

**Drifting identity in the global era? Polish students in Irish Higher  
Education**

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## **Abstract: Drifting identity in the global era? Polish students in Irish Higher Education**

**Motivation** My research project began with a desire to examine in detail the educational aspects of globalization and European integration in the context of young Poles in Higher Education in Ireland and their sense of life stability and localization in the contemporary world.

**Research Focus** The study explores the motivations, experiences and perspectives of young Poles entering higher education in Ireland. They undertake journeys which are not just actions pointed toward entering the HE and getting the diploma, they are embedded in a complex, rich world of meanings and experiences of individuals and their lives, which create a unique context for each student's *learning identity*. The leading theme is transition process perceived from different angles: the transition from one university to another, from one country to another, the re-negotiation of the self and learning identity. These journeys take place in the context of liquid modernity, as described by Bauman: the transition from communism to democracy, neoliberalism and globalisation, the transition from welfare state, with its security, to freedom and a deep sense of insecurity, unpredictability and the fear of freedom in this sense. The transformations in higher education in both countries Poland and Ireland, are the reflection of deeper transformations across Europe.

**Research Methods** This dissertation met this research aims through an extensive study of relevant literature and the implementation of practical research. The latter was carried out through narrative inquiry interviews.

**Findings** This research produces a number of key findings which indicate how student's identity and perception of the world changes due to those transitions. The study engages the concepts of *habitus* and Bourdieu's work on *social and cultural capital* to explore how Polish students learn to cope with the intellectual and *symbolic capitals* of the university. The concept of *recognition*, coined by Honneth, helps to understand social behaviours, human need and sources of transformation explored in the field of education. In relying on this set of ideas the case is made for linking *globalisation* and *neoliberalism* with the role of higher education in a rapidly changing order of the modern world.

The increase of self-esteem and self-worth, experienced by these students, is correlated with the increase of their employability due to acquiring a higher education diploma. They renegotiate their identities during the whole process of inter-cultural and inter-

university transitions as well as the whole range of experiences of being student, immigrant and worker abroad. One of the key findings was the change of their self-perception in the sense of Polish national identity. There was also the finding which may be applied to the whole generation of young professionals, and it is that their life becomes more and more episodic and their identity fragmented. This study attempts to critique the neoliberal agenda, which forces individuals to become marketable products. The experiences of these young Polish students is only one voice in a broader discussion about the pervading feeling of insecurity in globalised world, which becomes fluid and unpredictable.

**Recommendation.** As higher education institutions begin to engage with a greater range of students, it is increasingly important that they take account of the learning biographies, narratives and attitudes of non-traditional (including migrant) students. There is a valid knowledge for universities in the voices of these learners, to embrace their perspectives, their learning experiences, motivations and needs. The universities need to listen to those voices in order to adjust (culturally and structurally) to a more diverse population of students. What drives students in higher education, what they want from universities, are important questions in the development of a more responsive and culturally diverse system of higher education. Policy makers and those responsible for higher education need to know the implications of people's experiences for the development of a more supportive learning culture.

# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 EPISTEMOLOGY
- 1.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

## CHAPTER TWO CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL SENSITIVITY

- 2.1 LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY
- 2.2 POSTMODERNITY AND GLOBALISATION
  - 2.2.2 *The pervading feeling of insecurity as the outcome of globalizing processes in contemporary world.*
- 2.3 NEOLIBERALISM
  - 2.3.1 *Neo-liberalism in Poland*
  - 2.3.2 *Neo-liberalism and Irish Education*
- 2.4 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE CONSUMERIST SETTINGS. HOW ARE THOSE IDEAS RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY?
  - 2.4.1 *Where does it leave the prospects and the tasks for education?*
- 2.5 THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY AND CONTEMPORARY MIGRATIONS UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF GLOBALISATION

## CHAPTER THREE LITERATURE REVIEW.

- 3.1 INTRODUCTION
- 3.2 RETENTION AND ACCESS OF NON-TRADITIONAL LEARNERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION (RANLHE)
- 3.3 EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR RESEARCH ON THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS (ESREA)
- 3.4 PROMOTING REFLECTIVE INDEPENDENT LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION (PRILHE)
- 3.5 EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION.
  - 3.5.1 *The Bologna Process*
- 3.6 A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE RECENT HISTORY OF POLAND AND IRELAND.
  - 3.6.1 *Poland*
  - 3.6.2 *Ireland*
  - 3.6.3 *Transformation – Poland (1980, 1989, 2004)*
  - 3.6.4 *Transitional spaces of learning in HE. Changes introduced in Poland.*
- 3.7 NEW LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND MINORITY STUDENTS.

## CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY CHAPTER

- 4.1 EDUCATIONAL JOURNEYS IN THE SEARCH FOR LIFE IMPROVEMENT: NARRATIVES OF POLISH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN IRISH HE
- 4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
  - 4.2.1 *The Constructivist Paradigm. The implications for learning in Higher Education.*
- 4.3 NARRATIVE INQUIRY AS THE MOST SUITABLE RESEARCH METHOD FOR THE THESIS
- 4.4 THE GRINDING ASSUMPTIONS AND THE PROJECT'S INTENTIONS
- 4.5 THE CHOICE OF LANGUAGE FOR THIS STUDY
- 4.6 THE BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDENTS AND RESPONDENTS IN THE STUDY
- 4.7 THE ETHICAL ISSUES CONCERNING THE RESEARCH PROCESS
- 4.8 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
- 4.9 MOTIVATIONAL STUDIES. APPROACHES TO RESEARCH AND THE DATA COLLECTED
  - 4.9.1 *Methods and Narratives*

## CHAPTER FIVE MIGRATION EXPERIENCES AND TRADITIONS THROUGH EYES OF POLISH WRITERS.

- 5.1 INTRODUCTION.
- 5.2 CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ, ZBIGNIEW HERBERT AND HOMESICKNESS

## CHAPTER SIX FINDINGS, MOTIVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

- 6.1 NEW PATHS, NEW CHALLENGES, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.
- 6.2 MOTIVATION
- 6.3 EXPERIENCE AFTER ARRIVAL. THE STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY
- 6.4 THE FINANCIAL ISSUES CONCERNING ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION IN HE

6.5 THE VALIDITY OF FAMILY AND FRIENDSHIP IN GETTING THE CHALLENGE TO START EDUCATION. THE SUPPORT OF FRIENDS OR FAMILY LIVING IN IRELAND AS THE REASON FOR COMING TO THE COUNTRY.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN STUDENTS AS CONTEMPORARY TOURISTS AND SENSATIONS SEEKERS: BAUMAN'S DRIFTING IDENTITY.**

- 7.1 INTRODUCTION
- 7.2 LIFE HAS BECAME EPISODIC.
- 7.3 TRANSITION-EXPERIENCE, PERCEPTION
- 7.4 WHERE DO I BELONG? BEING A STRANGER IN BOTH COUNTRIES.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT BOURDIEU'S SENSITIZING CONCEPTS AND STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES**

- 8.1 EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND SOCIAL 'CONNECTIONS' NETWORK
- 8.2 STUDENTHOOD AND HIGHER EDUCATION AS A TRANSITIONAL SPACE
- 8.3 STUDENTSHIP AND LEARNING CAREERS. THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF STUDENTSHIP ACCORDING TO MARTIN BLOOMER
- 8.4 THE GRADUATES' POST-DEGREE DESTINATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

## **CHAPTER NINE REFLECTIONS ABOUT POLISHNESS, POLISH IDENTITY.**

- 9.1 SELF-IMAGE OF POLES IN CONTACT WITH ANOTHER CULTURE. THE SENSE OF IDENTITY AND POLISHNESS
- 9.2 THE LANGUAGE ISSUES. BEING POLISH.
- 9.3 THE MYTHOLOGICAL FAIRYLAND

## **CHAPTER TEN THE IDENTITY CONCEPT**

- 10.1 THE CHANGING SELF IMAGE AND SELF PERCEPTION
- 10.2 THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY IN NON-TRADITIONAL AND ADULT LEARNING CONTEXTS
- 10.3 BEING A GLOBAL, BORDERLESS PERSONALITY

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 11.1 RECOGNITION, CREDENTIALISATION AND HABITUS. STUDENTS' EVALUATIONS OF THEIR POST DEGREE TRANSITIONS
- 11.2 WHY IS THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN IRELAND ATTRACTIVE TO FOREIGN STUDENTS?
- 11.3 COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN POLISH SOCIETY. WHAT ROLE DOES THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY, TRANSMITTED THROUGH GENERATIONS, PLAY IN POLISH SOCIETY?
- 11.4 THE CONSTRUCTION OF LEARNER IDENTITY. REINFORCEMENTS AND LIMITATIONS
- 11.5 IMPLICATIONS
- 11.6 CONCLUSIONS

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## **APPENDIX I**

## **APPENDIX II**

## **APPENDIX III**

## **APPENDIX IV**

## **APPENDIX V**

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

By way of introduction, this dissertation becomes a journey into the world of immigrants, but a specific group of them. Some people claim that the 1989-generation, which witnessed the fall of the Communist system in Eastern Europe, is the lost generation and that only a small percentage of it has achieved a high level of self realisation, acquiring the necessary skills to cope with new, emerging possibilities. Those skills include: learning new languages, gaining Higher Education diplomas and having the ability to be flexible enough to travel or adjust to changing economic circumstances. My thesis is about those people, the young Poles taking the challenge and opening new pathways of development for themselves.

The main theme of this dissertation revolves around the search for identity in a world full of symbols, interdependences, cultural and social conditioning, internal and external norms. The individual's reasons for making the decision to take the challenge might be very complex, both on the conscious and unconscious level. What else is life if not a set of coincidences and consequences of every day choices? Thus it is also a process of identity building through the scraps of memory, experiences and choices made; it is the process of becoming, being, constituting and constantly reconstructing the self and its place in the world and society. Today's world opens its doors to otherness, or at least it advocates the slogans of equality, multiculturalism, diversity, emancipation and new, emerging possibilities. There is certainly freedom and a wide spectrum of opportunities available, but this also makes the individual more and more precarious in his search for meaning and understanding.

The role of education is changing as well. No more is it the elite practice of passing on knowledge. Knowledge is easily accessible to populations through new technology and mass media. Information can be accessed instantly and is easily available. The relevant question is how to find a meaning and significance in the overload of symbols and meanings; what should we be looking for and how do we make sense of all of this information? The role of education is now to teach how to think critically, find the hidden meanings in the mass media transmission and empower people through this. It is about learning how to become reflexive and able to filter the flooding streams of information.

My work explores the motivations, motives, reasons and also the experiences of young people in higher education. The leading theme is transition perceived from different angles. The transition from one university to another, from one country to another. The renegotiation of the self and learning identity. The transition from communism to democracy, neo-liberalism and globalisation. The transition from welfare state, with its security, to freedom and deep sense of insecurity, unpredictability and the fear of freedom in this sense. The transformations in higher education in both countries, Poland and Ireland, as the reflection of deeper transformations across Europe.

Each moment of transition, of taking the challenge and risk, leads to transformation, development and growth. Leaving one's own comfort zone is inevitably connected with personal growth, reconstruction of life and perceptions, and redefinition of the 'self'.

Rob Evans from the University of Magdeburg (Otto-von-Guericke Universität Magdeburg), in his analysis of individual and collective learning experiences in changing worlds<sup>1</sup>, notes that the new order of learning associated with globalising tendencies means 'the educational and training needs of the 'knowledge society' produce more and more fragmented vistas of learning.' He argues that these new vistas are more difficult to navigate a way through in order to attain a coherent self, in its many roles – as a professional, as a member of society, as employee, as student. This offers new learning opportunities as well as posing difficulties.

The neo-liberal, globalising tendencies and the market driven pressure of 'appropriate intercultural communication' may be experienced as the loss of 'what is near and familiar' (Bauman, 2002, pp.4-5). The acts of translation and transformation - along with the gains of employability, possibility for gaining credentials, opportunity for integration or assimilation – each also bring the losses of memory, of self-expression and the creation and recreation of the self in linguistic interaction with others and in acts of translating oneself and of re-presenting oneself across cultural boundaries. This raises the idea of identity construction, understood as the process 'founded on intersubjectivity and reciprocity in different forms of negotiated interaction' (Evans, 2009)<sup>2</sup>.

Getting back to motivation, the need to find new learning place may come from 'outside' pressures - like changing markets, incompatibility of learning institutions for

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<sup>1</sup> – a paper presented at the ESREA conference in March 2009

<sup>2</sup> a paper presented at the ESREA conference in March 2009



the changing world demands subjective perception (Evans, 2009). Motivation may also come from within, as an internal working model; there may be some additional needs other than those of simply gaining credentials. Those issues will be explored in the next chapters. At the centre of this research are the voices of interview respondents who participate in the 'liquid modernity' (discussed further below) of higher education institutions, to use the Bauman's term, institutions which are becoming more and more commodified. Those narratives provide 'insight into the significance of change for their individual and collective learning processes' (Evans, 2009).

The progressive trends of cultural diversity and functional differentiation of modern states and societies are commonly observed phenomena. Differences are acquiring new forms, which are being caused by the disintegration of traditional structures of society, the mutual influence of different cultures, emergence of the new nation states, ethnic conflict eruptions, religious fundamentalism movements and mass migration. The issues of otherness and cultural dissimilarity have become major concerns of our times.

My dissertation project began with a desire to examine in detail the educational aspects of globalization and European integration in the context of young Poles studying in Ireland and their senses of life stability and localization in the contemporary world. Ireland has become considerably more diverse in the last 15 years. The number of non-Irish students has significantly increased in the most recent years. EU enlargement in 2004 also impacted considerably on Irish migration flows, and as it, in turn, increased the number of students coming from EU countries. According to the HE Authority, 11.5 per cent of students enrolled in 2007/2008 were non Irish, one third of them were from the European countries.<sup>3</sup> Each country's education system, in a time of significant economic, cultural transformations and globalizing tendencies, cannot and does not want to limit its offers to nationals only. There is a phenomenon of young people more and more often making decisions to study or gain work experience abroad. There are many motives shaping their decisions, such as the desires to: broaden horizons, gain new knowledge, experience exchange, check own abilities of language and resourcefulness, gain better qualifications or become more employable, search for stability, locus and identity.

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<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Authority Key Facts and Figures 07/08  
<http://www.heai.ie/files/files/file/HEAFacts0708.pdf>

## 1.1 Epistemology

My experience with education encapsulates periods of different philosophical trends in education, starting with educational sociology, through the liberal-humanistic approach to the critical theory. The brief outline of each of them has been presented below.

The first one was under the communist system and its totalitarian approach to training and education, where students were seen as passive recipients of fixed terms of knowledge, without any right to pose questions, doubts or hesitation. This generation had not been taught how to learn or think creatively, or how to seek new solutions. Principles and rigid patterns of thinking were the constant attributes of everyday life and one's frame of reference. The leading pedagogical trend was educational sociology<sup>4</sup>, where schools were part of the class society, never separated from its leading ideology. The ideology, which developed on the grounds of social determinism, the hypothesis that social interactions and constructs alone determine individual behaviour. Extreme sociology has degraded education to educational technology – the socialization of the individual. Both the curriculum and teaching methods were consciously designed to make sure young workers were taught their place in society. The ability of the individual to oppose social power was not taken into consideration. The main representatives of this ideology in Poland were Ryszard Wroczyński and Helena Radlińska, who were followers of the theory of Emile Durkheim.

In spite of the strong influence of humanistic approaches and neo-liberal humanism, the remnants of the previous ideology can still be noticeable sometimes in the contemporary educational approaches in Poland.

The fall of the communist system in Poland, which took place in 1989, so it is still quite recent, when Poland officially became democratic during a peaceful transformation, led to the Education Reform in 1991. This reform has affected all levels of education in the country. The prevailing ideology in education has transformed to that of liberal-humanistic, where the teacher becomes an empathetic facilitator with non-judgmental concern for the learner and where individual freedom is paramount. Given the fact that

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<sup>4</sup> Educational sociology is a pedagogical trend, which formulates the educational process as a consequence of the societal influence over individuals and social groups. The radical sociology classifies pedagogy as a sociological science and treats education as a methodical collectivization of an individual.

[source: [http://portalwiedzy.onet.pl/64917,,,socjologizm\\_pedagogiczny,haslo.html](http://portalwiedzy.onet.pl/64917,,,socjologizm_pedagogiczny,haslo.html)]

these changes took place in Poland so recently, it is not surprising that the remnants of the old ideology are still noticeable. In the academic environment a big emphasis is being placed on critical theory and postmodernism theory, where the knowledge is contextual and can be individually interpreted and meanings are influenced by context and culture. The role of the teacher is to challenge meanings and, where there is no fixed value, set or define truth. (Murphy in Connolly&Fleming, 2007, p.154). Critical theory is based on a dialogue of mutual trust, where teaching and learning is collaborative and the learners have a right to challenge and intervene. It is for people not manipulators. Critical theory scrutinizes and filters a society, revealing all its aspects, especially those that have been carefully hidden.

The last decades have brought a great number of systemic transformations to the European continent. Globalization, migration and movements of populations are forcing many changes on the policy and social solutions field. They bring to light the need for new solutions and changes in education systems in order to co-exist better with transformed realities. The old solutions are not sufficient any more. We need to move from a multicultural to an intercultural dimension in our economic and educational systems. Posing difficult and provoking questions is particularly necessary when the existing mechanisms begin to malfunction and fail to cope with real problems. Zygmunt Bauman<sup>5</sup> was right in saying that (2004, p. 57):

never before has Europe needed to be as adventurous as it needs to be now. [And never before has this planet] needed an adventurous Europe as much as it needs it now: a Europe looking beyond its frontiers, a Europe critical of its own narrow-mindedness and self-referentiality, a Europe struggling to reach out of its territorial confinement, with an urge to transcend its own and by the same token the rest of the world's condition.

Multiculturalism, migration issues, global education, identity crisis, diversity, integration, social inclusion. These are the words appearing so often in every day life. They seem to become more and more appealing in modern educational systems. The European population is changing, becoming more diverse with all its varieties, different cultures, traditions, backgrounds and beliefs. The new vision of the world appears along with all these changes. We live in the era of postmodern socio economic systems and beliefs. This movement towards arranging a new vision of the changing face of the

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<sup>5</sup> Zygmunt Bauman is a Polish sociologist who, since 1971, has resided in England after being driven out of Poland by an anti-Semitic purge organized by the Communist party. Professor of sociology at the University of Leeds (and since 1990 emeritus professor), Bauman has become best known for his analyses of the links between modernity and the Holocaust, and of postmodern consumerism. <http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/bauman/conference/speakers/bauman.php>

contemporary world is very important. It directs the modern man's thinking, putting him in the position where he can orient himself and find his place in life. Without new solutions, people are falling into disorientation, which breeds nationalism, claustrophobia, delusion, anxieties and irrational fears.

Our postmodern society is witnessing great changes in the social, cultural and economic structures. A population and its mentality cannot stay the same in a changing world. The way of educating a society must follow its cultural and economical changes. It must deal with heterogeneity of social life and engage successfully in multiple discourses; figure out how to open pathways towards better ways of teaching and better ways of life:

For the large portion of the 1980s generation of Italian and Polish youth, the last decade has been a disaster; where twenty years earlier jobs were usually waiting alongside their fathers on a truck, the docks, in steelmills, auto plants, or in the telephone or gas and electric company, now the mills are closed down and automation has drastically reduced the demand for untrained manual labor in many other industries where workers have been reduced to watchers, or where they maintain highly complex machinery but are not needed as operators (Aronowitz&Giroux, 1991, pp.194-195).

Many people first experienced economic insecurity in the 1980s. Their life circumstances changed significantly due to the development of information technology and the rapid decline in demand for manual workers. People brought up under a totalitarian regime were not mentally prepared, nor educated, for the systemic changes introduced by neo-liberal reforms, which have strongly affected their lives.

## **1.2 The structure of the thesis**

In general terms, this thesis is about the experiences of young Poles graduating from higher education in Ireland. It is the expression of their motives and changing perspectives. Whilst studying a general picture of the individual and society, it is also the author's personal journey. The discussion and its theoretical assumptions are validated through the experience of each persons struggle to locate themselves in the world. It took a considerable amount of time for the dissertation to become the description and narration about the condition of the man in contemporary world, about the variety of possibilities open to him and insecurities and fears on the way to fulfil his self-realisation and find his own place in the world.

The work touches upon the changes of human mentality and the personality of people witnessing the deep systemic transitions. The group of respondents consists of young people who were born in an Eastern European country, during the time of communism

(real socialism in Poland). The main characteristic of the system was the state superiority over its citizens and the lack of freedom and boundaries within which humans tended to live and adjust to. Today's world claims respect for individual rights and freedom of democracy.

Western capitalist society relies on the democratic ideology to value creativity, individual autonomy and human fulfilment through self-realisation. However, being immersed in a cultural setting from birth predisposes an individual more favourably towards his own way of life than that of another culture, and also conditions a person to accept his own cultural practices as both normal and valid. This statement touches upon the work of Bourdieu and his concept of habitus as 'embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product' (Bourdieu, ..). Today's world is also about globalisation and an easy access to knowledge, increased social mobility, greater possibilities for travel, job search and school choice. As Friedman wrote – the world became flat, modern technology makes everything easily accessible and much simpler than before (Friedman, 2010). There are however, pros and cons. More freedom brings increased risk and insecurity, and leads individuals to 'ambient fear' as the term used by Bauman. It is this survival in a material world that increases fear and causes the individual to lose sight of the important things, in favour of security.

