to this reason, applying a mixed-methods approach, this article explores the complex nature of belonging by examining the influence of cultural, social, and institutional elements on the process of identity building and integration. A thorough comparison of research reveals significant differences in the everyday experiences of global citizens. First, cultural adaptation emerges as a critical factor influencing belonging, with individuals from the Global South often facing more unique challenges related to language, cultural practices, and perceived stereotypes. Second, social integration varies with relationships playing a vital role in the sense of belonging.

Keywords:

identity; integration; belonging; globalization; Global North and South; challenges.

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Introduction And Background

Over the past ten years, there has been a consistent increase in the number of people moving to other places as a result of the globalized nature of modern society. Poland, however, has not traditionally been known as a major destination for immigrants compared to some Western European countries. It is often characterized as a relatively ethnically and culturally homogeneous country, where the majority of the population in Poland identifies ethnically as Polish and the country

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has a strong cultural and historical identity. Polish is the official language, and the majority of the population (89% in 2021) identifies with the Roman Catholic faith (Poland: Religious Affiliation 2021 | Statista, 2023).

People in homogeneous nations are generally less likely to welcome foreigners (Bail, 2008). However, what can be observed in CEE (Central and Eastern European countries), is that they have been changing into migrant-receiving countries more and more recently (Górny, 2017) Poland has become a popular destination for people from both the Global South and the Global North. That is because migration patterns can change over time due to various factors, such as economic conditions, political developments, etc. And because of Poland's economic growth in the last two decades, labor market demands have grown remarkably, leading to a higher flow of people to come. For the sake of this particular research, it "is important to note also that the substantial inflow of immigrants to Poland took place in practice without a coherent and (clearly) articulated migration policy." (Duszczyk & Kaczmarczyk, 2022)

There are a couple of scholars focusing on migration research in Poland (Ośrodek Badań Nad Migracjami, n.d.; Kępińska, 2013; Blachnicka-Ciacek et al., 2021; Trąbka, 2022; Kupiszewski, 2002; Górny, 2017) or migrant identity studies (Sobolewska, 2015). However, the number of papers focusing specifically on foreign migrants in Poland is still relatively small. According to the recent analysis of migration trends, Poland is changing from a typical emigration country to an emigration and immigration country, as the number of immigrants in 2020 reached 13.3 thousand (Poland: Net Migration 2022 | Statista, 2023). This has brought some controversy into the social space (Mujagić, 2022), making the people who come to Poland feel isolated and expected to be those 'good migrants', proving worthiness to the host society through acts. (Blachnicka-Ciacek et al., 2021).

Yet, it always happens that „migrants bring their culture with them" while also increasing the diversity of the society they are in (Collier, 2013). „Many mobile people eventually settle down and create particular places" (Duyvendak, 2011). Those individuals do not necessarily need to forsake their own culture; rather, they are given a chance to construct a multifaceted and diverse cultural identity, emerging from the synthesis or fusion of separate cultural influences. Therefore, this research aims to better understand the complex nature of belonging in people coming to Poland from the Global North and South and attempts to bring something new to the general migration research in specific Polish regions. In this specific case – the Opole voivodship.

It will focus on examining the influence of cultural, social, and institutional elements on the process of identity-building and integration of such people.

The hypothesis is about the influence of different cultural, social, and institutional factors on distinct patterns of belonging in Poland between global citizens from the Global North and South. The research aims to unveil the differences in experiences of belonging among global citizens in Poland between individuals from the Global South and the Global North. Additionally, it would discuss what insights these differences provide into the complexities of the contemporary migration experience in Poland.

Literature Review

The study tries to uncover and compare these nuanced experiences, contributing to a comprehensive look at the complexities surrounding belonging in the context of migration to Poland. Thus, let us start with globalization altogether. The most prevalent way to think about global differences and categorize the world today is probably the division between a wealthy, powerful Global North and a poorer, less powerful Global South (Müller, 2018). While it is not entirely true, this narrative becomes most visible in the division of the globalized world.