One of the main concepts explored in the thesis is *liquid modernity*. This means constant changeability of living conditions, unevenness and future uncertainty, job uncertainty, economic insecurity, job market competition. It also explores the need for professional development and improvement in qualifications and skills and the need for life long education in order to stay employable. It highlights the need for being on move all the time, the lack of stability and lack of life continuity. It also means that life becomes episodic, fragmented, consisting of many unconnected fragments. The thesis also explores the role of capitalism with free market economy, neoliberal agenda, and the way it affects individual's lives, making it the marketable product.

In the first part of this dissertation I would like to build a theoretical framework for the research undertaken in order to create context and become more sensitive and receptive in data analysis. Chapter Two draws on the work of Fromm, Bauman, Bourdieu,

Bloomer, Honneth and Giddens. It introduces the sensitizing concepts of: *habitus*, *recognition*, *transitional space*, *social capital*, *liquid modernity* and *duality of structure*. Fromm argues that in capitalism man perceives himself as both commodity and consumer at the same time. His concept of automaton conformity stresses the individualization and isolation of humans. In welfare state there was reduced liberty and freedom, no place for individuality but the sense of responsibility was also too much to a lesser extent. In some regards, an individual's identity and social position was in some ways imposed on them. Sometimes an individual's life-path was dictated to them by way of a family business being passed down through the family for generations. For instance, people who were born into farming backgrounds were expected to carry on the business just as their forefathers had done before them regardless of whether they were happy. This occupation was a continuation of the family background and did not allow the individual to choose his or her own life course.

Bauman continues the thought of Fromm. Globalisation and neoliberalism has even deepened the isolation of an individual and his feeling of insecurity. The life of the consumer is not about acquiring and possessing, it is rather about being on the move, and being on the move allows the person to focus and occupy his mind so his worries can vanish. Bauman's liquid modernity relates to unpredictability of world forces and human's life and is rather an existential dilemma with its practical implications, like the mobility of an individual. It reduces our sense of constancy in suggesting new levels of freedom

Continuing the thoughts of Fromm and Bauman, the consecutive most important concept for thesis purposes is Bourdieu's habitus. This concept explains the meaning of the recent history of Poles as people from post-communist system. The concept of habitus is very useful for understanding the role individual history play in relation to her perception and decisions made. It is helpful in grasping many nuances and differences between students, especially those coming from different backgrounds. Habitus also explains to some extent the reasons why some students in spite of many obstacles, like different culture and language, can survive and even thrive in the world of academia in a foreign country. The concept is even more important when applied to liquidity of life, the changeability of living conditions. The notion of drifting identity seems clearer in the view of habitus with its temporal structures and dispositions. Social and symbolic capital are valid for implications and understanding the reasons for studying abroad. Striving for symbolic capital of academia can be perceived as coping mechanism as opposed to escape mechanisms of Fromm.

Honneth's concept of recognition is very valid for the thesis purposes. Recognition and positive feedback and cooperation with others help students survive and develop and become better equipped members of society. Higher education for non-traditional students can create a supporting environment, which might be trigger to change, to transform. The search for identity and the search for the self formation is indeed the search for recognition, as it is formed through recognition.

All concepts: Bauman's floating, drifting self, Bourdieu's habitus, Honneth's recognition, and Fromm's automaton conformity, relate to identity concept. Fromm's automaton conformity in capitalism, when one conforms to others expectations is actually the loss of identity.

The second part of this dissertation relates to identity changes against the background of economic and social transformations. The thesis relates also to influences to national consciousness formation.

There has been a 'global identity' term coined and I approached my respondents with the question if such identity really exist and if they can identify to some extent with it.

This work confronts the experience and perceptions of real people living in transition, from one country to another, from one university to another with social theories. It helped me to create, though unfinished, an interesting picture of an individual in search of her own place in the world. It is the individual with emerging possibilities for development according to post-modern theories from one side and who is also limited by his own habitus, by his own cultural affiliation and accretion, limited by his own country history, by his environment.

The generation of Poles who were brought up in a communist system and who were longing for freedom, has eventually regained it. After the initial euphoria, came stagnation. People were used to rigid rules, they knew their life very well. Obviously this life was limited and their potential restricted but this generation knew how to navigate in it. They gained freedom eventually but no one taught them how to live this new life of freedom with the responsibility placed onto their shoulders.

The dissertation though sets valid questions: What happens to human identity in a globalised world? How can one orient himself in a complex system of the outside world and how he finds his sense of self-identity? What are universities for and how can they assist people in their search for life consistency and meaning in an ever changing world?

Postmodernist theories state that individual identity becomes fluid and fragmented at the same time, as life itself becomes episodic and consists of many fragments. Individual experience is based on an inner capacity to 'change form', to redefine itself repeatedly in the present.

I also deal with the role of the European Union in the shaping of education policy and defining of what lies within the member states' jurisdiction. Education is an important part of social policy and is also the basis for economic development. An interesting consideration is the extent to which lifelong learning contributes to the changing role of regionalism in world affairs.

Murphy notes that: 'education policy, long viewed as an exclusive national prerogative, is now regarded as a vital instrument for creating a united Europe'. (Murphy, 2003, p. 557). He continues:

lifelong learning has become the educational focus of the EU, and has brought with it much discussion of the role of education in fostering a European citizenship and shared identity, a knowledge and information society, and, not least, an increase in economic competitiveness (Murphy, 2003, p. 557).

The next chapter explores the theme of the place of modern man in the contemporary world and capitalist system, his anxieties and insecurities, his fragmented identity and search for the self, and the choices he needs to make. Chapter Three reviews other studies related to the issues of migration and the role of non-traditional students in Irish higher education. It also mentions the language acquisition problem and studies on these issues. The Chapter explores the work of the PRILHE, ESREA and SCRUTEA projects. It also explores transformational changes in Poland, from the communist to the capitalist systems, and its subsequent EU membership, as well as economic changes in Ireland during the past 20 years. It also raises the issues of multicultural education and inclusion in the EU education system. The Literature Review Chapter draws on the work of such authors as West, Allheit and Merrill, to give an insight into the stance of non-traditional students in higher education settings and the narrative context of the research. It also mentions the work of Nizińska and Kurantowicz in the context of Polish students. The Methodology Chapter comprises of the research questions, hypotheses and the ethical issues concerning the research process. It also introduces the research methodology and the reasons for choosing the Narrative Inquiry as the research method. It continues the themes on the constructivist approach, explored in the Literature Review Chapter, as a useful approach for the research purposes.



The whole work in general evolves through the theme of transition in its variety of meanings and applications. Chapter Two explores the theme of transition from Communism in Eastern Europe to neo-liberation, democracy and globalisation. The Communist system conditioned people to be passive, deprived of initiative and servile to the authorities. The aim of the philosophy in this dissertation, and the work of the authors being referred to herein, is to more fully understand the relations between the transformation that the Post-Communist generation went through and the attitudes, motivations and experiences of its new reality. Social philosophy gives the space for critical thinking to challenge false and usually taken for granted beliefs in social mechanisms. It also empowers people and strengthens their trust in their own abilities and the possibilities offered by their life circumstances (Baksiński in Gordoce, 1998, p. 53).

The first kind of transition is the one from an individual's life conditions, which can be characterised by the lack of freedom – yet the inherent security - characterised by Communist rule, to the liberation from the falling ideological system and the experiencing of a new world of insecurity and unpredictability that freedom and globalization bring. The authors I refer to in this work help to examine and explain the meaning of such a transition in the individual's life trajectory. Transition in another dimension is the life journey from Poland to Ireland in search of improved life conditions, development and to, eventually, undertake higher education in this host country. It again entails, or results in, changes in the individual's identity and renegotiation of the self. The changes concerning identity embrace student identity and all the changes followed by the new life circumstances; the experience of being an immigrant and adjusting to a new place, culture and customs. There is also the challenge of the new language acquisition and the influence that this has over the individual's identity formation and the new ways that they perceive information as a result. This issue is being discussed both in the Literature Review Chapter and later on in the Findings. Some of the conclusions at the end of the dissertation meet the assumptions being set in the Methodology Chapter, but there are also some new and surprising findings within the research. They can be summed up by the realisation that the role of emigration has become drastically different to the previous generation's social movements, due to neo-liberal capitalism and globalisation. The form and personage of the present immigrant resembles more the sensation-seeker, in Bauman's understanding, than the homesick exile, yearning for his lost country. However, neo-

liberalism has been discussed and criticised by many authors (see Harvey 1998, Harvey 2005); it is still hard to foresee how deeply it can affect the individuals. I hope this work will be one of many small pieces of a bigger project dealing with the changing face of the world, with its long-lasting socio-cultural and psycho-social effects.

Interweaving the stories told by students involved in the research process with the work of philosophers on education and sociologists, I aimed to picture the contemporary student in her search and pursuit of her place in the ever-changing, unstable - almost liquid - world. However, the concepts of Bourdieu, Honneth, Giddens, Fromm, and many other authors, were very useful for the purposes of this thesis; the majority of the work is based on the writings of Bauman and his descriptions of postmodernity and liquidity of life.

I hope my research will contribute to this area of knowledge, theory and educational practice by exploring and comparing the work of thinkers from European countries, as well as America, identifying questions for further exploration and comparison - nationally and internationally.

The role of the modern educator in a rapidly changing society is to help students to deal with new challenges and become more self-aware and find out what is important within the vast pool of easily-accessible knowledge. They have to learn to choose and discriminate between low art (understood as popular culture, e.g. reality television and popular music) and the true one; to discriminate between what values are really important in life and what is pure manipulation through visual media and socio-economic mechanisms. They need to learn how to be critical addressees of all the stimuli they have to face every day. They need to learn how to validate their own cultural heritage and how to benefit from cultural diversity and to respect other individuals, regardless of their race, background or gender. It is hoped that the above factors could help individuals to build a more democratic society, where everyone could raise his own voice in common debate and expect his/her needs to be noticed and valued. I would like to end this chapter by quoting Augusto Boal (2002, p.207):

If the show starts in fiction, its objective is to become integrated into reality, into life. Now, when so many certainties have become so many doubts, when so many dreams have withered on exposure to sunlight and so many hopes have become as many deceptions - now that we are living through times and situations of great perplexity, full of doubts and uncertainties, now more than ever I believe it is time for a theatre which, at its best, will ask the right questions at the right times. Let us be democratic and ask our audiences to tell us their desires, and let us show them alternatives. Let us hope that one day-please, not too far in the future - we'll be able to convince or force our governments, our

leaders, to do the same: to ask their audiences – us - what they should do, so as to make this world a place to live and be happy in – yes, it is possible – rather than just a vast market in which we sell our goods and our souls.  
Let's hope. Let's work for it!

## **Chapter Two**

### **Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Sensitivity**

#### **2.1 Learning Environments and Identity Transformation in Times of Uncertainty**

This chapter establishes the conceptual framework for the thesis and scrutinizes certain theorists whom I believe are significant in the context of an examination of non-traditional Polish students in Irish Higher Education. The chapter deals with the concepts of *habitus*, *recognition* and *transitional space*. Concepts and ideas can be the subjects of scrutiny and critique and looking through the lens of different interpretations has certainly enriched my understanding of the complexity of the issues and ways of addressing them. My study pays attention to the mentality of students coming from *post-communist* systems. The theorists who will help me to illuminate this issue are Erich Fromm and Zygmunt Bauman. The latter engages with the concepts of *globalization* and '*liquid modernity*'. There is also the work of authors like Peter Alheit and Elżbieta Budakowska, whose studies I will deploy in Chapter 3. This is the context which defines the position of my study. Some critical theorists offer some help in elucidating this and help in perceiving HE from different perspectives.

My dissertation covers the aspects of the educator, researcher and student at the same time. The most important factor that complements my work is my own status as an immigrant. The transformation that Poland has undergone during the last twenty years has had a significant impact, not only on the economic situation of the state, but has also affected immensely the changes in the education system.

The time of immense change and transformation in education was the period when I was a student and when I was starting my career as a teacher. Both the political upheaval and the socio-economic changes which followed have had a significant influence on millions of Poles, on their life approach and their mentality. The whole generation of Poles that was brought up in the Communist system, who were longing for freedom, has regained this freedom eventually. After the initial euphoria, when the 'Solidarity' movement triumphed and everybody thought that the era of normality and happiness had started, something strange happened. Along with the problems of business and the limited economic prospects in the state of new emerging possibilities, the new movement of frustration and complaining has emerged as has been stated by

many commentators of those times (see Cirtautas, 1997, p.5). The need to complain is one of the most deeply rooted Polish national defects (Chmielewska 2012). This situation changed, however, along with identity changes and the transformation of a new, younger generation of Poles, having immediate access to a global world and different cultures and wanting to adjust themselves to it. People have found themselves in a new socio-cultural context and want immediately to join the consumer styles of self-indulgence and instant gratification of the capitalistic lifestyle. 'Not modernity but postmodernity has triumphed' (Cirtautas, 1997, p.5). Within the context of those changes, however, people have managed to shift and translate the miseries and futility of their everyday experiences during the 1970s into a meaningful experience 'by creating a collective consciousness based on the pursuit of human rights and dignity' (Cirtautas, 1997, p.5).

Fromm believed that freedom is an inseparable part of human nature that a person can either embrace or escape. He observed that embracing our freedom of will is healthy from a psychoanalytical as well as sociological point of view, whereas escaping freedom through the use of escape mechanisms was the root of psychological conflicts.

In the name of 'freedom' life loses all structure; it is composed of many little pieces, each separate from the other and lacking any sense as a whole. The individual is left alone with these pieces like a child with a puzzle; the difference, however, is that the child knows what a house is and therefore can recognize the parts of the house in the little pieces he is playing with, whereas the adult does not see the meaning of the 'whole', the pieces of which come into his hands. He is bewildered and afraid and just goes on gazing at his little meaningless pieces (Fromm, 1942, p.217).

The fragmentation of the self and not being fully defined and fixed is the basic driving mechanism for an economy. It shapes the condition of postmodern men and women. There is a feeling of cognitive dissonance appearing when an individual experiences the situation where components of cognition, like beliefs, symbols and reference points are incompatible with each other and constantly changing. People have a need to compose some meaning and wholeness from the fragments and pieces of shifting experiences. Striving for consistency in the plurality of reference points and the fragmentation of life makes this task impossible. Now we can observe how drastically the situation of an individual changes in the free market capitalist regime. Capitalism is strongly connected with the free market monopoly, with the freedom of thought, the freedom of choice and decision-making, but also with a deep sense of insecurity, changeability and liquidity.

The process of human development is marked by the socialization processes of a society and economy that are market-oriented.

If the individual overcomes the basic doubt concerning himself and his place in life, if he is related to the world by embracing it in the act of spontaneous living, he gains strength as an individual and he gains security. This security, however, differs from the security that characterizes the pre-individualist state in the same way in which the new relatedness to the world differs from that of the primary ties. The new security is not rooted in the protection which the individual has from the higher power outside himself; neither is it security in which the tragic quality of life is eliminated. The new security is dynamic; it is not based on protection, but on man's spontaneous activity. It is security acquired each moment by man's spontaneous activity. It is the security that only freedom can give, that needs no illusions because it has eliminated those conditions that necessitate illusions (Fromm, 1942, p.227).

Fromm outlined three of the most common escape mechanisms: automaton conformity, authoritarianism and destructiveness. *Automaton conformity* is changing one's ideal self to conform to a perception of society's preferred type of personality, but in the very process the individual is losing his or her true self. *Automaton conformity* transfers the responsibility of choice from self to society. *Authoritarianism* is giving control of oneself to some other power. By submitting one's freedom to someone or something else this act removes almost completely the freedom of choice. *Destructiveness* is the process which attempts to eliminate others or the world as a whole, all to escape freedom. Fromm said that "the destruction of the world is the last, almost desperate attempt to save myself from being crushed by it" (Fromm, 1942).

Fromm sets the critique of capitalism and stresses out how the system pervades/permeates human minds and in consequence creates 'the oppressor within', as to use Freire's words (Freire, 1970). Man perceives himself as both commodity and consumer at the same time. Financial insecurity, increasing competitiveness and feelings of isolation increase the vulnerability the individual experiences in day-to-day living. Fromm describes this alienated state of existence as 'automaton conformity' (1976, p.159). Such a process of social manipulation causes the individual to strive to be the same as every other member of society. Automaton conformity – leads to individualization and the isolation of humans. In welfare state there was reduced liberty and freedom, no place for individuality but the sense of responsibility was also too much to a lesser extent. An individual's identity and social position has been somehow granted in advance and imposed on him.

Automaton conformity can often manifest in 'pseudo thinking' (Fromm, 1976, p.164) and feeling. As a large amount of the opinions, feelings and value judgements that people experience as their they have been adopted from the world around, without any critical thought,. As Fromm states: 'we have succeeded in persuading ourselves that it is we who have made the decision, whereas we have actually conformed with expectations of others'(Fromm, 1956, p.197). Automaton conformity produces a social character that values and encourages the development of those most desired social qualities, specifically fostered to fit the latest job requirements. This process serves to further create the individual in the image of who they believe they should be, conforming to the expectations of others.

Considering the work of Erich Fromm and his most well known work *Escape from Freedom* (known in Britain as *The Fear of Freedom*) (Fromm, 1942) we can get the picture of an individual caught up in the conflicts of his time. Fromm is applying psychoanalytical insights to social problems through a psycho-analysis of society. His main focus lies on the human craving to seek a source of authority and control upon reaching a freedom that was considered to be a person's true desire. Fromm's writings were notable both for their social and political commentary and for their philosophical and psychological underpinnings too. *Escape from Freedom* is perceived as one of the founding works of political psychology. His other book *To Have or to Be* (Fromm, 1976) outlined Fromm's theory of human character as well as developing and enriching the ideas contained in *Escape from Freedom*. Taken together, these books gave a modern take on the impact of the market economy. Fromm moved Marxist thinking forward to go beyond the utility value of a product as key and saw the marketing of the product as more important. He is writing about a culture where success is centred on production, consumption and the market.

In capitalism economic activity, success, material gains, become ends in themselves. It becomes man's fate to contribute to the growth of the economic system, to amass capital, not for purposes of his own happiness or salvation, but as an end in itself. Man became a cog in the vast economic machine - an important one if he had much capital, an insignificant one if he had none - but always a cog to serve a purpose outside himself (Fromm, 1956, p.95).

Although we may try to break the stereotypes which we were brought up with and which are part of our nature, our fate is linked inextricably to the fate of others, our

worries and concerns may be the result of conflicts of the era in which we happen to live.

We can easily notice how influential branding has become in marketing nowadays. With this commodity circulation, demand is manipulated through the marketing of a lifestyle. Particular items are sold emphasising that the purchaser is not so much buying the item as buying a particular lifestyle. It is the way to become more attractive, more interesting or more alive. This perspective is about basing one's identity on what one possesses. This is the way of being that reinforces the desire to possess, not the mere possessions (Fleming 2010). Fromm is arguing that a society, in which "consumption has become the de facto goal", is itself sick. Modern global capitalism requires marketing characters in abundance and makes sure it gets them. Meanwhile, in this system, Fromm's ideal character type, the mature "productive character", the person without a mask, who can love and create, and for whom being is more important than having, is discouraged in this type of society (Smith, 2002).

In a neo-liberal, capitalist environment, education under the influence of the market seems to be obliged to be more concerned with creating the right product for the market and producing the self or ego that is appropriate for its purposes. One becomes the self that is sold as having the right profile, a commodity which is useful to the market. In this way our society, according to Fromm that is, develops a low grade form of schizophrenia. The lesson to be learned in training and education is to create the obedient, working personality, who has no feelings of his or her own.

In a nutshell, the history, culture and traditions had a profound impact on the lives of individual people. The period in which they lived to some extent shaped their perception of the world. No person can escape from the problems of a particular era, of the time in which he or she lives. One depends on them and this phenomenon can be observed from time immemorial. Fromm's insights into the nature of society and human activity have a lot to say to educators - especially those committed to working for fairer and more convivial forms of living (Smith, 2002).

As the way to inform the dissertation's theoretical and conceptual framework it is my intention to employ some concepts which I believe are relevant to the study undertaken. Firstly, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu I would like to develop the idea of *habitus*. Bourdieu's work on social and cultural capital is helpful when understanding how non-



traditional students learn to cope with the intellectual and symbolic capitals of the university. It is important to explore both the habitus of the student and also the habitus of the HE institution (the institutional habitus). His writing on cultural capital and the habitus can be of some relevance here. Students are striving to achieve the symbolic capital of the academy. Academia offers them access to social authority and to different forms of capital, which is helpful in negotiating different positions within the social world.

Pierre Bourdieu (1977 a) describes the 'system of dispositions' which is framed within social and cultural experience and which in turn allows an individual to give meaning to the experience. It is a person's habitus.

Habitus includes transportable dispositions such as way of thinking, values, and patterns of interpretation. One's habitus operates at two levels: it determines what and how one perceives, and also what expressions and actions one generates and in what manner. Habitus is not an individual phenomenon, a logic derived from a common set of material conditions of existence (Okano, 1993, p.27 in Bloomer, 1997).

Individuals have the opportunity for changing their taken for granted frames of reference, through the newly acquired tools of reflexivity and critical approach to the social values and culturally conditioned perspectives.

The learning careers and all the social experiences taking place during that time, are contributing to habitus and are shaping the students' predispositions and dispositions to learning. Habitus is produced by conditioning associated with a particular type of existence, based on shared cultural trajectories (Webb, 2002). The concept is useful for examining one particular cohort of students, who share similar backgrounds, social class and general life attitudes. A significant characteristic of habitus is that it is both durable, and oriented towards the practical. The important position here is that values and dispositions can be subject to modification. It happens when the narratives and explanations of a habitus are no longer useful for understanding the rules within a cultural field. People in transition, who move to another country in order to find a job, career and a place to live, have to modify their habitus in order to become familiar with a strange environment, which becomes their newly acquainted 'home'.

In fact, a given agent's practical relation to the future, which governs his present practice, is defined in the relationship between, on the one hand, his habitus with its temporal structures and dispositions towards the future, constituted in the course of a particular relationship to a particular universe of probabilities, and on the other hand a certain state of the chances objectively offered to him by the social world (Bourdieu, 1990, p.64).

While the habitus is subject to modification, this process usually happens gradually (Webb, 2002). However, habitus might stay unchallenged while moving from one field to another, when there is a 'continuity of meaning'. The forces of globalisation are affecting habitus. People are constantly exposed to new images, meanings and information from different perspectives that don't equate with their habitus. Young people studying abroad, are distanced from their original understandings and frames of reference and many aspects of their lives are challenged. This becomes a long-term process of changing a person's perception, world view and their dispositions.

The concept of habitus is even more important when compared to Bauman's liquidity of life, that is the changeability of living conditions. The concept of identity in flux seems clearer in the view of habitus with its 'temporal structures and dispositions'.

..the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the habitus, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 52).

The consecutive important concept is social, cultural and economic capital by Bourdieu. The graduation is strongly connected with acquiring new social and economic capital. As Bourdieu, eloquently described:

Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title nobility. (Bourdieu, 1986, p.16).

To make the analogy to Fromm's notion of freedom and identity and Bauman's view of the post modern condition and human place in it, there is a very interesting point to be made here. Bauman writes about a contemporary generation of tourists, who are making the progress towards being more flexible and adjustable to the labour market. They are tourists in search of security and employability. However, Bauman argues that the generation, which has moved from a socialist to a democratic system, fear the loss of their sense of security. What can be argued from the students' point of view is that they are people who are able, to some extent, combine newly gained freedom with some sense of security also. It is this courage that enables them to face the challenges but also become more qualified and benefit economically. To borrow yet another quote from Bourdieu:

Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. And the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, (Bourdieu, 1986, p.15).

The cultural capital gained within the institution, ‘in the form of educational qualifications’ has the potential to be turned into an economic and symbolic capital, that is to provide profit and recognition.

When one knows that symbolic capital is credit, but in the broadest sense, a kind of advance, a credence, that only the group’s belief can grant those who give it the best symbolic and material guarantees, it can be seen that the exhibition of symbolic capital (which is always very expensive in material terms) is one of the mechanisms which (no doubt universally) make capital go to capital (Bourdieu, 1990, p.120).

Another important author to mention here is Martin Bloomer and his notion of ‘studenship’. Bloomer provided a longitudinal study of young people’s experiences of learning in further education focusing upon the relationship between students’ opportunities for education available to them and their personal careers. Some of the students, interviewed by Bloomer in his study have claimed openly, and some have mentioned subtly, the fact that during the time they have completed their degree they have become ‘a different person’ (Bloomer, 1997, p.138) in the meaning of personal growth and development, along with gaining new knowledge and an emerging new personality. Martin Bloomer’s notion of ‘studenthood’ conceptualizes the ways in which students can begin to learn independently and reflect on their own learning experience, recognizing ‘the problematic nature of knowledge’ (Bloomer, 1996, p.140). The consequence is that they can begin to ‘exert influence over the curriculum’ in the creation and confirmation of their personal learning careers’ (p.140).

As Bloomer states, ‘Habitus allows for the dialectical interplay of the objective and subjective while providing some opportunity to account for both continuities and transformations in dispositions to studentship and to knowledge and learning.’ (Bloomer, 1997, p.141).

In this approach the habitus is not a deterministic view. However it sets boundaries to actions, it is more in its orienting function than a determining one. It is also a useful concept for possible explanations as to why some students continue graduation abroad and become successful in their new career path. This may be related to their previous

positive experience with education, which has structured them as successful agents in the learning environment.

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, system of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively regulated and regular without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53).

Learning happens in the cultural and social contexts within which it is located. People bring their original 'scripts' of meaning and their personal histories into new social contexts and new learning opportunities. Going further, the learning careers refer to the development of students' dispositions to learning and knowledge, as the result of the influences of many factors. The concept describes transformations in habitus, dispositions and studentship over time. During the course of life, people are deconstructing and reconstructing their perceptions and purposes. The concept of learning career places studentship, learning and personal development in a dynamic, mutually constitutive, relationship. It is inter-related with the theory of habitus, and is also linked, to the formation of personal identity and dispositions to the transformation of social and economic conditions (Bloomer, 1997).

Young people have to abandon their old ways of thinking and acting in order to integrate with the new possibilities but still staying within the structure of their culture, their collective wisdom and years of personal experience. Going to university can become a turning point in life- as an individual starts to reposition themselves in a newly-coherent world of values, beliefs and cultural practices, which differ to those of his home country experience. It also helps to develop a clearer view of who the person wants to be in terms of their general outlook and values, and even their future career.

According to Bloomer, Bourdieu's work is pre-eminently structural: 'While due emphasis is placed by Bourdieu upon subjective experience, it is a view of subjectivity as prescribed ultimately by objective probability. Objective conditions are the cornerstone of his theory' (Bloomer, 1997, p 142). Bourdieu's version of habitus, 'is premised upon the personal construction of meaning through processes of social interaction. It also uses disposition to link 'meaningmaking and action' and offers 'a

means of theorising a dialectic rather than dualistic relationship between agency and structure' (Bloomer, 2001, p 437).

This can be related to Anthony Giddens' *duality of structure*. The basis of the duality lies in the relationship the agency has with the structure. The key to Giddens' explanation is his focus on the knowledgeable ability of the agent and the fact that the agency cannot exist or be analyzed separately from its structure (Sewell, 1992). Structure according to Giddens, may be both constraining and enabling to the actions of people. Structure is to be understood as 'rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeable ability, and as instantiated in action' (Giddens, 1984, p.6). Social rules and resources can influence situational action. People shape structure, but structure determines what people do and it is an attribute of social systems. For this reason structure is part of the motivation for action and also becomes the consequence of action. Structure for Giddens is not a static concept but rather a dynamic and ongoing process (Sewell, 1992).

Structures are "both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitutes social systems" (Giddens, 1984). The Author argues that structures are enabling, and thus gives the 'knowledgeable' agent the capability to work in creative or formative ways. Dual structures are thus changeable (Sewell, 1992). Rules are the things that guide human behaviour. So too, certain rules set the foundation for social action, even if people are not aware of it. The existence of these rules is what allows human beings to understand new situations. Learning a new language can be then incorporated as new social practices into the rules of behaviour that are already known .

Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* is helpful to identify how structures change. Habitus is Bourdieu's word to describe how actors behave - it is the set of schemas that they use. There are many different structures operating at different levels, that society is consisted of and which are related. The schemas that an actor has access to can be usefully applied to many contexts. The fact that resources are endowed with cultural schemas means that they can lead to different interpretations of events and to different actions. Agency arises from the actor's knowledge of schemas, which means the ability to apply them to new contexts (Sewell, 1992).

In relation to the constructivist approach and theories of Bourdieu and Honneth, the respondents of this study are building up on the ground of their own history and

perception, they have their own habitus and frame of reference. They usually need a couple of years to relate critically and reflectively to their experiences and the country of origin with its culture. This is an on-going process of changing sets of schemas. Some structures are enabling those students to work in creative ways, constructing their new life careers .

The work of Bourdieu and Giddens is also helpful in understanding the ways that people's social connections shape educational decision-making. Broadly speaking, the concept of habitus provides a powerful tool for revealing the rationale of actions and structure in people's lives. There are, however, some limitations to the author's conceptions and theory in relation to my work, which puts me in a position where I must propose other concepts.

There is another concept, which has been proposed by Linden West, offering a psychological perspective on non-traditional adult learners. This is the notion of *transitional space*, which draws on Donald Winnicott's work on human childhood development (1971). Extending this idea to learning in adult life, we can see higher education as a:

Transitional space in which there is a constant negotiation and renegotiation of self in relation to others and the cultural world of the university....Basic question may be asked in entering university...of who a person is, has been and might want to be. This in turn may provoke intense anxiety about a capacity to cope with change or whether a person is good enough in the eyes of significant people, whether other students or tutors. New transitions via 'unconscious memory in feeling'...may evoke connections with earlier transitional moments (Johnston, Merrill, Holliday, West, Fleming & Finnegan, 2009, pp. 288, 289).

For the use of this study I am exploring the concept from a sociological point of view, by perceiving university as a transitional space for working out new identities with the potential for a changed self. In this sense, the identity of studenthood is itself an inherently transitional identity. Universities can also be viewed as a safe space, a temporary safe space away from life, for example living on a deprived estate, getting a better or any job, poverty, or a whole range of other problems.

I am especially interested in the applicability of the work of Axel Honneth to another important concept, which I would like to introduce here. This is the concept of *recognition* and Honneth's understandings of social behaviours, human need and sources of transformation explored in the field of education. One of the most important

aspects of one's existence is self-esteem which can be built through the respect one receives for one's work. The experience of being disrespected brings with it the danger of collapse in relation to one's identity. The search for identity and the search for the self-formation is indeed the search for recognition, as it is formed through recognition. And if one can earn the esteem through being acknowledged as a worthy member of society it brings the question: Why are some people leaving their country of origin, looking for education abroad and striving to stay in the country in which they got their degree?

Axel Honneth was a student of Jürgen Habermas and a follower of his ideas. He has worked at the Frankfurt School (Institute for Social Research) at the University of Frankfurt and at the Free University of Berlin. He associates himself with critical philosophy, but clearly marking down that the purpose of it is 'to investigate social problems in their historical context with emancipatory intent' (Fleming and Finnegan, 2010a). Honneth was developing the role of recognition as the key role in the inter-subjective development of a human being. He developed further critical theory of Habermas and rethought how structure and agency are related (Fleming and Finnegan, 2010). Although he confirms that his work is embedded in the Frankfurt School tradition, the work on recognition is a significant departure from Marxism.

Following the thinking of Fleming this thesis is attempting to connect the experience of non-traditional students in HE with the ideas of Honneth about recognition and respect playing a crucial role in lifelong learning and students' subjective, non-economic and psychological motives (Fleming, 2010).

Honneth argues that each person possesses his 'cultural self-understanding of a society'. It is his 'framework of orientation' that "serves as a system of reference for the appraisal of particular personality features, because their social 'worth' is measured by the degree to which they appear to be in a position to contribute to the realisation to societal goals" (Honneth, 1995, p.122). Thus the 'struggle for recognition' and a theory of inter-subjectivity become the starting point for redesigning the critical theory. (Fleming, 2010). In his *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth states:

...the reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee (Honneth, 1995, p. 92).

The conclusion is valid here: each person wanting to achieve ‘a productive relationship with himself, correlated with his identity, requires an ‘intersubjective recognition of his abilities and achievements’ (Fleming, 2010). Honneth creates the structure of relations of recognition, with three different forms of recognition. He starts with the primary relationships (love and friendship) one develops in the earliest stages of life, through the intercourse with main carers, parents usually. Those primary relationships set the foundations for basic self-confidence. The consecutive form of recognition is called ‘legal relations (rights)’, which are strongly correlated with self-respect. The last form of recognition, the one I am dealing with mostly in this thesis, is ‘community of value (solidarity)’ (Honneth, 1995, p.129), which is necessary to create self-esteem. Honneth explains: ‘the experience of being socially esteemed is accompanied by a felt confidence that ones achievements or abilities will be recognised as ‘valuable’ by other members of society’ (1995, p.128). Again, he argues that the ‘struggle for recognition, based on the need for self-esteem and the experience of disrespect, also explains social development (Fleming, 2010).

It is by the way of the morally motivated struggles of social groups – their collective attempt to establish, institutionally and culturally, expanded forms of recognition – that the normatively directional change of societies proceeds (Honneth, 1995, p.92).

Another important issue is that the aforementioned struggle and the reactions one receives from another human being, especially those significant for some reasons others (teachers, employers, people plying valid roles in societies), become the foundation of ones morality, ones moral consciousness. So the society as a whole develops a morality in the context of reciprocal reactions – either positive or negative (Fleming, 2010). There are more social scientists and philosophers dealing with the issues of identity formation with the connection of recognition, which would demand more work (i.e. the work of Nancy Fraser in Fraser and Honneth). The work of Nancy Fraser and her discussion on nature of recognition is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

This idea refers, to some extent, to the concepts of *transitional space*, *symbolic capital* and *habitus*. To summarize, in developing his critical theory of recognition Honneth focuses on the role that inter-subjectivity plays in shaping a person’s identity. He argues that the individual strives for recognition through developing relationships of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem in the family, civil society and the state.



...the reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee (Honneth, 1995, p.92).

So in order for humans to achieve a productive relationship with themselves, which can be understood as building the identity, they require an inter-subjective recognition of their abilities and achievements (Fleming & Finnegan, 2010).

Further on in his work, Honneth argues that the struggle for recognition, based on the need for self-esteem (the earlier experience of disrespect), also explains social development. 'It is by the way of institutionally and culturally expanded forms of recognition that the normatively directional change of societies proceeds' (Honneth, 1995, p.92). This is a component of a broader turn to issues of recognition and identity in philosophy and the social sciences (for instance in the work of Charles Taylor and Nancy Fraser etc) and a renewed concern with the ethical dimension of philosophy (see MacIntyre). What characterizes and discerns Honneth's theory of recognition is the extensive range of intellectual resources he engages with in developing his model, the ambition of the model in terms of his claims for its explanatory significance, and his persistence on the continuing validity of emancipatory hope as an important component of social theory (Fleming & Finnegan, 2010).

Honneth's idea of recognition which he raises was largely inspired by Hegel, but also visibly influenced by his reading of Winnicott's object-relation theory, which he saw as critical in understanding dependency on the mother as the underlying form of 'being oneself in another', referring to Winnicott's idea of 'transitional objects' as part of the shift towards autonomy (Honneth, 1995, p. 99-103).

Going further in my conceptual work I want to explore and understand how globalization shapes our life, how it influences our thoughts and the choices we make and how much of the above happens on the unconscious level and what it means to be a 'global man'. I am going to meet those questions starting with the work of such writers as Zygmunt Bauman, who dissects globalization in all its manifestations: its effects on the economy, politics, social structures, and even our perceptions of time and space (Bauman, 1998). However to be able to realise fully what globalization means for the individual, there is a need to put it in the context of the neo-liberal worldview. Without this globalization is not fully understood.

Bauman addresses important issues concerning the feeling of loss the individual experiences in the changing world. It is a world of constantly changing symbols and meanings. He presents two concepts to describe contemporary society and the condition of the world. These are *postmodernity* and '*liquid modernity*.' The passage from 'solid' to 'liquid' modernity has created a new and unprecedented setting for individual life pursuits and has confronted individuals with a series of challenges never before encountered. Social forms and institutions no longer have enough time to solidify and cannot serve as frames of reference for human actions and long-term life plans. The individuals have to develop a new approach to these life conditions. As they can no longer make any long-term plans and predict the future, their life consists of short-term projects and episodes that don't add up to any kind of sequence. Such fragmented lives require individuals to be flexible and adaptable – to be constantly ready and willing to change tactics at short notice, to abandon commitments and loyalties without regret and to pursue opportunities according to their current availability. In liquid times the individual must plan his actions and calculate the possible gains and losses of acting under conditions of constant and endemic uncertainty.

First of all, the passage from the 'solid' to a 'liquid' phase of modernity: that is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behaviour) can no longer (and are not accepted) to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set. Forms, whether already present or only adumbrated, are unlikely to be given enough time to solidify, and cannot serve as frames of reference for human actions and long-term life strategies because of their short life expectation: indeed, a life expectation shorter than the time it takes to develop a cohesive and consistent strategy, and still shorter than the fulfilment of an individual 'life project' requires (Bauman, 2005, p.1).

## **2.2 Postmodernity and Globalisation**

### **2.2.1 Dimensions of Globalization**

One of the main characteristics of globalization according to Eriksen (2001) is *Disembedding*. It means that distance is becoming irrelevant due to technological and economic changes. The ideas, fashions, labour or investments capital can travel in no time. This aspect of globalization also includes de-localization and abstracts social life from its local, geographical context. Another aspect of globalisation is called *Acceleration*, which means the increased speed of transport and communication. *Standardization* entails comparability and shared standards. It also includes the rapid

increase in the use of English and the worldwide spread of similar shopping centres, hotels and international agreements.

*Interconnectedness*, namely where the worldwide web and mobile phones, for example, bring people closer to each other. The networks connecting nations across continents are becoming faster and denser. This creates both opportunities and constraints. *Movement* - the world is on the move, people are travelling, migrating, having international conferences, travelling for business purposes and spending holidays far away from their homes, in some exotic places. *Mixing* - the cultural diversity is becoming the ordinary picture of every day life. *Vulnerability* – both on a social and personal level, the rapid increase in unwanted flows of anything from money, avian flu, transnational terrorism to climate change. The weakening of boundaries is causing the threat, which cannot be combated by nation-states, and is making people feel uncertain about their future. The last characteristic is *Reembedding*. All the responses to the disembedding tendencies of globalization can be called reembedding – which is national and sub-national identity politics and local power and community integration (Eriksen, 2001).

### **2.2.2 The pervading feeling of insecurity as the outcome of globalizing processes in contemporary world.**

Each society and each individual living on this planet deals with the issue of human security. No-one is immune. The increase in vulnerability in the global era produces the insecurity. It is due to the diversity of threats to human beings. To employ only some of them, we need to mention the proliferation of risks such as climate change, the spread of new diseases on a global scale such as AIDS or bird flu, the alienating individualism of neo-liberalism, fears of terrorist attacks or outbreaks of war and even the loss of religious faith. All the above mentioned phenomena are leaving the individual with the feeling of separateness without anchors, whereas his predecessors could have found the reliance and support (Eriksen, 2001).

It does not mean of course that creating the secure life is not possible, but it does entail hard work. The world seems to be too complex and turbulent. As Bauman notes security building activities are not only confronted with risks and insecurities on the national level, like the environmental problems, wars or crimes, but also and maybe more profoundly with individualisation and ideological tendencies favouring individual

freedom at the expense of sacrificing security (Bauman, 2000). His 'liquid modernity' concerns the floating, shifting qualities of values and social structure. Individuals' identities are fragmented, incomplete and constantly re-negotiated. Insecurity appears more vividly in societies undergoing rapid change. Suddenly, new events and issues are concerned and the individual finds himself in a setting with no preordained script to be followed.

It has been well documented that identification in our day and age can be an insecure kind of task with many difficulties and poor predictability. People who formerly had no mutual contact are brought together, new cultural forms arise, and the dominant ideology dictating that life should consist in free choices puts pressure on everyone. Good old recipes for the good life may not have been lost, but they are conventionally discarded as reactionary and inhibiting. The result may just as well be frustrated confusion as positive self-realisation (Eriksen, 2001, p.54).

Capitalism itself is creating the insecurity mentioned above and some new social dynamics. It is uprooting individuals from their conventional ways of doing things, moving them physically, disembedding them, giving them new tasks and bringing them into contact with new others, with strangers. They are left having to improvise and negotiate new situational definitions. The opportunities are more open and more varied to them than to an individual who remains contented in a condition of predictable routines, but the risks are much greater.

Postmodernity is a hybrid word in its multiplicity of changes associated with globalization, broadly understood, and the development of ever newer technologies and overproduction. What was distinctly postmodern for Bauman was found in the meaning of choice for individual agents under conditions of plurality. He coined this term in the 1990's, and a decade later he sees postmodernity as an umbrella term which can be applied to a wide range of social transformations (Lee, 2005, pp.61- 62). In his later work, Bauman proposes the term of 'liquid modernity' as more suitable for making sense of changes as well continuities in modernity. The metaphor addresses the critique of the aqueous foundation of modernity and characterises the future by a 'fluid world of globalization, deregulation and individualization' (Bauman, 2002, p.19) It is still linked with postmodernity in the sense of flexibility and uncertainty existing in the postmodern world which is continuous with the notion of liquidity. Liquid modernity is Bauman's conception of how the world today denies the so-called solidity it once struggled with persistence to create and maintain. We live in the world of shape-shifting capital and labour, which best defines modernity as amorphous, or liquid.