Following such thinking, it was noticed by Collier that migration policies are not being written by poor countries (2013). However, when creating an analysis of such experiences, there is a rather structural "need to study migration in the Global South, rather than assume Global North patterns will apply to all migration patterns" (Nawyn, 2016). This means that there appears a matter of conducting specific studies in the Global South instead of assuming that the patterns that have been seen in the Global North would be universally applicable. Comparisons of such experiences from global citizens would be an interesting way to see people's perceptions of belonging in Poland.

The acculturation theory and research indicate that acclimating to a new society is important for migrants (Phinney et al., 2001). When coexisting, the indigenous community and foreigners must find a way to get along and treat one another with the same respect that the host community expects of them (Maffesoli, 1996; Collier, 2013; Blachnicka-Ciacek et al., 2021). Talking about those issues, there is also a need to mention social relations/ties. This is especially true when taking into account interpersonal connections of individuals or even connections they have with groups or locations (as would be the case with people who move to another country).

Some may differentiate it as the feeling of being "at home" (Duyvendak, 2011) whereas, some think of it as the feeling of belongingness (Simonsen, 2017). One valuable theory that could help understand it better would be Social Capital

(Putnam, 2000), which observes networks of social relationships, shared norms, and mutual trust that facilitate cooperation within a community or society. Such trust, however, does not arise naturally (Collier, 2013), rather, it is something that is to be gained through socialization. Perceived as a basic given, this creation of social ties (Maffesoli, 1996) can help people self-improve and learn through interactions (Fairclough, 1993). Therefore, when moving to another country, such interactions may differ considerably as, for example, some would bring a/an (un)satisfactory identity-building process (Phinney et al., 2001), some would be used for general economic benefits (Collier, 2013), and some would even mobilize people together to define their worth (Lamont, 2017).

The best way to understand them would be to perceive them as stories (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002). Stories are narratives composed from experiences and are meant to evaluate various degrees of hopes for belonging as well as sentiments of proximity or separation from the majority community (Simonsen, 2017). Since this article unveils the understanding of how people perceive and navigate belonging, it would be best to apply a qualitative path. Its primary benefit is that it offers a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the population that is being studied (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). That is why a thorough comparison of such experiences was gathered and analyzed from people coming to Poland from the Global North and South.

Additionally, to social capital and relations, most resources have stated that social identity theory has become crucial here as well. Introduced by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, this theory explores how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups. Such a framework also shows in what ways these group affiliations impact their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. It can be used here to better understand how global citizens in Poland negotiate their own identities and establish connections with various social groups within their surroundings because migrants and societies, one way or another, inevitably assimilate one to another in order to function more efficiently. (Erdal & Oeppen, 2013)

Because it is a basic given and because people do not live in isolation, they always try to search for some kind of acceptance from the community they are in (Maffesoli, 1996). Similarly, the way people perceive and understand the world around them is always influenced and structured by the inherent features, dynamics, and patterns present in the social environment (Bourdieu, 1991). Therefore, when coming to a new place, those social environments/surroundings would be crucial in defining the identity-building process of foreigners. That is because an individual cannot exist in isolation since he/she is constantly connected to society through culture, communication, leisure, and other activities (Maffesoli,

1996, p. 81). As shown, those features are not necessarily rooted in us inherently, thus, we can assume that it is possible for someone coming from the Global North and South to feel a sense of belonging in other countries too.

"Belongingness", means "identifying with and feeling attachment to a social group" (Simonsen, 2017), where "the lifestyles that are foreign to each other can sketch the outline of a way of living together" (Maffesoli, 1996, p. 100). However, it becomes quite a simple choice once we think about it more. According to Maffesoli, such societal ties are as old as society itself (1996). So, if „an action which affects the relations with the self and others" is understood as the main definition of „interaction" (Fairclough, p.21, 1993), then it should be considered a habit that helps us exist in society as such. This is what we see in social identity theory too (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Yet, as reality shows, it frequently gets more complicated than that. Especially when talking about the integration of migrants because academics find it difficult to come up with a single, accurate definition for the reasons behind migration due to the complexity of such a task, and many layers of an overly complex process cannot be adequately described by a single word (Simonsen, 2017). Therefore, it is all about what people perceive as integration, assimilation, or belongingness. Crucial factors that can help us understand how they see the surroundings are the symbolic boundaries.