In his *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Bauman, 1998) he mentions the rise of liquid capital in the meaning of free movement of capital and money. Liquid capital flows in all directions and the labour forces are seen to take on more flexibility in relation to unpredictable market forces (Lee, 2005, p.65). This is a description of a neo-liberal approach to the market. Neo-liberalism has a sense of political directiveness that liquid modernity does not. What is inevitable nowadays is constant, rapid change and unpredictability. The progression of liquefaction brings the sense of inconstancy, where everything is unstable, unpredictable, uncertain, where reality seems to be in constant flux. Never before in history has humanity experienced such a condition. Bauman calls it 'the new lightness and fluidity of the increasingly mobile, slippery, shifty and fugitive power' (Bauman, 2000, p.14). As Lee suggests, Bauman's concern with liquidity 'is not simply a condition for contemplation but an existential dilemma that needs to be addressed practically' (Lee, 2005, p.67).

Liquidity reduces our sense of constancy in suggesting new levels of freedom, and leads us to dissolve the bonds that were strengthening the sense of security. Human bonds loosen up and intimacy is sacrificed to the unstable nature of all social relationships. It makes the individual vulnerable and alienated. What becomes valued nowadays is the ability to be on the move constantly and to be flexible.

In the life-game of postmodern consumers the rules of the game keep changing in the course of playing. The sensible strategy is therefore to keep each game short – so that a sensibly played game of life calls for the splitting of one big all-embracing game with huge stakes into a series of brief and narrow games with small ones. Determination to live one day at a time, depicting daily life as a succession of minor emergencies become the guiding principles of all rational conduct (1995, p.88).

The perpetually changing rules of the life-game become the nightmare for postmodern man. They strongly relate to the deep sense of insecurity and uncertainty experienced by contemporary individuals. The market forces are very strong. They affect the whole life of a human being. Transience has a built-in value towards the obsession with novelty. There are constantly new objects to be consumed, new goals to be reached.

....in the solid modern society of producers, gratification seemed indeed to reside primarily in the promise of long-term security.(...)but the human desire for 'security and dreams of an ultimate 'steady state' are not suitable to be deployed in the service of a society of consumers. An instability of desires and insatiability of needs, and the resulting proclivity for instant consumption and the instant disposal of its objects, chimes well with the new liquidity of the setting in which life pursuits have been inscribed and are bound to be conducted in the foreseeable

future. A liquid modern setting is inhospitable to long-term planning, investment and storage. And when degrees of mobility, and the capacity to grasp a fleeting chance on the run, become major factors in high standing and esteem, bulky possessions feel more like irritating ballast than precious load (Bauman, 2007, p.31).

Later in the consecutive chapters, I will argue that along with the unpredictable life conditions contemporary students are becoming the sensation-gatherers and seekers in the way in which Bauman describes. Along with adjusting to precarious and uncertain conditions they are becoming tourists in their own lives, pursuing their careers and looking for a comfort of living and not feeling such strong homesickness, their predecessors in exile have been experiencing .

“The individual life-projects find no stable ground in which to lodge an anchor, and individual identity-building efforts cannot rectify the consequences of ‘disembedding’ and arrest the floating and drifting self”(Bauman, 1997, p.20). Eriksen in his *Tyranny of the Moment* also puts *disembedding* as one of the main characteristics of globalization. It means that the distance is becoming irrelevant due to technological and economic changes. The ideas, fashions, labour or investments capital can travel in no time. This aspect of globalization includes also de-localization and abstracts social life from its local, spatially fixed context.

### **2.3 Neoliberalism**

When talking about globalisation and the expansion of social spheres and new variable dimensions in life due to the spread of new technologies and web connections it would be impossible not to mention the concept of neoliberalism. Definitions of it can vary as manifestations of neoliberal thought can take on social, political or philosophical dimensions, but it still remains quite easy to recognise. Neoliberalism is inseparable from globalisation and the spread of new technologies and development of a global market. It is not an easily definable term, however much it might seem so. In economic and political terms it describes the market - driven approach to social and economic policy, stressing the efficiency of private enterprise and an open market. Sometimes the concept is used pejoratively, when connected with the government objectives being framed by the discourse of commerce and the imperative of market demands, while deprecating the pursuit of public goods and social justice. The word describes what many perceive as the pitiful spread of capitalism and consumerism, as well as the equally deplorable demolition of the proactive welfare state.

The movement toward the neoliberal utopia of a pure and perfect market is made possible by the politics of financial deregulation. And it is achieved through the transformative and, it must be said, *destructive* action of all of the political measures (of which the most recent is the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), designed to protect foreign corporations and their investments from national states) that aim to *call into question any and all collective structures* that could serve as an obstacle to the logic of the pure market: the nation, whose space to manoeuvre continually decreases[.....]And yet the world is there, with the immediately visible effects of the implementation of the great neoliberal utopia: not only the poverty of an increasingly large segment of the most economically advanced societies, the extraordinary growth in income differences, the progressive disappearance of autonomous universes of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1998).

The growing dominance of neoliberal policies in many countries since the 1980's as well as economic globalisation relates strongly to the worldwide shift towards a so called 'predatory' form of capitalism (Bienefeld, 2007, p.20). Bienefeld argues that before the neoliberal modes of global capital, the economic life was, to a much greater extent, determined at the national level through the negotiation between capital, labour and the state.

What has happened to the advanced industrial countries since exercising neoliberal politics is that they have opened their national economies to international trade and competition. It is followed by deregulation in the sector of the capital, investment, ideas and goods control flows (Kiely 2005). Along with the liberation of market forces and the encouragement of enterprise comes the decline in the protection of indigenous companies, a reduction in subsidies and the privatisation of national assets. What follows is the creation of a more mobile and flexible labour force along with a decrease in state protection for the individual. Neoliberal policies were also implied in many Third World countries in the 1980's and 1990's by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank through the Washington Consensus. The main reason for imposing those changes was the consensus of debt relief and some other advantages in return for new national regulations and economic liberalism in those countries (Bienefeld, 2007). All of those changes have caused the great expansion of capitalist activity by incorporating governments into their operations disregarding previous obligations of those governments to ordinary people.

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to

such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit (Harvey 2005, p.2).

In theoretical terms it describes an internationally prevailing ideological paradigm that leads to all kinds of practices and policies (social, cultural, and political) that privileges the agency of markets, efficiency, consumerism, transactional thinking and individual autonomy and shifts risk from governments and corporations onto individuals.

The collapse of the communist system in the late 1980s helped to initiate policies of free market reform. From the 1980's onwards, a number of communist and socialist countries initiated various neoliberal reforms.

Neoliberalism is commonly thought of as a political philosophy giving priority to individual freedom and the right to private property. It is not, however, the simple and homogeneous philosophy it might appear to be. It ranges over a wide expanse in regard to ethical foundations as well as to normative conclusions. At the one end of the line is 'anarcho-liberalism', arguing for a complete laissez-faire, and the abolishment of all government. At the other end is 'classical liberalism', demanding a government with functions exceeding those of the so-called night-watchman state (Blomgren 1997, p.224 in Thorsen and Lie, 2010).

In the service of the market both the individual's validity and usefulness is seen through his consumerist lenses rather than any other skills. The citizen becomes the enemy of the consumer, the perfect product of market driven ideology. Education is redefined as marketable products while gaining credentials is seen as a commodity. It can be said that everything, starting with health, poverty and ending with human death and burial have become marketable products, but the focus of this study is on the changing face of education and its human consequences.

### **2.3.1 Neo-liberalism in Poland**

The collapse of Soviet domination and communism in Poland was a great moment in its history and Poland plunged into free market capitalism under the Balcerowicz Plan in 1990. The idea was to destroy the old society and create a better world of consumerism



overnight. However, not all the Polish people were mentally capable of rising to the new challenges brought by a neo-liberal agenda and free market economy. Poland struggles ever since with unemployment and its citizens are frustrated. . The World Bank figures in 2006 revealed that Poland still had an unemployment rate of 20% - the highest in the EU. Some 40% of young people were unemployed in 2006, almost two times the average for the rest of the EU (Naylor, 2010).

As noted by economist Tadeusz Kowalik, Polish politicians are still gazing at the American neo-liberalism. Poland has one of the lowest GDP shares in the European Union. It also has the highest rate of inequality in such spheres as: social security, expenditure on social assistance, benefits for children, unemployment benefits and housing assistance<sup>6</sup>.

Still, the younger generation, consisting of people in their 30s and 40s maintain that it was not really as bad as is often made out. What people try not to remember is the economic privation, the grim concrete tower blocks, alcoholics, empty shelves, massive environmental pollution and respiratory problems which were the reality of communist Poland. There is a generation of people who claim and remember that what Poland has lost is the safe place that locality and community offers. What this means, is the belief that people can work together for a better society and that, in the not so recent past real communities did exist and people were more able to cherish the simple things in life. There was some kind of tolerable stability about life, free from the complexities and anxieties that freedom brings. .

As Neal Ascherson put it:

We are invited to be kings and queens in the supermarket, but serfs at work. In the Tesco aisles we are cosseted with the illusion of sovereign consumer choice. But in the office or the factory we must stop choosing and submit to absolute authority. There, others decide in secret how we should work or whether we should work at all. As the rights of employees dwindle, the absurdity of this contrast grows more glaring (1998, *The Times*).

Poles work harder to increase their wages and those earnings are being spent to purchase new, better consumer goods. Unfortunately it brings less satisfaction than expected. There is very little real reform going on in Poland. Pensions are still low, universities mass-produce graduates with meaningless degrees, especially in the private

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<sup>6</sup> Source: State intervention and neoliberalism  
<http://wolnemedi.net/gospodarka/interwencjonizm-panstwowy-a-neoliberalizm/>  
assessed on : 29.10.2010

sector. unemployment in Poland was extremely high until the mass migration to the West after joining EU (Naylor, 2010).

Authors of *Captive Mind Neo-liberalism and Its Critique* (Sowa and Majewska 2007), are very critical of the free-market ideology and its practice. Real socialism is gone, but determinism and the historical necessity (Sowa and Majewska 2007) remained. It is a very strong statement, which is that the neo-liberal propaganda is trying to enslave the mind and imagination and arrest it to the extent that the socio-economic status quo is not subjected to criticism and no one looks for alternatives. The structures of the state power, that have traditionally facilitated the capitalists' actions, establishing the favourable rights for capitalism and ensuring its enforcement, are becoming less efficient and are losing its legitimacy in the eyes of citizens. Using the neo-liberal politics, the state government became limited in its influence (Sowa and Majewska 2007)

### **2.3.2 Neo- liberalism and Irish Education**

Kathleen Lynch provides a strong critique of the neoliberal, market driven approach to Irish education. She emphasises the fact that education is a right in the first instance. Secondly it is necessary for realising other rights. Educational credentials play a crucial role 'in mediating access to other goods', e.g. employment (Lynch in Healy, Reynolds & Collins, 2006, p.297).

As a neoliberal approach has commodified the educational sector, Lynch concludes it should include the rights to education for those who cannot pay and it includes the realisation of other rights to which education mediates access (Lynch in Healy, Reynolds & Collins, 2006, p.297). Education plays a crucial role in the development of the person, wherein self-realisation, self-fulfilment and exercise of capabilities and opportunities are being opened up for the individual. As a public good it also enriches all levels of life, in its social, cultural, political and economic dimension, both locally and globally. She adds that in a commercially-oriented system, the intrinsic values for the individual cannot be protected and dimensions of public good are not to be prioritised (Lynch in Healy, Reynolds & Collins, 2006, p.297). The same applies to a care function, which education has, as it is perceived as cost-generating. Lynch develops her critique of the neoliberal agenda stating that the economic view on education promotes competitive individualism and fosters educational inequality (Lynch, p.307, Lynch and Baker, 2005). She goes further by stressing the hidden

agenda of the neo-liberal ideology, which depoliticises debates about education moving the shift towards the language of economic efficiency. Lynch calls it a 'silent colonisation of the hearts and minds of academics and students happening in universities' (Lynch, in Healy, Reynolds & Collins, 2006, p.308). There is no longer the authoritarian academic measuring and judging the individual, but one is always 'measuring oneself up or down', marking progress by performance indicators (ibid, p.309).

The interrelated drive to increase choice, raise standards and shift control from the 'bureaucratic school' to the 'sovereign consumer' may be regarded as representative of a broader political shift towards the right, where a distinctive neoliberal interpretation of fairness and efficiency based on the moral might and supremacy of the market has taken root (ibid.,p.306).

She concludes further that ideology of choice is only a political distraction from the fact that marketised education is fostering the illusion of opportunity. The implications of a market-driven agenda for universities may be diverse. The market-oriented profile of higher education weakens the position of the arts, humanities and critical social sciences, as they do not service the business sector directly (Lynch, p.311). The reliance on industry-funded research results in the danger of losing independence of thought. What is positive though, is the presence of narratives of equality and inclusion in EU countries that challenge the neo-liberal code. In Ireland, there is a growing political demand to promote diversity in the universities. It concerns the socio-economic status of students, as well as their age, ethnicity and disability (Higher Education Authority, 2005). There is the conclusion that European countries, like Ireland, have become increasingly dependent on education to drive their social, cultural, political and economic infrastructure. In such conditions access to higher education is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for survival. Education should be treated in terms of a necessity for the majority and not for the privileged only. Although there is an extensive body of literature dealing with neoliberalism and a lot of thinkers analysed the challenge this historical turn creates for education, it must be noted that not so many authors have chosen to frame the transformation of Ireland and the aspects of the "Celtic Tiger" as part of a neo-liberal turn in its history (Finnegan, 2008). Finnegan states that there has been very little research on the impact of neo-liberalism on Irish education in general.

According to writers such as Giroux, Harvey and Bourdieu neoliberalism should not be understood only in terms of the political ideology of capitalist globalisation, but what is more profound is its complex form of 'cultural hegemony'. It should be taken into

account as a powerful worldview, which creates and promotes self-centred, egoistic, calculating and individualistic humans. The free market ideology saturates, pervades and permeates the very thought, emotion and desire of individuals. All of the above is being diffused through popular culture, being under the control of large media corporations. This affects the way we all create meaning and build our identities. “In this formulation the market paradigm has acquired the power to create what it claims to describe - an atomized, individualistic and acquisitive society”(Fleming, 2008). Continuing the thought the postmodernist thinkers like Bauman and Sennett conclude that ‘democracy is at a crossroads, not only in terms of devising global institutions of governance and overcoming inequality, but also in terms of our ability to create enduring and meaningful personal and collective narratives in a world in which tempo, values and reference points of social life have been drastically altered’ (ibid.).

Mentioning neoliberalism is necessary in order to understand changes in contemporary Ireland in its both contexts as economic policy and as a form of political hegemony. After the huge transformation which Ireland went through for over a decade in the field of privatisation and marketisation there was a noticeable growth in support of neoliberal ideas in public debates. O’Rain, the accomplished commentator on the Irish economy, mentions “competitiveness obsession” and a ‘blind faith in the market’.

Harvey argues that neoliberalism has only deepened social inequality through the transformation of the way resources and wealth are distributed (Harvey, 2005). He also accentuates the postmodern time-space compression, which emphasizes the values of instantaneity and disposability (Harvey, 1989, p.286). However, while this definition mainly refers to the market driven production and consumerist approach towards goods, it also creates the space for different understandings.

It meant more than just throwing away produced goods, but also being able to throw away values, lifestyles, stable relationships, and attachments to things, buildings, places, people, and received ways of doing and being[...]Through such mechanisms [...] individuals were forced to cope with disposability, novelty, and the prospects for instant obsolescence (Harvey, 1989 p.286).

It corresponds with postmodernism and liquid modernity, where everything in the world is unstable and individuals cannot stay attached to things, places and even other people. The powerful demands which the capitalist market are exerting on us are visible in the forces playing their part in the media manipulation.

...advertising and media images have come to play a very much more integrative role in cultural practices and now assume a much greater importance in the growth dynamics of capitalism. Advertising, moreover is no longer built around the idea of informing or promoting in the ordinary sense, but is increasingly geared to manipulating desires and tastes through images that may or may not have anything to do with the product to be sold. If we stripped modern advertising of direct reference of three themes of money, sex and power there would be very little left (Harvey, 1989, p.287).

Having in mind the neoliberal emphasis on the power of the market to satisfy all the customers needs, there is no wonder that education in a neoliberal world becomes a commodity, to be traded in a global, homogenized world. David Harvey in *A Brief history of Neoliberalism* (2005) and *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989) makes an excellent critique of neoliberalism.

If we view culture as that complex of signs and significations (including language) that mesh into codes of transmission of social values and meanings, then we can at least begin upon the task of unravelling its complexities under present-day conditions by recognizing that money and commodities are themselves the primary bearers of cultural codes. Since money and commodities are entirely bound up with the circulation of capital, it follows that cultural forms are firmly rooted in the daily circulation process of capital. It is, therefore, with the daily experience of money and the commodity that we should begin, no matter if special commodities or even whole sign systems may be extracted from the common herd and made the basis of 'high' culture or that specialized 'imaging' which we have already had cause to comment upon (Harvey, 1989, p.299).

Bauman writes about fragmented life. The transition from one culture to another involves a basic uncertainty about oneself, identity, place and belonging. It includes a feeling of being fragmented, of not having the past, and not yet being able to form or plan a future.

Many of those problems are being raised in the work of Bauman. He (2006) writes about the uncertainty and insecurity connected with modern reality. Bauman uses the metaphor - 'liquid modernity'. The world around us has become more precarious than ever: we live in an era of constant change and disposability.

The liquid modern society of consumers emerged along with globalization and its new order-making on a worldwide scale, which is providing more mobility - of people, capital and information with the intention to be equally beneficial for everyone. Post-modern worries and anxieties are tightly connected with the neo-liberal agenda, which strongly affects personal life circumstances and raises challenges never before encountered. In the world open to the free market circulation of capital, nothing can remain stable and indifferent to change. (Bauman, 2007a).

Social forms, understood as structures, institutions and patterns of behaviour are dissolving and therefore cannot serve as solid frames of reference any longer. The neo-liberal agenda of free capital and commodity flow, separates power from politics. Much of the power moves away to the politically uncontrolled space and unpredictable market forces (Bauman, 2007a, p.2). In this world individuals are all expected to give meaning and form to their lives by using their own skills and resources. Many of them lack the tools and capabilities. Everything keeps changing - the fashions people follow, the things they dream of and things they fear. The most profound outcome of a consumerist life philosophy propagated and instilled by a consumer-oriented economy is the feeling of necessity to adjust to this world tempo by being flexible and constantly ready to change. Therefore, people find themselves in a situation which forces them to abandon long-term planning and thinking. The social bounds and structures weaken (Bauman, 2007a, p.3). All the above results in life becoming episodic, consisting of 'a series of short-term projects' and events (Bauman, 2007a, p.2).

The postmodern world became deprived of visible structure . The capital and finance has been bestowed with the unbound freedom. The legal frameworks of the welfare state have been replaced by the process of polarization and led to even greater inequality. The liquidity of the world also results in the process of watering down and blurring of what can be expected and what is unexpected, of what is familiar and what is strange.

The main critique at this point can be that certain structures do play significant role in this study. There is certainly a neo-liberal agenda, higher education, young age of respondents and some other structures as well. It can however be argued that the above statement, as the whole concept of liquid modernity should rather be treated as an 'existential dilemma' (Lee, 2005) and understood as the personal experience of social bounds weakening and individual perception that the frames of reference, which seemed solid for previous generations are dissolving. Thus such a strong assertion can shed some light on the contemporary man condition and indicate what anxieties he is facing. According to Giddens, the development of late modernity have uprooted individuals from traditional social structures which defined their identities or social positions (Giddens, 2000). At the same time the contemporary reality is strongly associated with reflexivity and constant questioning of scientific knowledge, which further leads to problems with individual identity formation.

In postmodernism each of us is 'fragmented among a plurality of partial identities, identity being only provisionally determined and therefore open to the contingent addition of further partial identities' (Bagnall, 1999, p.107).

Postmodernism theory is a set of explanatory understandings that help us make sense of some aspect of the world. (p.3) Although there is little empirical evidence to support the post-modern theories it is an interesting conceptual framework, to be applied in the analysis of research outcomes.

What is often associated with postmodernism is that contingency in life –the acceptance of all understandings and solutions is partial, provisional, and continuously open to review and renegotiation. Also constructivists would see the dominant discourse as just one of many possibilities and recognise that the concepts used to understand the social world are themselves socially constructed and invested with meaning that is contextual and temporary.

There is another striking feature of the liquidity, its gravity, which is not the same for everyone. The stillness of the water and the awareness of being in control while swimming gives freedom and pleasure. Changing water into another substance, like honey or treacle would cause a totally different sensation. This substance will stick to the person and suck at her. Bauman uses the expression coined by Jean-Paul Sartre *le visqueux- the slimy* (Bauman, 1997, p.26). This liquidity may be welcomed or feared according to the resources the person possesses. The *slimliness* stands for the loss of freedom or the fear that liberty might be lost. Freedom is power related and depends on who is stronger and who possesses greater resources to combat the obstacles. However the limitation of Bauman's theory is that he is not giving the easily applicable solutions to overcome the fears and difficulties people are faced in this world.

He argues that people need to resemble *smart missiles* and avoid being fixed in order to survive in an ever-changing, consumer-oriented world. There are however, other theories in this conceptual framework, which shed some light on possible strategies helpful in managing the liquidity of life. There is the social and economic capital of Bourdieu, which empowers the individual and liberates him to some extent, in his struggle for a decent life. There is the concept of recognition by Honneth, which seems to be essential for self-worth and self-development.