As described by Michele Lamont, those boundaries are explained to be about defining ourselves in a certain way while also excluding the "others" (2015). Its central process is in the projection of self and is tightly linked with identities and identity-building processes. The reason for this is linked to people's „judgments", which are based on the „social circumstances" (Fairclough, 1993) that are currently surrounding them. This means that our experiences as well as our upbringing influence how we behave in the future and enable us to shape ourselves in response to the world around us (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002). That is why, even though it would be impossible to completely separate an individual from society (Maffesoli, 1996), there is a way to exclude certain aspects of it by drawing those crucial yet transparent boundaries.

On the other hand, it is claimed that certain nations, for example, have more recognizable symbolic borders than others (Heath & Richards, 2019). People in those nations are less likely to accept foreigners because of their greater homogeneity (Bail, 2008). This is, for example, a case for Poland as, for example in 2015 it "was ranked as one of the last among EU member states in terms of the share of immigrants in the total population." (Duszczyk & Kaczmarczyk, 2022) In defining the appropriate citizen, such boundaries establish a „democratic

code" that, as Lamont claims, „involves clear distinctions between the pure and the impure" (2015). In such cases, the nation's homogeneity, which attempts to create a respectable „community of value", results in the representation of „both non-citizens (such as migrants and refugees) and failed citizens in similar terms as an inside and outside threat" (Blachnicka-Ciacek et al., 2021).

As a result, such people tend to isolate themselves from the outside world. They would „feel less happy than the indigenous host population" (Collier, 2013). What is more, in the mainstream media, the metaphor "MIGRATION IS AN INVASION" is becoming obnoxiously frequent (Mujagić, 2022). Inevitably, it raises issues and difficulties that arise in the affected nations and typically asserts that it does not take any side on the matter. However, what we see in reality are the clickbait terms in media without consideration for the linguistic harm.

This is an important issue because such narratives are „mirrored in migrants', engendering feelings of ‚self-doubt' about one's legitimacy and deservingness" when they are present in the national discourse (Blachnicka-Ciacek et al., 2021). This is the reason why some people that have been interviewed have indicated those terms negatively and wished to omit them. Even though it is often overlooked, the determination of who falls into the category of „undeserving" migrants is a matter of political calculation rather than logic (Blachnicka-Ciacek et al., 2021).

Such symbolic boundaries in countries would differ significantly in various parts of the world. This means that those boundaries „by no means have the same significance and relevance everywhere" (Pastore & Ponzo, 2016). For instance, in Western nations those are based „on race, religion, language, culture, and human capital" (Bail, 2008). Therefore, it puts a lot of pressure on foreigners' emotional ties to „here" and „there" (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015), and causes them to feel homesick or alienated. However, these narratives have the potential to go beyond the institutional strategies of assimilation or integration, which present a narrow, one-dimensional, „all or nothing" view of migrant „integration" (Ryan, 2017).

Based on observations, being able to belong somewhere requires having „intimate knowledge of society, commitment to living one's life there, and respecting the norms and rules that apply in that society" (Simonsen, 2017). So, such stages of transformation are necessary for people's lives because they „involve the transmission, reproduction, and evolution of emotions in relation to belonging, identity and ‚home'" (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). Therefore, we can see that different identities would perceive belonging differently, depending on where their symbolic boundaries are (Simonsen, 2017). Narratives are the informational resources available to fully explain it.

A person may feel as though they belong or do not, depending on their perception, and the elements influencing this interpretation would vary. A frequently considered example or even a common factor of such elements would be duration of stay because „immigrants classify themselves according to the period of their arrival in the neighborhood." (Pastore & Ponzo, 2016) Thus, a „satisfactory" or „unsatisfactory" identity-building process results from the construction of one's selfhood from the interconnected aspects of one's experiences (Phinney et al., 2001).

Another example would be in cooperation, as people in the group are said to feel more like a part of the community in those nations where participation is higher, so these communities „are above all based on shared feeling" (Maffesoli, 1996, p. 79). It states that people most often identify with the community through acts of cooperation, as mentioned by social capital theory as well (Putnam, 2000). It may also be necessary to have access to and benefit from various forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) connected to personal trajectories and class resources to engage in leisure activities' integrative role (Blachnicka-Ciacek & Trąbka, 2022). Meaning that people find a common language more easily when placed in similar circumstances. Such interactions can appear through university coursework, employment, volunteer work, or as mentioned, leisure activities, etc.

Consecutively, it would be better to treat belonging as separate sets of experiences, which would vary based on an individual's upbringing, perspective, self-presentation, and opportunities for integration. Especially in this region of Poland, as seen in interviews, the reasoning behind migration is not an economic one. It leads the research to examine whether the hypothesis regarding how all of the experiences would manifest in various ways and influence foreigners' sense of belonging in Polish society is true. Thus, a comparison of such experiences in specific regions would be beneficial for an overall better understanding of the topic.

Methods

Fundamental to the interaction of individuals would be the natural arrangement of the different components that gradually come together to form a whole (Maffesoli, 1996). As was mentioned previously, this study takes a qualitative approach in understanding people's experiences of belonging. Being social science research, it "can help us know only what is and why" (Babbie, 2001) when it comes to the belongings of foreigners in Poland. It can be applied to make responding to inquiries about various aspects of communication easier (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). Thus, narratives become crucial in this situation.

It is important to mention that this article is a part of a bigger research project focusing on experiences with migration and for quite some time now, in Poland it was possible to observe streams of individuals arriving for a variety of reasons. During the interviews, a chance of asking about their experiences in a new location as well as understanding, whether they noted those experiences as good or bad, has appeared. That is also why the choice was to use interviews.

"A qualitative interview is essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent" (Babbie, 2001). Consecutively, a more comprehensive examination of each person's perspective (meaning the way they perceive and engage with the outside world) would be most helpful in concluding the matter of belonging to a place. Throughout the data collection process, a range of expressions have been encountered, as well as consequences that impact the welfare and assimilation of foreigners into Polish society. The findings can, however, be summarized by the term „communitas communitatum", explaining this point perfectly – "it is not individuals that come first, but rather relations between them" (Maffesoli, 1996).

Inevitably, people who were included would undoubtedly have "other ties, other networks of mutual aid, participate in different groups" (Maffesoli, 1996), making it more interesting to focus on their stories through semi-structured interviews. This is because such approaches are supposed to increase the amount of interpersonal interaction in the study (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992) as well as encourage respondents to be more truthful in their responses (Babbie, 2001). Those two elements are the most important for this article's hypothesis, which seeks to understand the viewpoints of foreigners coming from the Global North and Global South.

The non-probability (snowball) sampling method was primarily employed here for the recruitment of the informants for the interviews. In it, the pre-selected interviewees are „asked to identify others who might be eligible to participate" (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). After that, the other people were included and interviewed. An approach like this obviously has couple of major drawbacks, like limits of generalization of samples onto the broader populations or lack of randomization, for example. On the other hand however, it could provide a foundation for developing theories, investigating new areas of study, and give access to not well-defined groups (in this particular case – migrants/foreigners). This means that such a method gives the ability to reach a group of people who would share a particular characteristic to fit within the research topic.

Even though, such a sample is not as representative of the population, in qualitative research designs, where the goal is to comprehend the breadth and context of a phenomena rather than drawing statistical generalizations, non-probability sampling is frequently used. In the original research the interviews were conducted with around 20 people who offered to talk about their experiences living abroad, which they would not have done if they had been asked to do without any knowledge of their circumstances. Therefore, after some consideration it still appeared to be the best option for that specific narrative study due to its convenience (time efficiency) and possible exploratory insights which are not as necessary in other types of researches as they are here. In this article only 4 of such interviews were included (the ones that were most interesting to analyze within the topic of the article). It was the main reason why it was possible to ask for extremely detailed stories, feelings, and experiences as well as giving a chance to leave out subjects which the informants felt uncomfortable discussing (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992).