## **2.4 The role of education in the consumerist settings. How are those ideas relevant to this study?**

First of all, the world around us deeply affects our identity structure and formation. It also affects human motives and choices. Postmodern identity is uncertain because the whole world is uncertain and erratic. Bauman is writing about the uprooted, drifting existence, about the position previously built gradually, step-by-step, where the consecutive events determined, and in some way fixed, the coming occurrences and were becoming the guarantee of tomorrow. Man grew up, graduated, started a family, went to work and raised children. His life was, to a large extent, predictable, framed and secure in this meaning. Today the disintegration of social ties is taking place. Formal education cannot guarantee the job position and the job is not a guarantee of the future. Marriage is becoming more of a partnership agreement which can be terminated in unfavourable times. Everything, even social ties, is becoming commodified.

The crucial, perhaps the decisive purpose of consumption in the society of consumers (even if it is seldom spelled out in so many words and still less frequently publicly debated) is not the satisfaction of needs, desires and wants, but the commoditization or recommoditization of the consumer: raising the status of consumers to that of sellable commodities (Bauman, 2007, p.37).

This links to neoliberal approach to education. Higher education institutions have marketed themselves (Lynch, 2006). Students became both consumers and commodities. Graduates can be seen as university products.

As we have seen, it is the widespread characteristic of contemporary men and women in our type of society that they live perpetually with the 'identity problem' unsolved. They suffer, one might say, from a chronic absence of resources with which they could build a truly solid and lasting identity, anchor it and stop it from drifting (Bauman, 1997, p.26).

As well as the world around us our identity also becomes divided, fragmented, disintegrated and elusive, formless and uncertain. There are many factors contributing to such a condition: the media, an increase in the technological revolution, the industrialization of all aspects of life, hyper-consumption, renamed the nature of interpersonal interactions and the internalised nature of social control. But man still wants to find out. He wants to have meaning, to extract meaning and purpose and, in consequence, to build subjectivity.

The world construed of durable objects has been replaced 'with disposable products designed for immediate obsolescence'. In such a world, 'identities can be adopted and discarded like a change of costume'. The horror of the new situation is that all diligent work of construction may prove to be in vain; its allurements is



the fact of not being bound by past trials, being never irrevocably defeated, always 'keeping the options open' [...] The hub of postmodern life strategy is not identity building, but the avoidance of being fixed (Bauman, 1995, p.89).

Existentially people are more on their own, and live – whether through choice and/or necessity – in conditions of confusing and uncertain change as well as pervasive unpredictability, economically, politically, socially and ecologically. Using Zygmunt Bauman's metaphor they need to see themselves as 'smart missiles' (Bauman in Bron & Kurantowicz, 2005, p.17 ), constantly adapting to a liquid world where nothing is certain, including our futures, and where targets constantly change, then biographies, by definition, are both more unpredictable but are also at the heart of the learning process, in a dynamic, reflexive sense (Bauman in Bron & Kurantowicz, 2005). He points out that education must become continuous in the liquid modern setting. 'No other kind of education and/or learning is conceivable; 'formation' of selves or personalities is unthinkable in any other fashion but that of an on-going and perpetually unfinished re-formation'(2005).

#### **2.4.1 Where does it leave the prospects and the tasks for education?**

Jacek Wojciechowski (2004, p.38) observes: 'once upon a time a university degree offered a safe conduct for practicing a profession until retirement – but this is now history. Nowadays, knowledge needs to be constantly refreshed, even the professions need to be changed, otherwise all effort to earn a living will come to nothing'. Bauman puts it in this way: 'the impetuous growth of new knowledge and no less rapid ageing of the old combine to produce, on a massive scale, human ignorance and continuously replenish, perhaps even beef up, its supplies.' He also adds the '...identity of the individual was cast as a project, the life project. Identity was to be erected systematically, level by level and brick by brick, following a blueprint completed before the work started' ( Bauman, 1997, p.20).

The task for education would then be 'empowering' one. Under conditions of incurable uncertainty and the constant threat of being 'left behind' Bauman concludes 'we need (..) education to give us a choice. But we need it even more to salvage the conditions that make the choice available and within our power.'(Bauman 2005, p.22) By empowerment he means acquiring the ability to control or influence all kinds of forces (social, political, economic and personal) that are affecting the life trajectory. It also means the ability to make choices and then to act effectively on them. "Empowerment

requires not only the acquisition of skills that would allow to influence the game's objectives, stakes and rules; not only personal, but also 'social' skills." (2005, p.23)

Another factor is the omnipresent consumerism, which strongly affects our lives. And the 'consumer is an enemy of the citizen' (Bauman, 2005). Education should not only enable people to pursue their life goals with the hope of success and self-confidence. There is another task for education- 'not adapting human skills to the fast pace of the world's change, but making the fast changing world more hospitable to humanity' (Bauman, 2005). The feeling of being lost and a lack of durability might be overcome by taking actions and adapting to fast- changing life conditions. Entering education seems to be a light in the unpredictable world by empowering people to make choices and influence the 'social conditions in which choices are made and pursued' (2005, p.23).

Stanley Aronowitz raises an alarm about the current state of education. The crisis extends to higher education, where all but a few elite institutions are becoming increasingly narrow in their focus and vocational in their teaching (Aronowitz, 2001). Bauman also writes about globalization and how it affected our way of perceiving the space. He writes about the time and space compression in the globalised world (Bauman 1998). The word globalization itself aspires to be the concept which explains the contemporary human condition. It is inevitably connected with the expression of time and space compression - which encompasses multidimensional transformations of all aspects of human existence (Bauman 1998). I am interested in those transformations in relation to education. The individual has the right and the freedom to choose his place to live, to learn, to choose the learning style and the school in which he or she wants to gain the knowledge. The space seems to disappear. There are no designated borders to limit our world. There is no right set of values. In the world where borders appear to count for little and cultures and values to mix together creating a new hybrid and where the information transfer happens immediately – the human being finds himself in a completely new situation having to make life choices about which way to go. Melosik (1998) has noted that:

The journey beyond my own world might be the expedition for commodities but also the search for the self. The education becomes the journey, the opening up the windows for the new worlds, the meeting with the otherness, seeing from strange perspectives. The displacement is in fact the desire for identity (Melosik, 1998, p.51).

Broadening horizons through learning is very helpful in gaining new and better strategies to cope with life. So maybe work and studying in a foreign country can be the better way of gaining knowledge and seeing things from the greater perspective.

The next aspect is the search for one's own self, being the seeker of the truth of the self. Leaving your comfort zone demands courage but can reward you with a better understanding of yourself with a greater trust in the flow of life and in yourself.

## **2.5 The concept of identity and contemporary migrations under the conditions of globalisation**

Why is the identity concept so important in relation to globalisation and learning? As John Field points out :

Our learning needs to be understood in socio-cultural terms, as an outcome of everyday life as it is lived in constant interaction with specific socio-economic conditions, and as experienced through each individual's interpretation of an actions on those conditions (Field in Jarvis & Watts ed., 2012, p.176).

Giddens wrote about reflexivity as necessary in late modernity as the individual identity is 'no longer something that is 'just given' and taken for granted, but must be understood as 'something that has to be routinely created and sustained' (Giddens, 1991, p.51). For this reason learning becomes 'a fundamental dimension of living' (Giddens, 1991, p.6). The author also coins the expression of *life politics*, which is the politics of choices, of struggles over self-realisation, way of navigating in life and coping with the emerging challenges. (Field, 2010).

As Giddens adds, *life politics* 'presumes (a certain level of) emancipation' in two main meanings: 'emancipation from the fixities of tradition and from conditions of hierarchical domination' (Giddens, 1991, p.214).

In a post-modern world seen by Bauman and Giddens as consisted of fragmented and shifting experiences, the creation of life politics is the individual response to the external world. Life politics is a politics of life decisions – based on making choices and integrating past experiences, and future plans into a coherent framework of an individual lifespan.

The narrative of self – identity has to be shaped, altered and reflexively sustained in relation to rapidly changing circumstances of social life, on a local and global scale. The individual must integrate information deriving from a diversity of mediated experiences with local involvements in such a way as to connect future projects with past experiences in a reasonably coherent fashion. Only if the person is able to develop an inner authenticity – a framework of basic trust by means of which the lifespan can be understood as a unity against

the backdrop of shifting social events – can this be attained (Giddens, 1991, p.215).

At a time of changing external circumstance, life politics provides the means of giving coherence to the finite lifespan (Giddens, 1991).

At the time when globalising influences intrude into the reflexive project of the self but at the same token the processes of self-realisation influence global strategies (Giddens, 1991, p.214). Life politics is the response to those forces and the struggle for consistency and coherence of the identity and self-project. In this sense even changing masks of identity would be the only external form of adjusting to changing conditions, while maintaining coherence inside. Students making decisions to study abroad are trying to maintain coherence in their self perception and their choices are more or less reflexive projects. They become creative agents in creating their careers and their internal structures are being transformed. Their overall world perception and the reflection on their own nationality is being transformed. They seem to be on the move, but there are certain structures, which characterize those students, which structures can be applied to new changing life contexts. Their educational experience, English language acquisition, age and class – are specific structures, which define and position them as young professionals.

The concept of identity as a social phenomenon has gained a privileged position in the field of social sciences. There are particular reasons for paying special attention to this phenomenon. There is a sense of separateness, resulting from the system of cultural referents and patterned in the web of connections and contacts, which enable the production of social capital. There is also the issue of losing the incubational comfort for most of the individuals affected by globalization. The economic, monetary and social dimensions of the processes of the integration, mostly on the international scale, have affected negatively ‘such identity referents’ (Misztal, in Budakowska, p.32). The concept of identity occupies a valid position in this dissertation, referring to the transition Polish students went through and their renegotiation of the self. In such circumstances of competitiveness, unpredictability and changing life conditions, identity becomes a ‘reflexive project’ (Giddens, 1991, p.32). Along with the move from locality to a broader, global perspective, this project also changes. Castells (1997) argues that ‘while in modernity project identity was constituted from civil society (as in

the case of socialism)', in today's reality it 'grows from communal resistance' and leads to 'transformative subjects'. Giddens adds:

The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options (Giddens, 1991, p.5).

Manuel Castells understands identity, in its reference to social actors, as 'the process of construction of meanings on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning' (Castells, 1997 p.7). It is valid and interesting for the purposes of this thesis as all the students refer to their changing cultural values and attributes. This means that the way identities are constructed largely depends on social context. Giddens states that 'self-identity is not a distinctive trait possessed by the ? individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her/his biography' (Giddens, 1991, p.53). In postmodern societies, individuals have a chance of creating and inventing the selves as distinct subjects, irrespective of their group memberships, heritage and even, to some extent, the language spoken.

There are also the voices of critics when relating to postmodernism. Noam Chomsky has argued that postmodernism is meaningless because it adds nothing to analytical or empirical knowledge, giving the explanations to things that were already obvious (Chomsky, 1995). As Bagnall (1999) records, the notion of post-modern identity is that it is socially so malleable that can be constituted and reconstituted at will. The same person can think and behave in entirely contradictory way depending on the situation. Fromm as the critical theorist believed that each individual possesses a unique, core essence 'which is unchangeable and which persists throughout life in spite of varying circumstances, and regardless of certain changes in opinions and feelings' (1956b, p.123). As Brookfield points out, this notion may appear hopelessly naïve to contemporary post-modern sensibilities (Brookfield, p.150). The assertion that people can endlessly create their selves is not substantiated with empirical evidence. However, the theory can be used as a possible explanation of the contemporary man condition or indicate the constant pursuit for identity formation. It should be treated as the expression of the way people experience themselves and their relation to the world. The world of our experiences seems chaotic, disconnected, confusing. There appear to be no integrating forces, no unified meaning, no true inner understanding of phenomena in our experience of the world. Postmodernism, does not have a universally applicable definition. Vaclav Havel explained his understanding of the post-modern view:

I see it rather as a typical expression of this multicultural era, a signal that an amalgamation of cultures is taking place. I see it as proof that something is happening, something is being born, that we are in a phase when one age is succeeding another, when everything is possible. Yes, everything is possible, because our civilization does not have its own unified style, its own spirit, its own aesthetic (Havel, 1994).

Taking the postmodern notion that human lives are immersed in social and cultural contexts and for this differ greatly depending on time and place, the justified approach to the study undertaken is constructivist paradigm. 'Constructivism rejects universals and generalizable truths and focuses instead on the variability of how people make interpretations of their experience' (Brookfield, p.15).

Field in his critique of postmodernism, states that not all of our environment is turbulent, and not everything around us is changing. All the same, many of the old coordinates of everyday life, for long accepted as fixed and given, have become looser and more mobile. For this reason creating a secure identity can be an attainable goal (Field, 2010).

Ties based on place, tradition, nation and religion are giving way slowly to new, renegotiated selves that are built upon the passage from one membership to another, the overlapping of symbolic codes and the multiplicity of reference points (Melucci, 1989). All of these concepts will be further discussed and developed in the next chapters.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Literature Review.**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As Higher Education institutions begin to engage with a greater range of students, it is increasingly important that they take account of the learning biographies, narratives and attitudes of non-traditional students. There is a valid knowledge for Universities in the voices of these learners, to embrace their perspectives, their learning experiences, motivations and their needs. They need to listen to those voices in order to adjust (culturally and structurally) to a more diverse population of students.

The subject I am dealing with in my dissertation has become in recent years the point of interest and research of many scientific disciplines. I suggest some examples such as; sociology, education, anthropology, and psychology.

There are a number of important studies on non traditional students in Higher Education (HE) in Ireland (Inglis & Murphy, 1999 Fleming & Murphy, 1997, Lynch, 1999), however, those studies are focusing on a variety of non traditional with mature (including disadvantaged) students playing the crucial role.

What drives students in higher education and what they want from universities are important questions in the development of a more responsive and culturally diverse system of higher education. Policy makers and those responsible for higher education need to know the implications of people's experiences for the development and more supportive learning culture.

Much research has been done, and focuses mainly on the voices of immigrants coming to Ireland for work purposes, their perspectives and their experiences. There is some study of inclusion of ethnic minority students in an Irish primary and secondary school setting. Most of these researches pay attention to the problems of marginalization and social exclusion. I believe that this is not the issue in HE and therefore I will not focus on this problem. There are some research projects about motivation in education, and specifically about non-traditional students in HE settings, which are of particular importance for my own study purposes.

There is a growing interest in a wider perspective concerning higher education, which is the impact of globalizing tendencies on individual life trajectories. The extent to which new conversations and shared understanding between learners from across Europe remains an issue.

There are some on-going projects dealing with the phenomenon of non-traditional students and their experiences in Higher Education.

### **3.2 Retention and Access of Non-traditional Learners in Higher Education (RANLHE)**

There was an EU funded study on Retention and Access of Non-traditional Learners in Higher Education (RANLHE). The report defines 'non-traditional' as students who are under-represented in HE and whose participation is limited by structural factors. The group consists of students from low income families, first generation entrants, students from minority ethnic groups, mature students and also people with disabilities. It also takes a biographical research approach, so its methodology and conceptual framework are of great help to my research project. The RANLHE project deals with the problem of the experiences of non – traditional learners in HE, it involves eight partners from seven countries, which are as follows: England, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Scotland, Spain and Sweden. It is set in the context of a huge increase of students entering higher education on a global scale and the acknowledgement of the benefits of participation for social and economic development. It recognises that despite the significant increase in student numbers, there are still inequalities in participation which many countries are approaching to address. However its overall aim is to examine issues of access, retention and non-completion in relation to non-traditional students, but it also looks at the ways that non-traditional students in HE experience the processes of learning, how they perceive themselves as learners and how their identity develops while acquiring the degree (Nizińska, 2009). For those reasons the literature review of the report is contributing largely to my work. There are also some authors from the research team, who are very useful authors for my dissertation purposes. Barbara Merrill (Merrill, 1997) for example, is writing about learning identities of non traditional students within HE. Barbara Merrill, Peter Alheit and John Field are developing the idea of habitus from Pierre Bourdieu's work on social and cultural capital (Field, Merrill and Morgan-Klein, 2010). Linden West introduces a psychological perspective on non-traditional



students. Linden West's research has been very influential for me, including his detailed analysis of adult motivation in learning (West, 1996).

West deals with what motivates adults in higher education, and what drives them on, or not, using psycho-social, including psychodynamic perspectives. He concludes that struggles for more authentic selfhood often lie at the heart of learners narratives, in an uncertain, liquid world.

His approach seems to be very close to my way of thinking and therefore I would like to take a closer look at his perspectives and findings later on.

The Irish team (Fleming & Finnegan, 2010a) is dealing with the concept of recognition, which has been introduced in the previous chapter. This concept relates to Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School. Other partners, like Nizińska & Kurantowicz present the Polish perspective and narratives of Polish students getting their diplomas in EU countries. Elżbieta Budakowska offers interesting position on *borderless identity* in global era the role of someone's history and biography in creating and changing identity. All of these authors are coming up with incredibly interesting conclusions and implications and indeed further work. I am going to present some of their findings which are useful for the purposes of this thesis.

The report suggests that the biographical research methodology is the most useful for complex understanding of non-traditional learners when taking into account the historical and socio-cultural as well as the psycho-social context of their lives. All of these students bring with them a memory of and attitudes towards learning shaped by previous experiences of learning in schools as well as a wide range of life experiences (Bron, Kurantowicz, p.43).

It also points out, that the noticeable phenomena while interviewing participants is a recurring theme of 'self esteem'. It might be in the realisation of the increasing importance of credentials in the labour market, a successful adaptation to social norms, a new form of reflexive individualism (Fleming & Finnegan, 2010a).

### **3.3 European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA)**

Another important project which I would like to concentrate on is ESREA, the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults. ESREA promotes and disseminates theoretical and empirical research on the education of adults and adult

learning in Europe through research networks, conferences and publications. Active members come mostly from Europe. It is also dealing with the phenomena of non-traditional students, due to big transformational processes in Higher Education institutions across Europe enabling those students the entrance to the world of academia in different countries and enabling them to make decisions about their future prospects and career. The wide range of economic and social changes, globalising tendencies and policy interventions, such as the Bologna process are changing drastically the face of academia nowadays and the way the Higher Education is perceived at the moment. Some authors may say that we can notice a big shift from the elite system to mass higher education.

The 2011 ESREA Conference theme affirms the importance of story as a means of understanding and appreciating the life paths of adult learners. For its purpose of shedding light on adult learners' transformations and human agency, autobiography is one form of story that draws together and configures the scattered elements of the author's life.

The problem of motivation seems to be of major validity in recent times. As Linden West points out that there are reasons why we should investigate student's motivation in higher education to be able to create a more responsive and culturally diverse educational system, also to develop more supportive, learning culture (West, 1996, preface, ix). Education should not be perceived in terms of a simple linear progression towards particular goals, e.g.: material security or personal agency, as many learners show their experience fragmentary, in which self is divided between privacy(private life) and public sphere (the world of academia) , between 'experiential ways of knowing', which is personal, subjective and between 'academic knowledge'(West, 1996, preface). It strongly connects with the work of such philosophers as Fromm or Bauman, who write about fragmentation of human life and experience, and there are human stories, which can reveal, how much education may offer a supportive space during periods of change and uncertainty.

With the help and encouragement of significant others, education can be used to create more meaning, authenticity and agency within a life. It can be a resource, emotionally and intellectually, to help participants move beyond the fragments (West, 1996, p.x).

### **3.4 Promoting Reflective Independent Learning in Higher Education (PRILHE)**

Another major study I am going to look at is Promoting Reflective Independent Learning in Higher Education, Socrates Grundtvig project (PRILHE). The key objectives of this project were to identify the learning processes which enable non-traditional adult students in higher education to become reflective independent learners in the times of new changes in the structure and curriculum of higher education in European Union countries.

The project also looked at how the process of reflective learning could be better supported in terms of web support, study materials, systems, staff and peers support. The main target groups were non-traditional undergraduate adult students. The project involved eight countries: the UK, Germany, Poland, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, Finland and Portugal. The research methods (survey, biographical interviews and learning diaries) were used to identify the learning processes and skills needed to become a reflective independent learner within a comparative European framework.

As Johnston and Merrill point out-

at the policy level, the developing Bologna process is beginning to prompt universities to engage with a much wider range of students. Adult students, including non – traditional adult students are now participating at undergraduate level, although they are often limited to particular discipline areas (Johnston & Merrill, 2005).

Despite the inclusion of new types of students universities have generally implemented few policy, cultural and structural changes to meet the needs of the new students (ibid.).

In the Polish context of PRILHE project research Nizinska, Ligus and Kurantowicz are developing the concept of *transition* in the Polish higher education during the last thirty years. They are distinguishing three spheres of this transition: the first one is associated with social and economic transition; the second one is connected with the institutions of higher education and the third one is connected with learning of individuals in these institutions (Nizińska, Ligus & Kurantowicz, 2006). Johnston and Merrill identified these levels as macro, meso and micro (Johnston & Merrill, 2005).

### **3.5 Education and social policy in the European Union.**

Education in Europe became the aspect of social policy recently, and since the 1970s the European Union has gained a great deal of control over education matters, in comparison to the earlier times, when it belonged to the member states jurisdiction.

Pollack (1994, in Murphy 2003) argues that in comparison to the original Treaty of Rome in 1957, where education and social policy were neglected, the issues became actively pursued a decade later. Murphy (2003) referring to Hantrais (2000, p.1) indicates that there is a noticeable commitment to the social dimension in the European integration processes and in its economic policy. He calls it the 'prerequisite rather than an end product of economic integration'. Some authors call this transformation in the EU in the field of education 'covert activity' (Ryba 1992, p.11) or 'creeping extension' (Field 1998, p. 26).