As was already indicated, there were a few challenges encountered when discussing cultural adaptation because interviewees had unfavorable perceptions of certain terms. So, it was necessary to use terms with closer, more neutral meanings based on the ways in which the informants responded to them. Additionally, objectivity, defined as "a conceptual attempt to get beyond our individual views," must be discussed when discussing methodology in this context (Babbie, 2001). Likewise, since „that would be embarrassing to the respondents if that information became publicly known," researchers are not allowed to violate ethical guidelines during the course of their work (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). Both rely on the particulars of the problem that is being studied and the particulars of how the data is being used (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992).

For this reason, before providing their answers, all interviewees were given a general overview of the study and given the chance to review the questions. Every informant was aware of the type of data that would be used in this situation as well as the goal and purpose of the study. This is because impartial research can never be biased or intentionally harm people to manipulate the information, especially when asking such questions. However, despite the structure of the interviews, the informants had a great deal of freedom to define the way of their story if they wished to share more (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992).

Individuals could, if they so desired, share their narrative and manner of life in the host nations for as long as they wanted to. This helped analyze their interaction circles better, making it easier to compare and draw certain conclusions. Maffesoli provides an explanation for this, explaining the spontaneous formation

of social bonds as an example – according to him, „the processes of attraction and repulsion will be a matter of choice" (1996). Some people, depending on their previous experiences, will find it easy to adjust, while others may have difficulty doing so.

Results

„The strict format for presenting research results helps to maintain the validity and reliability of social science research" (Vanderstoep & Johnson, 2009, p. 251). Much like was discussed in the theoretical part above, for everyone, the perception of belonging would be different (Simonsen, 2017). Therefore, before asking the interviewees to share their stories, they were asked to provide their definitions of belonging to a place.

One such definition, for example, was provided by the informant (I1, 41 years old, male, GS) from South Africa. He defines mental and physical migration to a country, mentioning that belonging is "when you mentally move to the place you are in". Sharing his experience, that same informant says that: "I've come to realize that, and I know people, who have physically moved to Poland, but they haven't mentally moved to Poland. They have a very difficult time". Similar views could be seen in the words of another interviewee from India (I2, 28 years old, male, GS), as the word mentioned to describe his experiences was "adaptable". He mentions that "you need to be highly adaptable to move to a different country".

As could be seen in the words of the informants coming from Global North, they have given good definitions of belonging too. One mentioned by a woman from Romania: "I think it's the process of meeting new people, learning about the new culture, learning to adapt in the environment where everything is changed in a way that every culture is different" (I3, 24 years old, female, GN). Whereas to the other interviewee from Germany moving to another country would take a lot of "planning that needs to be done" beforehand (I4, 39 years old, male, GN). This correlates well with statement from another research, where integration was described as an interaction-based process requires immigrants to participate in the social and political life of the host society and to respect its fundamental norms, values and institutions (Rajca, 2015).

Once mentioning planning, all the interviewees stated that their decision to move abroad was not entirely spontaneous and that seems to work well with the claims in work of A. Górny. She mentioned that the process of long-term planning in migration is more beneficial in foreigners' long-term wish to stay in the chosen country (2017): "I've been researching for a long time. For almost a year, I was

researching different countries. I have been researching on Canada, Australia, UK but I didn't get that exact process as such and that's why I chose Poland" (I2, 28 years old, male, GS). In the same way, for another interviewee mentioned, "it was a very well-thought-of decision as we always had a 10-year plan and 2020 was supposed to be a year of assessment. In Poland, you know where you stand" (I1, 41 years old, male, GS) For him, it seemed a better decision:

> I've come from a country which has failed miserably with multiculturalism and integration. Our national anthem is in 5 languages. We have 11 official languages in the country. It's multiculturalism to extreme and the result is that it doesn't work. At that moment, Poland was looking a lot more stable. (I1, 41 years old, male, GS)

"Stable" is the word we need to highlight and talk about. When thinking about divisions in a globalized world (Müller, 2018), which were already mentioned above, researchers frequently focus mostly on the economic side of migration (Collier, 2013). Global North is perceived as better – more stable, more developed, safer, etc. However, as can be seen through the interviews, even coming from Global North, people move to Poland in search of a more stable environment in Poland. As mentioned by the interviewee, who originally came from Romania but then lived in England before coming to Poland in 2019: "I feel safe, really safe here. That's why I decided to make my studies here" (I3, 24 years old, female, GN). Additionally, a somewhat similar statement could be added from a person coming to Poland from Germany: „This part of Europe, it's more traditional like me. It was a political decision, social decision and also a strategic decision" (I4, 39 years old, male, GN). It means that the assumption that the patterns can be generalized and universally applicable would be a wrong way of facing such an issue (Nawyn, 2016), which goes against the statements in researches focusing only on economic side of migration.

Having discussed the reasons that people had when coming to Poland; it brings us back to interactions. Frequently, one of the most important modifiable characteristics that facilitate migrants' social and structural integration, mentioned by integration policies, theories, etc., would be their ability to communicate effectively in the language of the majority (Geurts & Lubbers, 2016). However, unlike the examples from theories, the interviewees in this research did not focus as much on the usage of the Polish language. All of them have mentioned having little knowledge/ using it only for basic things. Like, for example, here: "I'm still learning, I have my teammates. They are helping me out so, sometimes we are

communicating in Polish that's helping me out to improve my Polish language." (I2, 28 years old, male, GS), or here: "I'm fighting very hard to learn it. I go to Polish once a week. My children are fully bilingual. We speak a mix of languages within the house. My Polish is getting better. As you saw, I ordered the coffee." (I1, 41 years old, male, GS) Language would be a beneficial tool in easing the living processes, however, none of them really mentioned it when describing belonging.

Similar things could be heard in the answers of people from the Global North. „If you are in public places, just to be able to communicate, it would be important to learn some basic Polish." (I3, 24 years old, female, GN) Yet, this particular answer was quite curious:

> I4: There was one situation in this village, I'm going inside and I'm speaking German and they also speaking German and this woman says, that I need to learn Polish. That it would be beneficial. But I don't think learning Polish language would be beneficial from my side. Because all my business that I have it's like English-related, related to this international language.
>
> Interviewer: And what language do you use the most here?
>
> I4: German. Deuthsch because many people here speak German and English as well. (I4, 39 years old, male, GN)

In the Opole region, where the interviews were conducted, some generations are still bilingual in Polish and German. "This whole area is very German. Those western parts were German part of Poland." (I4, 39 years old, male, GN) This helped the interviewee interact with the host community. Yet, this situation is extremely specific and could only happen in this part of the country due to the history of the region and its belonging to Germany up to the end of WWII in 1945. After the resettlements of Germans, the remaining Poles, who were living on the territories (also known as Silesians), frequently used German in everyday life, passing it on to the younger generations too. Nonetheless, as can be seen through the quotes provided above, all the informants were using only English in most cases.

When speaking about communication, societal interactions open up endless possibilities to those who use them. There are different values and different countries. „Different groups within these countries have very different ideas of where the boundaries lie, or indeed, whether there should be any boundaries at all" (Heath & Richards, 2019). With everything taken into account, it becomes clearer why majority groups select particular symbolic boundaries that include

some groups while excluding others (Bail, 2008). Therefore, people in the group are said to feel more a part of the community in those nations where participation is higher. One of the interviewees even says it can be a way to feel this sense of belonging: "So I just join a whole bunch of clubs of people I just write myself in. I show up and I do my thing and with some time, people ask me questions and it kind of leads to me being more accepted and involved." (I1, 41 years old, male, GS)

Those communities „are above all based on shared feeling" (Maffesoli, 1996, p. 79), and come from interactions. Some may even consider this shared feeling to be belongingness in itself – "I have met different people and most of them have been kind of like a family to me. We had very good relations as such, so that's why I feel that I belong here in Poland." (I2, 28 years old, male, GS), and "I'm a very social person and I have some knowledge about social engineering, so it's like I made very rapid friends here and built up a supporting network here." (I4, 39 years old, male, GN) The creation of ties/friendships becomes an integral part of belonging once we think about interaction as a key to getting more knowledge about the country. "If you are Polish, that's alright, but if you are from a different country, they are not going to be a friend because they are very conservative and they hold onto their culture." (I3, 24 years old, female, GN) This may indicate the homogeneity of the country, as mentioned by theory, leading to people being rather skeptical of accepting foreigners (Bail, 2008), not just from the Global South but the Global North too.