One of the key issues is the growing power of the EU in shaping educational policies of its member states (Murphy 2003). Rosenthal points out: 'education policy, long viewed as an exclusive national prerogative, is now regarded as a vital instrument for creating a united Europe'. What consequences does it have for the member states and for the individuals? As Aronowitz and Pollack (1994, p. 96) have noticed that education perceived through the legal means of the European Court of Justice has allowed to pursue a European learning society with its mission to increase economic competitiveness and facilitate the development of a European form of citizenship (Murphy, 2003). The European Court of Justice (ECJ) has also provided an 'expansive interpretation of European social law' (Hantrais 2000, p.234 in Murphy 2003). Due to the above, the ECJ has impacted greatly the shape and scope of the social policy of its member states.

As Murphy continues there were mainly two European institutions responsible for the transformation of education and training policy in the last decade- the European Commission and the ECJ, through guidelines, resolutions, recommendations and reports (Murphy, 2003, p. 554).

The Treaty on European Union – Maastricht Treaty amended by the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997, although not directly dealing with education, has transformed the role of education, introducing the distinction between education and training (chapter 3 of Title VIII, Article 126 –dealing with the issue of 'quality education' and Article 127 deals with vocational training). Shaw (1994, p.309) notices that the Article 126 and selective funding task lies in encouraging 'the development of educational initiatives which foster the spirit and practice of European integration, including in particular

language training, mobility of students and teachers and enhanced mutual recognition', all topics cited expressly in Article 126 (Murphy, 2003, p.556).

In 1993, the European Commission published a White Paper *Growth, Competitiveness, and Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, which deals with the adaptation of education and vocational training systems in its Chapter 7. It also proposed the organisation of the 'European Year of education' in order to raise the awareness of the importance of the discussed issue. Two years later, in 1995, the White Paper on education and training was published, entitled *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*. This document launched the European year of Lifelong Learning. 1996 was the European Year of Lifelong Learning, which was the Commission's effort to mark the importance of lifelong learning as the priority in Europe.

In 2000, the European Commission edited a Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, moving the EU focus on the lifelong issues as the guiding principle of learning context and 'brought the discussion of the role education plays in fostering a European citizenship and shared identity, a knowledge and information society and the increase in economic competitiveness' (Murphy, 2003, p.557).

### **3.5.1 The Bologna Process**

The main aim of the Bologna Process has been to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on international cooperation and academic exchange that is attractive to European students and staff as well as to students and staff from other parts of the world (Bologna Process official website<sup>7</sup>). This is a very important issue for this thesis, as never before in the history, have students such freedom in choosing a place to study and the opportunity for their professional development. The Bologna Process began in 1999 when 29 countries signed the Bologna Declaration. Ireland was one of the original 29 member states. Since July 2007 the process unites 47 countries. The Process involves European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES, and representatives of higher education institutions, students, staff, employers and quality assurance agencies.

Following the changes brought by the Lisbon Convention and the Bologna Process, the academic staff in Europe has been increasingly dealing with foreign students or students from different ethnic backgrounds, which creates the need to adapt the teaching methods, competencies and abilities to this new reality. The

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<sup>7</sup> Source: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>

major challenge when discussing the issue of education and multiculturalism is dealing with some of the inherent tensions that arise in reconciling competing world views. Such tensions reflect the diversity of values which co-exist in a multicultural world. However, the dynamic interchange between competing aspects is what lends richness to the debate on education and multiculturalism[...] which accommodates both universalism and cultural pluralism. This is particularly evident in the need to emphasize the universality of human rights, whilst maintaining cultural difference (UNESCO Guidelines on intercultural education, 2006, p.10)<sup>8</sup>

The Bologna Process puts also as its aim the mobility of students and the recognition of their qualification in all the countries participating in the Process. Its aims include a three-cycle system (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate), joint degrees, quality assurance, social dimension, employability, lifelong learning, The EHEA in a global context, doctoral studies and synergies between the EHEA and the European Research Area.

Mobility of staff, students and graduates is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension (Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process, London Communiqué, May 2007).<sup>9</sup>

### **3.6 A brief summary of the recent history of Poland and Ireland.**

#### **3.6.1 Poland**

As Walicki stated, many people perceived Gen. Jaruzelski's (Polish president, who introduced the martial law in 1981) Poland as a remarkably repressive, totalitarian regime. From today's perspective the main problem of those days in Poland was obviously the lack of freedom and continuous violation of the rights of citizens. Indeed, only the young generation of Poles can claim such statements in good faith. The older generation, who remember Stalinism and knowing what totalitarianism really means, and especially intellectuals of that time will state that the Jaruzelski regime was much more tolerant, intelligent and flexible than the preceding governings of Gierek or Bierut. Some 'Solidarity' advisors, like Małachowski Aleksander and Siła-Nowicki Władysław had even claimed it publicly (Walicki, 2000).

There is a tendency for many Poles to consider themselves as being subjected to repressions. Those feelings however are deeply associated with frustration and public opinion indignation because of the seizure of power by the army and a violent precipice between political reality and state aspirations. Neither was totalitarianism the only or the

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<sup>8</sup> Source: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001478/147878e.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Source: [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/Bologna\\_leaflet\\_web.pdf](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/Bologna_leaflet_web.pdf)

main problem of Poland in those days. The major issue was connected with a deep crisis of legitimism of power along with an economic collapse. Both crises are interdependent. The government in the real socialism political regime plays the role of the main economic administrator along with not having social acceptance and trust. The whole system was perceived as the one not protecting their citizens, where it is not worth the effort to work hard or indeed to be patriotic, as nothing will be appreciated or decently paid. The policy was then characterised as having dual tactics- repressive moves from one side and conciliatory from the other. As an example, we can take the creative activity, music and writings. It all worked as a safety valve, something that people can vent their frustrations and emotions in general. The most popular rock bands were openly criticizing the reality of the situation. They were singing about the greyness of life, lack of sense, feelings of hopelessness, exposing and pointing out the flaws and defects of totalitarianism reality. The authority accepted it, the censorship subsided. It is to let people to breathe and calm down, release the pent up emotions. They were so different from today's shallowness of media.

Aesthetic and cultural practices are peculiarly susceptible to the changing experience of space and time precisely because they entail the construction of spatial representations and artefacts out of the flow of human experience.(Harvey, 1989, p.327)

The Solidarity movements in the end of 70's and beginning of the 80's were getting stronger and more and more effective. After the strike wave in 1980, when Lech Wałęsa, the man of the people, uneducated, who was elected as president, but also became the symbol of Polish freedom and the strength of solidarity between people, the Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1983, which is wife received in Oslo, on his behalf, as the authorities refused Wałęsa as leader of the opposition, the issue of passports. Subsequent years in Poland are not so much saturated by emotions and the quality of life of the individual leaves much to be desired in comparison to other developing countries in Europe.

### **3.6.2 Ireland**

Ireland joined the European Union in 1973. As O'Donnell in his *Ireland's Economic Transformation* paper points out, the Irish economy performed relatively well through most of the 1970s. The period 1980 to 1987 could be characterised as a prolonged recession and dramatic increase in unemployment, falling living standards. It was similarly to the quite recent history, the prospect of emigration as the best option for the young.

Ireland has finally escaped the most negative effects of Britain's political business cycle and in the process, also rejected the neo-liberal approach to social policy and regulation adopted in Britain between 1979 and 1997 (O'Donnell, 1998). As a result, it has preserved a higher level of social solidarity, which seems an essential pre-requisite to sustaining redistributive policies and addressing issues of structural change and reform in a non-conflictual way. In this aspect the history of this country resembles the very recent history of Poland, who gained the freedom in a non violent way. The common thread, the underlying transformation, for both countries is a switch from a long history in which external factors were constraining, to a new situation in which the external environment provides valuable inputs and even its undoubted constraints can be used as opportunities. However during the recent 20 years Ireland has started the rampant transformations and economic growth, rapid growth of exports, output and employment. It was called the Celtic Tiger during that time. It became an interesting case of macroeconomic stabilisation and adjustment in a small and extremely open economy. The dissertation does not deal with the impact of the most recent recession, as it affects the whole European Union zone and United States.

### **3.6.3 Transformation – Poland (1980, 1989, 2004)**

In Poland the biggest, most influencing changes that can be referred to are the years 1980 and 1989. Ever since the communists stole parliamentary elections in 1946 in Poland, the struggle, however non-violent, has started against the authoritarian communist government. There were three decades of civil resistance, but Polish society has started to organize and consolidate itself in a broad coalition of social forces that led to the establishment of *Solidarity* (Solidarność) movement in August 1980. The events directly preceding this establishment was the successful strike wave which swept Poland in the summer of 1980<sup>10</sup>. Solidarity was rooted in trade unionism and it delegitimized the communist regime by exposing its ideological claims as false. By the end of 1988, the number of strikes and protests was rising and a poor economic situation has forced communist government to re-engage with Solidarity. As a result of the discussions between the opposition and the government, an agreement was reached to hold free elections to a packed parliament in June 1989. The elections brought a decisive victory for Solidarity with the first non-communist prime minister Tadeusz

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<sup>10</sup> On Tuesday, July 1, strikes broke out in factories throughout Poland: Ursus [tractors] and Huta Warszawa [steel] near Warsaw, at Poznan (metallurgy), at Tczew (transmissions), at Mielec (aviation), at Swidnica [aviation], near Lublin (source: 1980: Poland mass strikes - Henri Simon from: <http://libcom.org/history/1980-poland-mass-strikes>)



Mazowiecki, heading a new government, with Lech Wałęsa who was elected president in December 1990 with a broad popular mandate to implement wide ranging economic and social reforms to stabilize the country (Bartkowski, M, 2009). That was a crucial time of significant social events, which have had essential impact on institutions of higher education. They also had a big impact on the functioning of an individual in a broader context of society but also in educational situations. As Marek Szczepanski points out this transformation process has its winners and losers. What he means by this statement is that the people who benefited from the transformation Poland went through, are all those well-educated ones, who represent younger generations, coming from bigger cities and legitimize higher competence of civilization. (Szczepanski, M, Sliz, A, 2010) Those are citizens called by Bauman 'the tourist generation' He writes about the dimensions of the present uncertainty:

The universal deregulation- the unquestionable and unqualified priority awarded to the irrationality and moral blindness of market competition, the unbound freedom granted to capital and finance at the expense of all other freedoms, the tearing up of the socially woven and societally maintained safety nets, and the disavowal of all but economic reasons, gave a new push to the relentless of polarization, once halted (only temporarily, as it now transpires) by the legal frameworks of the welfare state, trade union bargaining rights. Labour legislation, and – on a global scale (though in this case much less convincingly) – by the initial effects of world agencies charged with the redistribution of capital (Bauman, 1994, p. 23).

The transformations of the year 1980 were mostly related to societal transformation, introducing the ethical dimension in public and political activity and visible in the sphere of values, based on cooperation and trust to others, on the category and hierarchy of social actors. What has been achieved in Poland since 1989 centres mostly on provisions for a political democracy, the smooth expansion of small business and visibly efficient privatisation methods in the field of commerce. The changes from 1989 were more visible and to some extent shaded 1980 transitions.

Economic transformations connected with such categories as ownership, work, financial resources, etc. caused new divisions in the society which resulted from "economic" value of an individual or a group and not from their cultural belonging (Nizińska, Kurantowicz&Ligus, 2006).

However there are two sides to the story. There are people from the older generations, with poorer education and coming from smaller towns and villages, who still seem to be deeply rooted in the socialist era. Szczepański continues to assert that those individuals can be characterised by the fear of change and a withdrawal attitude. The globalisation

and metropolisation processes that modernity offers makes them only fear the future, which becomes unpredictable, and for which they are not prepared as active participants in a new emerging Poland. However Szczepański adopts the terms of winners and losers, which has been known in sociological world, since the process of globalisation had situated itself within the social context of modern life. Castells speaks of winners and losers in the globalising process (Castells, 1998), which seems to pose grave threats to individuality and learning with its impact of vastly accelerated communication and transport networks on globally organised economic system (Evans, R, Kurantowicz, E, 2009). Those may be populations unable to access the electronic networks and education, which can be perceived as instruments of power or even simple existence in today's world. Bauman in his *Wasted Lives*, speaks of the 'forces of globalisation' which 'reshuffle people and play havoc with their social identities' (Bauman 2004, p.128).

No jobs are guaranteed, no positions are foolproof, no skills are of lasting utility, experience and know how turn into liability as soon as they become assets, seductive careers all too often prove to be suicide tracks. In their present rendering, human rights do not entail the acquisition of the right to job, however well performed, or – more generally- the right to care and consideration for the sake of past merits. Livelihood, social position, acknowledgment of usefulness and the entitlement to self-dignity may all vanish together, overnight and without notice (Bauman, 1994, p. 23).

There is another phenomena associated with those transitions. It is gain and loss associated with crossing the borders, physical, cultural, emotional and the fragmentation of identity, and life inevitably connected with it. Evan and Kurantowicz put it thus:

Elsewhere in the name of globalisation and global networks, local, regional and national identities are 'reshuffled' and their traditions and idiosyncracies of long-standing are 'brushed aside as irrelevant', as language reform, language imposition, and language destruction together unfold their effects on populations and individuals. Each time an individual changes language or dialect in order to obtain a job, to qualify for a position, to enter a school; each individual who crosses physical and language borders to survive or start afresh; each and all of these aspects of translation and transformation entail – next to net gains 'employability', the possibilities of integration or assimilation, the incalculable cultural gains – a loss of memory, of self-expression and all that is contained in that particular voice and its lived particularity. The irony here is that learning and learning opportunities are so frequently predicated on mono-lingualism and the relinquishment of language diversity.

The above was a brief summary of the recent history of both countries, which showed that both of them share some similar historical threads, and were not free from the periods of constrains and limiting factors for the individual development. However, Ireland developed intensely much earlier and has never faced socialism or communism.

Although, whatever the barriers for individual freedom are, whether poverty or British policies imposed on the country, the wave of new neo liberal and globalising tendencies have brought new freedom as well as new challenges. Today's Europe is not creating the idyllic island and contemporary reality is not free of challenges and dangers, which are caused by technical progress and civilizational development. Because of this as Pilch states there is a special role inscribed to education and the system of values chosen as its foundation. There is a need to formulate norms and rules, which are sufficiently general to be universally accepted. Identification and universality are the primary characteristics of a system of values for the modern individual (Pilch in Budakowska, 2005, p.34-48).

The new generation faced a wave of uncertainty, insecurity and dissatisfaction, negative feelings and disappointment. What could cause these emotions? I would like to refer back to the work of Erich Fromm and Zygmunt Bauman. However Fromm was not writing about the present situation and his writing was dealing mostly with the capitalist system in the west. His work is useful to critique all authoritarian systems. Fromm mapped the ways in which those systems were able to 'get at' the inner world, psyche, identity and even the unconscious. By being able to get at the unconscious, the system has strongly influenced two things. First of all, the desires of people became socially constructed and secondly the creativity, needed to initiate freedom and emancipation was also undermined

Zygmunt Bauman, David Harvey, Anthony Giddens and many other sociologists outline the historical meaning for the systemic changes introduced in Europe. Most of them, especially Bauman also deal with the psychological impact of those changes and transformations onto the human condition. Bauman discusses the lack of freedom in the communist system which oddly enough was connected with a sense of security to secure future prospects. The individual has been stripped of freedom in our understanding of this word, but the totalitarian state was also the welfare state, securing citizens their jobs, houses and retirement. No one had to worry about their qualifications, career prospects and upskilling, no one lived with the uncertainty of tomorrow or of losing a job. Even his identity and social position has been somehow granted in advance, imposed on him. There was reduced liberty and freedom, no place for individuality but on the other hand the sense of responsibility was also too much to a lesser extent. However, all the authors mentioned above have focused mostly on the

condition of the individual in the contemporary system. There is a shift in the consciously and unconsciously acquired skills. As Fromm states:

Capitalism freed the individual. It freed man from the regimentation of the corporative system; it allowed him to stand on his own feet and to try his luck. He became the master of his fate, his was the risk, his the gain. Individual effort could lead him to success and economic independence. Money became the great equalizer of man and proved to be more powerful than birth and caste (Fromm, 1942, p.52).

Being a student in HE is an important biographical turn in the course of one's life. If an individual finds himself in a supportive environment, this sometimes may be a trigger to change, to transform (Nizińska, May 2009).

### **3.6.4 Transitional spaces of learning in HE. Changes introduced in Poland.**

Nizińska, Ligus & Kurantowicz write about transitional spaces of learning in HE in a Polish context. They are mentioning the transitions Poland went through, starting with the year 1980, and later changes that were made after 1989.

I am restricting my research to the local perspective and the one which relates to my personal situation. However the cultural context shaping the perspectives of students may be common for universities in Poland, Ireland and across Europe. However, there are some difference, connected with the political, economic and social situations in those countries and the ways that they dealt with economic development or educational transformations. As Malewski states the changes in Polish higher education took place in respectively short period of time, which could not stay unnoticeable and untraceable in the system (Malewski 2000).

Before 1990 there were 126 higher schools in Poland – exclusively public ones, and in the present moment there are around 456 higher schools (including 325 non-public ones).<sup>11</sup>

The transformation in 1980 kept the high position of higher schools and university professors in the terms of social status and credibility and trust (Nizińska, 2006). There was a common belief in autotelic<sup>12</sup> value of university degree and its emancipating

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<sup>11</sup> Source: opracowanie własne na podstawie: *Szkolnictwo wyższe. Dane podstawowe 1992*, Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, Warszawa 2002; *Szkoły wyższe w roku 1996/1997*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 1997; *Szkoły wyższe i ich finanse w roku 2008*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 2009

<http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul/index/numer/31/id/668>

<sup>12</sup> autotelism- The belief that an entity or event has within itself its own meaning or purpose. In literature or art, the belief that a work, having been created, is a justification in and of itself.

character, which indeed was only a false conviction highly supported by organisation and policy of higher education (Nizińska, 2006, Malewski 1999). After 1990, education in Poland became highly influenced by free market economy. It had an impact on a growing number of higher education institutions, including non-public ones, which had to compete with each other in terms of prestige and economic position. The educational offer has been enriched in the 1990's due to the increase in the student's number – in 1990: 500.000, in 2005 about 2.000.000 (Nizińska, 2006).

Tadeusz Luty -the President of Polish Universities Chancellors Conference, writing about the HE in Poland during the interview for Gazeta Prawna states that the structural transformation which has started in 1990 could be characterised by the lack of consideration and financial support for education and science. In this time there was a great social demand for academic/university education. It is often said, that in the nineties the number of students has increased by five times, but there was only 30% growth in accordance with the academic staff number. What happened then was the didactic overload in state universities (lack of personnel and infrastructure) and what followed was the increase in numbers of the non public universities. Unfortunately private universities have offered 'easy' specializations and were engaging staff from the state universities. In the second half of the 90's, the state began funding vocational and further education. The result was the decrease in the quality of teaching and almost total decrease of research activity of professionals working on few positions at the same time.

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The Ministry proposal lacks clarity in accordance with strategic future of the HE in Poland. The university autonomy is apparent, because the sector is under-financed. Luty points out the weaknesses of Polish education: too many local, small universities, multi-employed professors and the uncontrolled increase in the number of universities. Lack of legislative regulations increases conflict between public and non public sector. Higher education in Poland educates more professionals than educated people. The education funding system did not require development plans but extorted quantitative development.

'Institutions of higher education – so far solid, stable and sustaining historical and cultural continuity – become transitional space' (Nizińska, 2006).

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Source:Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/45178/autotelism>

<sup>13</sup> [http://praca.gazetaprawna.pl/wywiady/447962,wykladowca\\_tylko\\_na\\_jednym\\_etacie.html](http://praca.gazetaprawna.pl/wywiady/447962,wykladowca_tylko_na_jednym_etacie.html)

The OECD report, Poland (September 2007) “Both teaching and research have been squeezed to the point of serious damage to the aspiration that Polish tertiary education and science should play a full part in the European higher education and research areas” It points out the danger of:

- emigration of the best/most competent students, facing the inability to fulfil their intellectual and academic careers expectations,
- gradual decrease in Polish scholars participation in creating the global knowledge, discouragement to undertake ambitious programs and research projects on the international scale.
- too small of a percentage of students of natural sciences, exact sciences and technical sciences
- the decrease in the number of doctoral and professorial degree

The most spectacular evidence confirming the opinions revealed by the surveys is the record number of Poles emigrating to the West-European countries since Poland's accession to the European Union which has opened some of its labour markets. The number of emigrants is assessed to range between 1 to 2 million people. The most frequent reason for this mass exodus is financial incentives. However, it is not only more money or better social security that force so many Poles to leave their fatherland (Żuk, 2007, p.15).

The mass emigration of mostly young Poles can be perceived as a pursuit of a different public life model offering a more open society, more rational mechanisms and everyday living standards. Young people are searching for more civilized relations in the workplace– ‘the human touch in relations between an employer and employee’ (Żuk, 2007, p.15). Author stresses also, that the enormous emigration is not only an escape from the Polish poverty, unemployment and penury but also ‘an escape from the Polish provincialism, greyness of life, parochialism and civilization backwardness. The latter is clearly visible—even to the naked eye—particularly from the West European perspective’ (ibid, p.15).