Anyhow, in the interactions interviewees had with the host community, it was also noticed that since homogeneity in Poland is so strong, people of the host community do not immediately assume that the person speaking is not Polish (except when the person has a different skin color, though). Instead, it comes later:

> I look Polish, sort of, and I mean it by the color of my skin. If I walk into a shop, the person on the other side presumes I'm Polish before I'm foreign. And if I speak very quickly and I don't... They may don't even suspect, I'm not Polish. The presumption is that I'm Polish, not foreign. Whereas, in other countries which have multiculturalism to the hill, the presumption that you are not local first, and you come from somewhere else. I like that in Poland because you can just blend straight in. People only find out later that I'm not Polish or that I haven't got Polish connections, but that's like the conversation down the line. Their first assumption is that he must be Polish. (I1, 41 years old, male, GS)

Those presumptions disappear once the interviewees start longer conversations: "And then me because of the color of my skin, I can be identified as a Polish

person just from saying ‚dzień dobry'. They don't continue the conversation. If they can continue, they will find out I'm not Polish." (I3, 24 years old, female, GN)

Once person is identified as a foreigner, either based on the color of the skin or based on little knowledge of the language/culture, quite expectedly Polish people tend to isolate themselves. "The first thing is that Polish people are scared of is that they won't be able to communicate with you. If you can demystify that by showing them that you speak a bit of Polish - that's huge." (I1, 41 years old, male, GS) Meaning that belonging in Poland becomes quite a hard thing to achieve immediately. "Over here, I would say it's really hard to get that bonding, I would say. To be with the Polish people it really requires a lot of time and effort to be in their group, to be in their family and such." (I2, 28 years old, male, GS). It was also mentioned that: "There is a thing about loyalty here. People value loyalty and to be loyal, you kind of have to evidence that. The only way to evidence that is either through time or dedication." (I1, 41 years old, male, GS)

Since this is a comparison of experiences from the Global North and Global South, the interesting thing that can be noted here is that globalized people coming from the South seem to have a better understanding of what it means to belong somewhere or generally have better insights on describing the Polish community. They indicate, as in theory, that having a thorough understanding of a society, being dedicated to residing there and complying with the customs and laws of that society are all necessary for one to feel like they belong (Simonsen, 2017).

Such people are more open to building connections and their mixed identity in the culture surrounding them (without losing their own, of course). "Initially it was hard but in a slow but steady manner I was able to make friends and even groups in different cities I've been to." (I2, 28 years old, male, GS). Or as seen here, "If you know a little bit about Poland - that's huge. A little bit about the area, you live in and a little bit of the history of Poland, a little bit about what people are interested in talking about: politically, socially." (I1, 41 years old, male, GS), he says: „That gives you discussion topic points that you can find easily and communicate with the person on." (I1, 41 years old, male, GS) From this, we can notice that globalized citizens from the South rely much more on various societal interactions.

Whereas people from the Global North indicate having built a completely new identity, not feeling belonging anywhere. "In Germany not so much anymore… I feel like... it's heavy to say. You know? First of all, I feel like a human being, like European person." (I4, 39 years old, male, GN) Another example of this would be: "I feel like... you know, usually with my moving and stuff I feel like I don't belong anywhere. I feel like I'm just a person living on the planet

Earth." (I3, 24 years old, female, GN) It may indicate their different attitudes to the creation of ties (Mafessoli, 1996) through various interactions with people from host communities.

Differences were also seen in the way people generally perceive their experiences in the country. For example, in governmental institutions: "They are really aggressive with the paperwork. If they are in a bad mood, you don't get the support. (I1, 41 years old, male, GS) A similar statement could be seen here: „In Opole, I had kind of both experiences. I mean, like, good and bad. Sometimes they were nice and sometimes they were really harsh and rude." (I2, 28 years old, male, GS). Although all the interviewees have stated their life in Poland to be positive, the general procedures in the institutions have brought much more complications for people from the Global South than the Global North. "It has been really bad area. It has been really really mess in the governments and stuff, I'd say." (I2, 28 years old, male, GS). According to what has been shown in the interviews, Poland's integrative strategies are not promoted enough to be as helpful as they could have been. "There is a huge growth happening with regard to Azerbaijanis, Turks, you can see the Nigerians too. Foreigners are pouring into Poland. Poland doesn't seem to be doing very much in regards to them. It falls onto the person's shoulders to learn about their environment." (I1, 41 years old, male, GS)

Whereas, when asked people from Global North, did not seem to focus too much on institutions when moving abroad. "Because I'm the citizen of EU, I have different requirement to live in Poland than a non-EU citizen. For me I just need a PESEL number." (I4, 39 years old, male, GN) When it comes to non-EU countries too: "Whenever they see my passport, they see that in the system that I am a permanent resident in England. But when I come back here it's not a problem. Now I'm non-EU country, so I go to a different line." (I3, 24 years old, female, GN)

However, what they all seem to agree on is the fact that Polish regulations quite frequently evolve only around Polish people. „They don't have any rules for non-Polish people. Then what you do? You do nothing if you are not Polish. I think they should be more open to those changes." (I3, 24 years old, female, GN) Also, this can be seen here: "There have been a couple of these situations where I just shake my head and go: ‚I don't understand why it has to be like this.' But that's how it is. The system is just rigged like that." (I1, 41 years old, male, GS)

Conclusions

When looking into the complex issue of belonging among global citizens in Poland, the multifaceted nature of their personal experiences comes to light.

The focus of the research was on Global South and Global North people coming to live in Poland. As shown in the analysis, it has illuminated the interplay of cultural, social, and institutional factors in shaping patterns of belonging within those foreigners' experiences.

Duyvendak's insight that „many mobile people eventually settle down and create particular places" (2011) captures the essence of the experiences uncovered in this study. Global citizens actively construct their identities through a dynamic process that gives rise to rich and diverse cultures, far from renunciating their cultural heritage. Such travels are characterized by the blending of disparate cultural and social elements, which challenges preconceived ideas and adds to Poland's distinct cultural and social landscape.

This country has not traditionally been known as a major destination for immigrants compared to some Western European countries (Górny, 2017), and it is often characterized as a relatively ethnically and culturally homogeneous country, especially compared to some other European nations. There have been quite a few research papers on the topic of migration studies in Poland, yet that number is still relatively low compared to some other countries with more diverse populations. Additionally, those researches are most frequently focused on the economic side of migration similarly to works by Collier, for example.

This particular study, however, framed by Social Identity Theory and Social Capital, tried to unravel the intricacies of how individuals from the Global South and Global North navigate their sense of belonging in particular cultural contexts. It is important to note that even if the country is often considered homogeneous, there can be some degree of diversity and with time the host community perspectives may change (Duszczyk & Kaczmarczyk, 2022). Being situated at the intersection of political science, sociology, and cultural studies, analysis in this work not only provides a nuanced understanding of the experiences within Poland but also contributes to the broader global discourse on migration. According to the hypothesis of this article, it was possible to compare how different cultural, social, and institutional factors between global citizens from the Global South and Global North influence distinct patterns of belonging in Poland. By highlighting the diversity in such belonging patterns, an attempt was to highlight the importance of recognizing and embracing the richness of cultural identities in multicultural societies.

Different threads of the social integration variety emerged, highlighting the vital role that community relationships play in encouraging a sense of belonging. Cultural adaptation has become a critical point of difference, with people from the Global South facing particular difficulties with language, cultural norms,

interactions, and institutional facilities. However, then such people were sharing a more detailed view of general belonging. Therefore, they are able to create and describe their identities with much more detail and insight. It emphasizes how crucial it is for emerging multicultural societies to acknowledge and value the diversity of cultural identities.

Focusing on relations within different societal groups (Mafessoli, 1996), or transparent boundaries, which are created by such groups to include or exclude others (Lamont, 2015), in conclusion, the research not only affirms the hypothesis but also tries to highlight the importance of understanding and addressing the distinct needs of global citizens. As Poland continues to evolve as a destination for those global citizens, the findings hold practical implications for policymakers, community leaders, and organizations engaged in fostering inclusive environments. Therefore, promoting inclusive policies, social cohesion, and the individual contributions that each person makes to the common narrative of belonging lies in understanding and appreciating this diversity.

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