### **3.7 New language acquisition and minority students.**

Zygmunt Bauman writes eloquently about the ‘forces of globalisation’ which ‘reshuffle people and play havoc with their social identities’ (Bauman 2004, p.128)

Learning itself and the learning opportunities are oftentimes based on mono-lingualism and new language acquisition.

Each time an individual changes language or dialect in order to obtain a job, to qualify for a position, to enter a school; each individual who crosses physical and

language borders to survive or start afresh; each and all of these acts of translation and transformation entail – next to the net gains in ‘employability’, the possibilities of integration or assimilation, the incalculable cultural gains – a loss of memory, of self-expression and all that is contained in that particular voice and its lived particularity.(Evans, R., Otto-von-Guericke, Kurantowicz, E.,2009).

While writing about non-traditional students in the meaning of the minority students, whose first language is not the one used at the university, there is a need to mention the problems concerned with second language acquisition and anxiety connected with this process. The definition of ‘anxiety’ as ”the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” has been taken from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety article in *The Modern Language Journal* (1986). Although some research has been done mainly to identify foreign language anxiety as a distinct variable in the language learning and mostly for the use of foreign language teachers, some finding might be useful for the thesis purposes. The above mentioned concerns, a performance evaluation within academic and social context. Horwitz and Cope (1986) are mentioning three related performance anxieties. The first one is communication apprehension understood as the type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people, difficulty in speaking in bigger groups or publicly. The remaining two performance anxieties are: test anxiety and the fear of negative apprehension.

Most people perceive themselves as reasonably intelligent, socially proficient individuals, sensitive to socio-cultural customs and manners. These perceptions are typically never challenged while communicating in one’s native language, because it is not a problematic task to make oneself understood or to understand others. The situation changes when “individual communication attempts will be evaluated according to uncertain or even unknown linguistic and socio-cultural standards, second language communication entails risk taking and is necessarily problematic” (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986), p.128).

The study of Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham deals with Communicative Anxiety and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) among adult multilinguals. They mention Eva Hoffman’s biography, who describes such powerfully the complexity of feeling and emotions associated with new language acquisition and difficulties in expressing herself in her interactions with native English speakers. She felt fear and rage at being unable to present herself in the way she was, and being forced to use the only vocabulary she

knew and she felt that she was trapped within a mask or ‘clumsy astronaut suit’. The interesting point for this thesis is that Eva was Polish who moved to Canada, so her experience can be similar to the experiences of the students who participated in this dissertation research.

The seminal articles of Horwitz (1986) and Horwitz and Cope (1986) are focused specifically on the effects of language anxiety on learning and its pedagogical implications, concerning also the interactions in the classroom. They are trying to find the answers as to why multilinguals feel anxious in communicative situations. The reason for the importance of this study is the fact, that the authors attribute impaired performance among some students to language anxiety, which causes short-term memory loss and problems in long-term memory retrieval (McIntyre and Gardner’s in Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham, p.915). Another important factor is that the anxious learners tend to procrastinate in their writing, papers submission etc. They are also found more concerned about errors and more fearful of evaluation (ibid.).

Gardner and MacIntyre found that high levels of anxiety depress motivation, but on the other hand high motivation levels can inhibit anxiety. Most of the authors on the subject can link FLA to personality characteristics, mostly perfectionism. FLA is also linked to socio-biographical factors, so that public speech seems to be most anxiety – provoking and chat with friends significantly less. (Dewaele, 2007, p.917).

The cultural background of learners has also been found to highly influence and even determine the level of foreign language anxiety. The learners from China, Korea and Japan usually suffer more from FLA in comparison to other ethnic groups (Woodrow, 2006). There is also a big role of the self-perceived competence in second language usage. This perception concerns a person’s evaluation of their ability to communicate and the willingness to do so. It is worth stating that all the respondents who presented a research project are fluent in the English language and have emphasised very little concern of their language performance anxiety, they nonetheless preferred (with one exception) to communicate in their first language during the interviews.

Authentic communication becomes problematic in the second language because of the immature command of that language in comparison to the mother tongue” adult learners’ self-perceptions of genuineness in presenting themselves to others may be threatened by the limited range of meaning and affect that can be deliberately communicated”. Their self-esteem might be “vulnerable to the awareness that the range



of communicative choices and authenticity is restricted” (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986), p.128).

Naturally, all the changes in institutional and formal learning connected with the process of globalisation, accelerated communication are posing the big challenge to education. They are also deeply threatening to individuality, as they are increasing the social isolation of the individual (Evans, 2009, Alheit and Dausien 2002).

## **Chapter Four**

### **Methodology Chapter**

#### **4.1 Educational journeys in the search for life improvement: narratives of Polish students' experiences in Irish HE**

The purpose of my dissertation was to investigate the experiences of Polish students in Ireland and what has motivated them to travel to another country to continue their education abroad. I wanted to explore the phenomenon of life long learning in this specific context and set of life circumstances. I wanted to hear the voices of immigrants; to listen to and understand their experiences of feeling alienated and their struggle with language acquisition, but also their joy of taking the challenge and gaining new self esteem, strength, broadening of horizons and life transformations.

I was also keen to explore the life circumstances and influences of others who have shaped these Polish students' attitudes and motivated them to study abroad. I wanted to investigate how the students' perspectives have changed since graduating. The choices they made have affected their economic position as well as their self-esteem and self-assessment. It may be then the study of motivations, attitudes, identity changes and cultural affiliation. It may be an investigation of the experiences of young immigrants, seen from their perspectives, through their eyes, and told with their own words and in their own language.

There are many life transitions shaping an individual's life. Emigration and career changes which follow graduating in another country, where people are exposed to a new culture, a new language and have to learn new meanings, can be such transitions. This is undoubtedly stressful but can also be a very enriching and creative process.

“To capture such processes is essential for understanding human conduct and becoming, but most of all for adult educators, to understand the intersubjectivity of human learning.”(West, 2000, p.218)

“Life can only be understood backwards. In the meantime it has to be lived forwards”. Søren Kierkegaard (Medel-Annonuevo, Ohsako, Mauch p.5)

All my respondents were people between 25 and 35 years old, so it can be said that they are adult learners. They all started their adventure with higher education in Poland, mostly graduating at bachelor level. Most of them, after coming to Ireland, spent

between one and a few years working and gaining experience before returning to education. This is a valid issue when contemplating their overall experiences and perspectives. I was curious about their motivations and reasons for continuing in higher education at this particular stage in their lives. I wanted to know what keeps them persevering at university and to explore what other external forces helped them to graduate. I also wanted to know the extent to which external factors, such as the support of family and friends, are helpful - or even crucial - for gaining a diploma.

As Linden West thoughtfully points out, it is a very good choice to write about motivation at this time, as adults constitute the majority of students in higher education (West, 1996).

Education is not just a simple linear progression towards personal agency<sup>14</sup> or material security. It is a complex process of gaining greater self esteem, confidence and both psychological and material security. It is also a process of struggle, anxiety, doubts and questioning of one's own frames of references; of meeting new challenges, sometimes not even recognized as decisive moments of life, but nevertheless being unconsciously shaped, changed and transformed by them. It is a time of growing up, either mentally, emotionally or psychologically. There are many layers of transformation involved in the process and it does not only concern the way people change themselves; these individuals are also impacting on their environment, as well as being influenced by this complex variety of experiences on their way to gaining credentials.

This raises a key point, namely that the help and encouragement of significant others, as Honneth points out, has crucial meaning in creating the complete, integrated self and one's authenticity in life, especially in times of profound change and periods of overcoming uncertainties.

Narratives, which are at the heart of this dissertation, are creating the space of discourse about more profound issues, like the nature and purpose of not only higher but education in general, in its higher, further, adult and diversity dimensions. They are posing questions about the ways HE can assist people in their needs, wants and biographies, at stages of continual flux and changes within their lives. How can higher education institutions respond to cultural diversity, and the variety of contexts, students locate their stories. Their narratives can add to international debate about the

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<sup>14</sup> the term 'agency' - has been coined by Pierre Bourdieu and means the idea that individuals are equipped with the ability to understand and control their own actions, regardless of the circumstances of their lives.

interdependence, future employment prospects and welfare of entire communities and cultural renewal and economic regeneration (West, 1996).

## **4.2 Research methodology**

### **4.2.1 The Constructivist Paradigm. The implications for learning in Higher Education.**

The Constructivist Paradigm is the most suitable theoretical approach to employ for the phenomena described in this thesis. Its basic assumption is that what we believe as reality is no absolute reality which exists beyond our experience, but is our own construction. In this sense the influence from the 'outside' is not possible and the brain is an autonomous system, which refers to itself. This means that subjects do not see the reality as it is, but rather construct it unconsciously, lacking objectivity. What determines perception is the internal structure, which creates the filter for the information from the environment. (Alheit and Dausien, 2000, p.53). What it also depends on are socialisation processes, learnt values and moral systems, social rules and common truths. The individual narrative and the biographical experience mirror personal background; everything that has happened to construct the self. It reflects historical, personal, cultural and social past experience (PRILHE, 2009). In other words, experience as well as all objects of experience, are the result of individual ways and means of experiencing, and are necessarily structured and determined by space and time and the other categories derived from these. (Glaserfeld, 1989, PRILHE, 2009).

Another factor of the constructivist paradigm is structural coupling – which means that the individual and his/her environment affect each other mutually.

From the constructivist point of view, meanings are conceptual structures and, as such, to a large extent influence the individual's construction and organization of his or her experiential reality (Glaserfeld, 1989, p.162).

The constructivist paradigm also has implications for new knowledge acquisition in a foreign language. As the same author continues:

Language users, therefore, build up their meanings on the basis of their individual experience, and the meanings remain subjective, no matter how much they become modified and homogenized through the subject's interactions with other language users (Glaserfeld, 1989, p.34).

The personal and biographical dimension of perception is at the core of each individual's understanding. The world is not a solid, stable thing, that is waiting to be discovered. It can be said that human beings are too limited with their ability to perceive

the nature of things. They can only use their senses for the process of cognition, and the world is much more complex than the reality available to humans through their eyes, ears or conscious thinking. However this seems to be sufficient for their existence in the world, and building their understandings of things and phenomena on the basis of what is conceivable and recognizable. ‘Thus the function of the cognitive capability is not to produce a true picture of an independent objective world, but rather to produce a liveable organization of the world as it is experienced’(Glaserfeld, 1992). Another, extremely important, dimension for construction of reality is social dimension. As the PRILHE group of scientists, referring to the work of Schmidt, emphasises, the particular life experience of the person is the reflection of his/her historical, personal, social and cultural background. Through the socialization process we learn “binding points of views, truths, values, social rules, etc”(PRILHE, 2009, p.23).

What are the implications of constructivism for teaching and learning? It shifts the emphasis from the system and lecturer to the learner and her learning. That also means that if learning takes place on the basis, and through the lenses, of the previous experiences, so the learner’s biography plays a crucial role in interpretation of the academic knowledge and its integration. “Furthermore, the interests, motivations and affections of the individual are relevant to its learning as well as the interactions learning is embedded with” (PRILHE, 2009, p.24). Learning, although individual, is also part of the social process. Neubert claims that, from this point of view, learning cannot follow one defined structure, rule and procedure, but ‘should enclose common planning of the process and a space for the learner for self-directedness and self-reliance’ (PRILHE, 2009, p.26)

There is no best and final observer perspective as to what we should learn and how we should learn together, we ultimately have to keep experimenting with the contents and relationships of learning (Neubert, 2003, p.13).

In my research I have applied the constructivist approach using narrative methods.

I set out the qualitative interviewing with Polish minority HE students in Ireland in order to discover the understandings, perspectives and, most of all, motivations of research participants. I did this through narrative interviews, the transcriptions of which are included. I was interested in their motives for studying in Ireland, the specializations they are choosing and perspectives for the future. I have provided a small number of interviews, looking for richness of information and capacity for reflection when choosing interviewees. I intended to find out the answers to the research questions: How

studying in Ireland has shaped their perspectives and the sense of life stability? What challenges did they face? What is their perception on education and its role to facilitate the overall development and the sense of human existence in the lifelong learning process?

Their experiences are only accessible in all their richness through the stories told by the people themselves. The power of the story lies in its unique ability to reconnect past with present and future, and keep inter-connect the multidimensionality of a human's life, such as the psychological, social, cultural, historical, cognitive, affective, spiritual and somatic dimensions (Brooks and Edwards, 1997). Seeing the effort that people are putting into making sense of their stories "not only gives a researcher more complexed perspective on learning processes in adult lives, it gives a sample of learning itself" (Nizińska, 2009).

According to Allheit, telling a story is a way of re-living the past. This can be beneficial not only to the researcher, but to the story teller as well, giving her new perspectives, critical insight and a 'new voice' (Allheit, 2005). Fleming (2003) argues that the learner is both the main character and the author and can find a more critical, confident and agentic voice through the process of story telling itself.

I have interviewed seven people, meeting with each participant two or three times, as well as exchanging emails with them. During the first introductory interviews I ~~was~~ examined their backgrounds, starting back in Poland, asking what has shaped their motivations and their willingness to study abroad and why they have chosen Ireland as their country of education. Furthermore, I asked about their families', and broader society's, attitudes towards higher education and travelling to a foreign country, in order to try to establish any patterns. In the following interviews, I posed questions about their personal experiences within higher education at university, asking what they found unpleasant and, in contrast, what they found inspiring during the study. In addition, I asked them what influenced their decisions to live and study abroad. After having done two pilot interviews with the first participants, I already knew that economic motives are not the only ones responsible. Social and cultural motives are as important as the search for self realization and personal/ and professional development. Some individuals are driven by the desire to face challenges and a sense of adventure.

I have been keeping in contact with all participants via email and mobile connections. I have sent them the transcripts of each interview via email, so they could feel as though they are co-creating the work with me. The approximate duration of each meeting was between 1 to 3 hours, with tape recordings of approximately 40 minutes to 1.5 hours. Part of my strategy was to find out what was convenient for the participants, so the time and place of meeting was strongly dependent on their needs and expectations. I arranged the interviews in places where the interviewees felt most comfortable. It was home settings for some, a quiet room at the university, or in the coffee shop, for others. The place had to be quiet as far as possible for recording purposes. I also made some notes during the interview of some body and posture gestures, important facial expressions and other striking features of the conversation (e.g. crying, very long pauses). Body language can be a great source of information, which complements my knowledge and understanding of the layers of emotions strongly connected to the subjects being raised.

The relationships between motives, educational participation, biographies and present situations are explored by talking to seven students (most of whom have already finished their courses and successfully gained employment) in depth and at length over a period of 18 months. The idea was to reflect on reasons for taking the challenge to study and work abroad, considering and connecting the present context, past experiences and plans for future.

Stories it is suggested, are products of the present: the narrative of the different beginner in higher education can be quite different from a story of self, others and one's place in the world four years later. Like the self narrative develops slowly – often painfully – but perhaps increasingly towards an authentic composure (West, 1996, p.x).

I have used the constructivist view, as I felt it best suited to approaching the main research themes of transitions in human life, as it applies to the collective process of migration and changes within the societies, educational institutions and on an individual level as well. In present-day complex societies, the global expansion of new ways of life have emerged. This diversity of fields, actors, and cultural symbols no longer conform to the stereotypical image of collective actors moving on a historical stage, forced by life circumstances. The narrative methodology allows the reader to follow the student along the way, discovering his life-changes, the challenges he has faced and the multiplicity of choices he has had to make.

Current research in sociology and social psychology suggests the need to examine collective phenomena as the outcome of multiple processes, which are

seen either to enhance or to impede the formation of cognitive frameworks and systems of relationship necessary for action. Collective phenomena are viewed as the result of various types of action and elements of structure and motivation. Cognitive and constructivist theories of human action help us consider collective phenomena as processes through which actors produce meanings, communicate, negotiate, and make decisions.... Structural theories, based on systems analysis, explain why but not how a movement is established and survives.... Social movements cannot be represented as characters, as subjects endowed with being and purpose, as acting within a scenario whose finale is predetermined... only then can we discover the plurality of perspectives, meanings and relationships which crystallize in any given collective action (Melucci,1989, pp.20, 23, 25).

### **4.3 Narrative Inquiry as the Most Suitable Research Method for the Thesis**

We live in deeds not years; in thoughts, not breaths;  
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.  
We should count time by heart throbs. He most lives  
Who thinks most - feels the noblest - acts the best

P.J. Bailey (1816-1902)  
*Festus*

In this section I will try to give an explanation and noteworthy arguments for choosing narrative inquiry as a research method and demonstrate it to be the most suitable choice for the phenomenon described in the dissertation. However, it is still a challenge to find a single source that would comprehensively explain how researchers should use narrative as a research method. (Webster, Mertova, 2007)

The questions are: How can science and humanities benefit from biographical narrative methods? Why is this method most suitable for illuminating an individual's experience and the meaning of that experience. How can this method be regarded as a valid way, in scientific terms, of providing reliable and verifiable outcomes?

The explanation I shall give here is just a concept; a voice in broader discussion, not the ready answer or conclusion.

Narrative is a story; a story which has an author, a subject, and a more or less informed motive, or purpose, to justify the need to tell the story. Biography on the other hand relates to the course of life of a particular person. It might be in a form of written text as



an account of this life course. When the individual reports his own story, we call it an auto biography. It is assumed that each narrative (or auto narrative) is anchored in the author biography, because it relates to his/her own past and present experiences. The term narrative-biographical indicates that the source of data, which is narrative inquiry and a subject of reference, is the individual's biography.

The individual biography is like an image of the personal life trajectory. It reflects in this sense the social capabilities and the social barriers, which had, or had not, been overcome by a particular person, through her own determination or a lucky set of circumstances.

Narrative inquiry is always like an open question - it pictures an individual as someone who is constantly on his way, transforming, changing. In rapidly changing societies, in constant flux, the meaningful question for the individual is how do they cope with this situation? The research perspective informs us how the individual finds his sense of self-identity and asks how he can orient himself in a complex system, which is what the outside world is. How possible it is to provide consistent actions in the incoherent world, under the influence of conflicting stimuli?

The explicit purpose of biographical narrative inquiry is to find the explanation and reconstruction of the rules and principles to create structures, which are the foundations of the human agency. It is not so important why people behave in a particular way, but more important to find out what the biographical implications are, and what experiences and processes have influenced that action. The important thing is to understand the rules and principles adopted by the person, on even the conscious or unconscious level. The change, transformation in the individual perspective is also the reflection of the transformation of the social system. In this methodological perspective most important is description of the state of the affairs than its evaluation.

Developing biographical narrative interviews can allow the researcher to capture in depth the dialectics of agency and structure in the learning experience in higher education. 'Biographical narratives also illustrate the dynamics and influence of past lives in initial schooling, family and work in constructing present and future lives as an HE student' (Merrill and West, 2009, West, Alheit, Andersen& Merrill, 2007) 'Biographies, although individual, also illuminate the collectivities and shared

experiences in people's lives through issues such as gender, class and race' (Merrill, 2007).

Another important issue is that the biographical narrative has the ability to link the macro and micro worlds. We can say that it:

...offers many examples of the wealth of biographical and life history research, and its unique potential to illuminate people's lives and their interaction with the social world and the interplay of history and micro worlds, in struggles for agency and meaning in lives. And to illuminate the interplay of different experiences and forms of learning – from the most intimate to the most formal (West, Alheit, Andersen & Merrill, 2007, p.280).

My research focuses on the students' experiences and perspectives, and how they perceive themselves as students. It concludes later with their transformation and changing perspectives on life - and labour market - as well as life stability.

The significant theme here is human reflexivity. What I mean with the expression is the fact that the human being can adopt a position towards the socially expected forms of individual and collective existence. The world and the self are not just given structures but they become through our perception and experience.

The constituted view is the result of human interpretation and it can be reinforced, diminished or changed during the life span. The very basis for selection and creation of symbols to construct reality is continually accumulated knowledge about the material and intangible reality and values internalized during everyday experiences. New knowledge and new experience, appearing in the biographically new life circumstances, are being constantly compared and confronted with the already stored images of the self and the world around. The fragmentary experiences are being related to the totality of ideas and representation and being transformed into new structure. (Urbaniak-Zajac in Koczanowicz, Nahirny & Włodarczyk, 2005, p. 122) Bourdieu's *habitus* locates person within the wider social space and in relation to others. He also recognises that this can be transformed through the use of agency:

Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures (Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant.1992, p. 133).

The self is a product of what the person considers as his life in the terms of his own history. In our own history/biography we are constantly drawing and redrawing our past and our future. 'Me' and 'my' history are inseparable. The identity is the construction, which adopts the form of history represented in a personal narrative. At particular times

in an individual's biography, agency may be more dominant, for example when making the decision to study abroad. While interpreting the biographical data, the problem of objectivity is raised. When analysing data, what is really important is fruitfulness and transparency of interpretation. My understanding of fruitful interpretation is sensitive, far-reaching understanding as well as critical consideration. In other words it is both the trust in what the interviewee is trying to express and also some distance to what has been said. Interpretation is like the conversation with the written text, with the transcript of what has been said. (Urbaniak-Zajac in Koczanowicz, Nahirny, Włodarczyk, 2005, p. 126).

An indispensable component of the ability to read the data gathered through the interview process is the researcher's systematic reflection on their own inquiry practice. The documentation of every stage of the research process seems to be essential.

The narrative investigation is about presenting the human agency against the background of the conditions and circumstances he happened to exist in; it is about expressing his actions along with their meaning, significance and implications. The point is to understand the single individual with reference to his daily world of experience and to recreate, as much as it is possible, his/her biographical becoming.

There is a common argument against narrative research in science, which is that it does not produce any conclusions of certainty, in contrast to what traditional approaches would provide. As Webster argues, narrative does not claim to represent the 'exact truth, but rather aims for verisimilitude – that the results have the appearance of truth or reality' (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.4). The empirical methods approach, that summarises the experience and issues surrounding it by the use of statistical figures, is very limiting and insufficient to express the complicity and broadness of the researched phenomenon.

Quantitative research is typically looking for outcomes and frequently overlooks the impact of experience, while narrative inquiry allows researchers to get an understanding of that experience....Narrative is not an objective reconstruction of life – it is a rendition of how life is perceived. (Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp.3, 5)

The growing interest in qualitative methodology, and its suitability for research purposes, can also be explained with the epistemological concept of truth, which changes while moving from the modernist to postmodernist perspective. This means that what has been previously argued, that is 'how we know whatever we know' was taken from the objective and ultimate truth, is now rather recognised and interpreted in

the light of 'subjective, multiple truths', as postmodernism itself relates to the human-centred holistic perspective. (Webster, 1994, pp.6, 11, Merrill 1996, Reeves 1996). The advantage of the narrative method is its ability to communicate and explore both the internal and external experiences of human beings. What is also maybe even most important for the task of illuminating the perceptions of people in transition, is the narrative method capability of encompassing factors of time and communication in change, which are fundamental in dealing with human centeredness and complexity of real life experiences with connections with the individual's worldview. Narrative provides a means to investigate the individual's inner experience of human activity, so it becomes the postmodern tool to explore in a more sensitive way 'the subtle textures of thought and feeling, which are not readily accessible in more standard forms of research' (Gough, 1994, in Webster, p.7).

Narrative is the concept I was working with, and it has been chosen as the most useful tool in encompassing the transitions my respondents were/are going through, as well as being a way of attempting to access that sequence of events in people's lives. It was the best tool to explain the phenomenon of triple or even multiple transitions, connecting past with present and future.

Why have I chosen narrative as a form of my research? I want to explore the story of each participant, their own history and narrative. Their stories are in a process of becoming, being created in a present moment. Individuals are always in the process of becoming, of creating themselves. According to Tedder and Biesta what makes a story a narrative is a plot (Tedder and Biesta, 2007). Narrative inquiry is the best way to let the respondent decide what part of herself she is going to share with me, what identity position she has adopted and what are the most important elements in the story. I am aware that the interviews deviate from the questions and go in a different direction. "The purpose is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives." (Riessman, 1993, p.2). There is also something about me that makes me feel comfortable about the narrative. The journey through this research starts with my own experience, as a person split between two countries, having the experience of working and learning in both of them. I can identify very well with this position because I am bilingual, I am an immigrant, who struggles to merge into a new culture, to find a place like home in another country. I can understand, more than anyone else, how it feels to move to a different culture, to be a

stranger in a workplace, in a society, and to struggle with the language acquisition. I can perceive things more clearly from the Polish minority perspective. I have witnessed all of the most recent economic and social changes taking place in Poland and I can understand the way these are shaping the Polish immigrant's identity and attitudes.

My family roots are in Poland, but also in the Ukraine, where my grandmother comes from. I have been part of multinational discussions within the family settings since my very early childhood. My own history and my background as an international person puts me in a position of multinational perspective and gives me a more sensitive sense of empathy with similar experiences of others.

I had an open and exploratory attitude to the questions I was asking. As the researcher, I am trying to reflect critically on the theory I am using as my starting framework. I am also very flexible and open minded in accordance to young adults' experiences.

In Polish students' narratives presented by me, there are some commonalities, but the way they have built their plots is different.

During the first analysis stage there can not be the formal and closed conclusion, only the early interpretations which may be redirected as a results of other peoples narrative's impact. Each new narrative may change the way other were understood because of the new social dimensions they bring together (Nizinska, 2009).

Allheit highlights the presence of social elements in individual stories, which gives a story teller "socially viable lifeworld perspective for guiding their actions" (Allheit 2005, p.209).

I have begun my research with interrogating the learning and transition processes in my respondents' lives, through posing the following questions:

What is the relation between studying abroad and the sense of stabilization and security in life? How does studying abroad influence the sense of identity of young people? Why is the education system in Ireland attractive to foreign students? What are students coming from post communist countries looking for in a foreign country? What are their motives to study abroad? Why are they choosing Ireland?

I had the list of research questions, (see attached in Appendix), which were used to initiate discussion with no intention to meet all the answers. The stories were evolving their own way and each narrative was different and influenced the research in a different way.

Those questions were to help me to explore connections and influences of learning, and transitions in their lives. In the final chapter I draw some indicatory conclusions of my findings and argue that biographical and narrative methods are necessary for understanding learning and changing perspectives through the transitions in the life course. Life, work and learning are reciprocally permeating to create the biographical entity. The above is being created by individuals' experiences and transformations, which would not be possible to come into existence without all those mentioned components. My dissertation deals with not only learning in HE institutions, but also with the social spheres interconnected with it. It articulates the stories of the people who could be marginalized in traditional forms of research; but what seems crucial is that their stories are enabling me to develop a more 'nuanced understanding of learning and educational processes' (Tedder and Biesta, 2007) in the cross-cultural context. It also provides the possibility to discover 'unexpected experiences and surprising transformations that in many cases are not foreseen by the learner himself' (Alheit and Dausien, 2002, p.16).

Higher education is a space where people can acquire knowledge and credentials marked as employability outcomes. Education also has a role to play in providing space for them to reflect on their lives - and their meanings - and identify opportunities for further development (Tedder and Biesta, 2007, p.10).

Alheit (1995) noticed also the possibility of discovering by both teacher and learner the 'opportunities for shaping social, occupational and political existence more autonomously' (Alheit, 1995, p.68). Tedder and Biesta point out another important component enabling an understanding of the significance of transitions in learning, which is the 'space of opportunity' available to those people assessed and their 'instruments for individual self-management' (Tedder and Biesta, 2007, p.2).

The transitions are important. They are not only the mark of a new career turn. They also give the confidence and self-assurance to adapt to new circumstances. They have significance for the 'maintenance and development of the self' (Tedder and Biesta, 2007, p.6). The interesting question about the young people who have already gone through many transitions, having taken the challenge, is: Would they be more inclined to take a similar risk later on?

#### **4.4 The grinding assumptions and the project's intentions**

My first assumption was that Polish people graduating in Ireland do suffer from a high level of language anxiety, and time spent in the university setting helps them to adjust to the new culture and improve their command of the language, their appropriate use of it, and their self-perceived competence. Another assumption was that the motives for studying abroad are highly economic, with smaller percentage being for self-development and other kinds of purposes. The next one concerned the growing importance of Ireland on the labour market as being the major trait attracting people to choose Irish universities. The fourth assumption was that studying abroad is strongly connected with gaining self confidence, self worth and self esteem, as well as greater confidence within the job market. The fifth one was that studying in a foreign country changes the perspective into a more mature and positive one and also adds to life stability.

The economy driven choices, like the desire to feel secure in the employment market, might be the possible explanation for moving abroad in order work and study. The other motives might be strongly connected with a deeper need for security in life and a fear of the future, in all its aspects. We can also notice some globalizing tendencies; there is a contemporary Nomad generation, which does not feel connected with one particular place in the world. How far are people conscious of the motives of their choices? How much does it depend on their self awareness?

Linden West's research provides an in-depth analysis in learning, dealing with what motivates adults in higher education and what 'keeps them keeping on'. He concludes it is often the struggle for more authentic selfhood. (West, 2007, p.71). I want to frame my research in terms of narrative because I hope to notice different layers of meaning in the dialogue with my participants, and to understand more about individual and social change. Clandinin introduces the idea of a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. The terms are: personal and social (interaction), past, present and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation).

Though the idea may put constraining boundaries on inquiry, it can also help to open up imaginative possibilities for inquirers, which could not so easily be seen without the idea. It is because the inquiry space, and the ambiguity implied, remind us to be aware of where we and our participants are placed at any particular moment - temporally, spatially, and in terms of the personal and the social. Researcher is always in the midst – located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal, and the social. But he is also in the midst

in another sense as well; that is in the middle of a nested set of stories – ours and theirs. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.89)

Narrative inquiry has identifiable features. For Clandinin and Connelly (2000) it is the best way of representing and understanding experience. They describe four directions of a narrative inquiry; inward and outward, backward and forward.

- By inward they mean towards internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions
- By outward they mean towards the existential conditions, that is the environment
- By backward and forward they refer to temporality, past, present and future.

Narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines. (Clandinin, 2000 p.121). For me is my own experiences of immigration and continuing education in a foreign country. For narrative inquirers, it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and sense of significance and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others. The narrative inquiry will allow me to create a research text that illuminates the experiences, not only of the students, but also of how the discourse of social and theoretical contexts shape their engagement in the learning process.

The narrated life story represents the biographer's overall construction of his or her past and anticipated life... The stories that are selected by the biographer to represent his/her life history cannot be regarded as a series of isolated experiences, laid down in chronological order... individual experiences are always embedded in a coherent, meaningful context, a biographical construct... The present perspective determines what the subject considers biographically relevant, how she or he develops thematic and temporal links between various experiences, and how past, present or anticipated future realities influence the personal interpretation of the meaning of life (Rosenthal, 1993, pp. 62-63).

Auto-biographical narratives of learning, unfolding in the interaction examined in qualitative interviews, are emergent, evolving accounts of motives, motivations, of choices, renunciations, blockages and liberation, even (Alheit & Dausien, 2002: 574). They are stories of the self, and they record the challenging process of reflexive construction of a (potentially) more secure, coherent and cohesive self.

In these auto-biographical stories which are being 'collected', the context of the research interview is a learning space in which the many stories of experience can be tested and explored and new endeavours for consistency and security can be made.



Narrative inquiry is a very suitable method for discovering different understandings and perspectives of participants. It leaves the place for themes that the researcher did not anticipate to emerge. Narrative can also address the diversity of participants' experiences.

Narrative inquiry is set in human stories of experience. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world through their stories....Narrative is well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning' (Webster and Mertova , 2007, p.1).

A central characteristic to the narrative inquiry is reflexivity:

Effective reflective practice is focusing upon detailed stories of practice and life, and upon the thoughts and feelings associated with the actions in them. These stories are imaginative creations drawn from experience. (Bolton, 2001, p.7).

Phillion highlights three essential qualities of a narrative inquiry (2002):

- Thinking narratively - seeing experience as fluid rather than as fixed, as contextualized in time, place and society. This means knowing about one's biases and assumptions and how they can impede understanding.
- Being in the midst of lives - seeing research as living in the daily experiences of participants. This can be intense, emotionally draining and time consuming, life and research are viewed as inseparable.
- And making meaning of experience in relationships – developing understanding in relationships with participants.

Linden West in his writing has suggested that the participants of the research experiences are always intervened with the personal experience of the researcher himself and those two influence each other:

In our work, we keep in the foreground of our writing a narrative view of experience, with the participants' and researchers' narratives of experience situated and lived out on storied landscapes as our theoretical methodological frame. As we make the transition from field texts to research texts, we try to interweave our researcher experience of the experience under study with narrative ways of going about and inquiring into that phenomenon (West, 2007, p.132).

The most exciting part of narrative is that the research may have different, and sometimes surprising, twists and turns, as life itself does. The researcher can not entirely predict the outcomes, as it is up to participants to decide what side of themselves they want to show.

The only way to get anywhere in reflective practice is to do it – trusting the journey be interesting and useful, having faith in and respect for yourself and your abilities to reflect as well as practise. But you do not know where you are going...We don't travel far in reflective practice: just make a great deal more sense of where we are. (Bolton, 2001, pp. 200-201)

The transcript of the interview may be more or less interpretive, and may be also researcher influenced. (West, 2007, p.94). I am aware of the fact that, as a researcher, I have decided the moment to turn the voice recorder on, I have decided which questions to ask, and also that I may have influenced some participant responses by simple things like smiling, asking for clarification, nodding my head, or by asking a new question that seemed relevant at that moment. My body responses could have also influenced the story being told. In addition, I am aware of the fact that the stories are also shaped by the relationship between researcher and participant.

#### **4.5 The choice of language for this study**

For immigrants, who have moved to another country and are merging into its culture, the transition brings a cultural shock and triggers questions about belonging and the self in connection to others and in the context one is in.

Although all my research participants are fluent in English, I set the interviews in the Polish language. It has allowed me to pick up all those slight, barely noticeable, changes in the speech pattern, gestures, nuances and subtleties, which tell so much about the emotions engaged in the process. There can be specific use of words or phrases, that can indicate something important happening on the deeper emotional, subconscious level. My purpose as a researcher is to develop some understanding of how people experience their identities when facing cultural and social changes affected by education, learning, and by moving to another culture. Language acquisition plays a significant role in the whole process. Agnieszka Bron in her Essay: Learning, Language and Transition (Bron in West, 2007), supports her understanding of G. D. Mead's theory of intersubjectivity, and his way of approaching the issue of language; Meads argues that language, as well as culture and its values, beliefs, speech patterns and forms of understanding, are not static phenomena. It can not be taken as a technical way of communication only, it has to be understood as a social process: it develops out of verbal and non-verbal gestures and comprises awareness of meaning. (Bron in West, 2007, p.210). It is much broader than speech and grows from the gestures learnt when we are children and before we can articulate them in any speech. We acquire narrative competence skills very early, and use them while socialising within a culture and a language in a natural way. Moving to

another country means developing these skills consciously, but to some extent staying culturally bound. To really appropriate a language means to understand it in all aspects, situations and cultural contexts, to be able to use it as a natural expression of life. Language for immigrants becomes a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the emerging of the new self. Bron points to two layers of a language: the first one connected with everyday life, and the second, abstract one which we learn at higher levels of education. Usually we learn the first as a child, naturally and without much effort, but sometimes for immigrants the reverse might happen. (Bron in West, 2007, p.210).

Ewa Hoffman, in her book *Lost in translation*, writes about first learning the abstract academic language, while staying ignorant of the everyday one:

I soak in the academic vocabulary of the time with an almost suspicious facility; for me, this is an elementary rather than an advanced language, a language I learn while I'm still in my English childhood. (Hoffman, 1989, p.181).

Language and learning play important roles in cultural and identity transition. There is also one more dimension of the language issue, which is language anxiety. I had not realized the problem when drafting my thesis proposal but, after doing three pilot interviews, I realized the problem connected with the anxiety of being misunderstood is strongly connected with gaining access to higher education abroad. Transition from one culture to another involves a basic uncertainty about oneself, identity, place and belonging. It includes a feeling of being fragmented, of not having a past in the new country, and not yet being able to form or plan a future.

The complex set of feelings that constitute Foreign Language Anxiety is powerfully described in Eva Hoffman's (1989) autobiography. Eva was born in Krakow, Poland and emigrated with her family to Canada in 1959 at the age of 13. She deeply regretted the loss of her sophisticated and confident Polish self in her interactions with native speakers of English. Speaking English shortly after her arrival filled her with fear and rage:

It takes all my will to impose any control on the sounds that emerge from me. I have to form entire sentences before uttering them; otherwise, I too easily get lost in the middle. My speech, I sense, sounds monotonous, deliberate, heavy — an aural mask that doesn't become or express me at all. I don't try to tell jokes too often, I don't know the slang, I have no cool repartee. I love language too much to maul its beats, and my pride is too quick to risk the incomprehension that greets such forays. I become a very serious young person. I am enraged at

the false persona I'm being stuffed into, as into some clumsy and overblown astronaut suit. I'm enraged at my adolescent friends because they can't see through the guise, can't recognize the light-footed dancer I really am (Hoffman, 1989, p. 118-119).

We can only assume that Eva Hoffman did overcome her language anxiety in English: She obtained a PhD in the United States, became editor for The New York Times, published several books in English, and settled down in Hampstead, UK.

I think that both my past and my present experiences have influenced the subject of my research. I could say I was attempting, at least partially, to find the answers to my own concerns and questions, trying to find my own way and to better understand the world I have come to live in. Pierre Bourdieu wrote about the vast role that *habitus* plays in people's lives. My own experience with education started in Poland as an administrator at university level and coordinator of foreign language courses for students wishing to continue their studies and careers abroad. My work in Ireland was in tutoring students with special needs when working in a school for children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. I would say it is a very diverse professional background, combining a broad range of educational challenges. Since coming to Ireland five years ago, I keep asking myself: how much has this excursion changed me? Have I become more Irish in my behaviour? Or, on the contrary, am I more Polish than the Poles in my country of origin are? For years I have been playing the game of researcher, observing how my friends seem to change, how their perspectives, problem approaching and plans for the future are moulding. I can see how some of them literally merge into Irish society, feeling like a *fish in the water* (Bourdieu's term), finding themselves in natural and familiar environment. Some of them are quite the opposite and cannot find their place, staying as if in suspension, unable to decide whether to leave or to stay for good, being afraid to make such a decision. Even now I am trying to find the answer to the questions of my own motives; why did I decide to leave my own country, my *secure employment*? Has my sense of security in life changed since then?

The other aspect of my research is the literature and subject matter I have chosen to investigate. I write about the uncertainty and insecurity of modern man, as Zygmunt Bauman states it, and liquid modernity – rapidly and endlessly changing the reality we live in. I also wish to touch upon a question of making life decisions and how difficult a task it is to have this obligation and responsibility. I want to ground my research on the work of some other theorists, Axel Honneth, Stanley Aronowitz, and Pierre Bourdieu. Theory is valid, as it helps us to be more sensitive to situations, experiences and it

fosters generalizability. It makes the work of the researcher more effective (Eisner 2007).

We are all alike, in the search and pursuit of purpose, in the curiosity of the world around but also in the thirst for security and stability, as well as the striving for recognition. Our everyday concerns are, among others, struggles for respect and a decent quality of life. Only the qualitative interviewing of people can let me explore their life concerns and reflect a 'feeling of person', or the place. I agree with Eisner that qualitative research can reveal much better what has been obscure and lets the researcher notice the nuances, which are impossible to record during, for example, quantitative research. The example might be noticing such subtleties like slight changes in the facial expression when touching a particular subject during the interview. It allows us also to go a different direction in the conversation than previously planned, when we discover something unexpected in the other person's perspective/experience. What plays the role is, to follow Eisner, emotion, perceptual freshness and nuance.

#### **4.6 The brief introduction to the students and respondents in the study**

Five of my respondents were female and two male. Their ages ranged from 25 to 36. One of my respondents was married, five were in relationships and one single. All of them had gained some qualifications before leaving Poland and they have continued their studying in Ireland.

##### Kate (30 yrs old)

Intelligent, bright, witty blond girl. Under the calm and modest pose she covers a bright and curious personality, who loves meeting new people, is interested in new places and the world around. She likes reading and gathering new knowledge. We are meeting in her home, on one of the streets of Dublin. The very first impression of this house is the enormous amount of books piled up on the shelves and floor, when there is not enough space. She comes from Poznań, has graduated in English studies in Poland (B.A.). She has lived for 7 years in Ireland and she did General Linguistics at T.C.D in 2006. She is teaching English and Polish and doing some translations.

##### Suzanne (30 yrs old)

She has studied Cultural Anthropology in Poland and came to Dublin 6 years ago. Modestly dressed, tall blond girl. She worked in McDonalds after arriving in Ireland,

but was never satisfied with the physical work. She always wanted to do a PhD and, when her close friend advised her about the possibility of getting the Dublin City Council grant for pursuing a doctorate, she did not hesitate to start a new life career. I meet her at the University. Her voice is calm and composed. You can easily notice that she is self-aware and has the ability to distinguish her emotions and outside influences and the world around; as well as her explicit view on the world and broadmindedness. Extremely intelligent, she has passed many exams in Poland, allowing her to study many specialisations at universities. She could study psychology, cultural studies, but also mathematics and physics. Suzanne is doing her PhD in Sociology at the present in one of the Irish universities.

#### Anne (25 yrs old)

Energetic, smiling, young woman, with long dark hair. 'I always wanted to study abroad' she mentions on the very first meeting. 'My auntie got married and she migrated and studied in Peterborough, I wanted be like her' she remarked. Anne came to Ireland after gaining her bachelor degree in Poland. She had no particular interest in staying in Ireland, however she started to work and decided to continue her education in Dublin. She has gained a degree in Business and Treasury. After a few years of living in Dublin, she moved to Singapore in April 2011. The first interviews with Anne took place in Dublin, and continued later as conversations via skype connection.

#### Barbara (26 yrs old)

She got a bachelor degree in English studies in Poland, and, after graduation, she came to Dublin, wanting to try her chances at working abroad and using her language qualifications. She decided to stay and do an MA in Cultural Studies at U.C.D. Barbara is working in the city centre, in a non-profit organisation in a Cultural Sector administration role, and perceives her post-graduate diploma as a way of achieving extensive development and better work possibilities. She is not motivated by money, but instead by doing what she enjoys and is passionate about.

#### Pawel (36 yrs old)

He came to Ireland 11 years ago, before the time Poland joined the EU, so there were very few Polish people around. Pawel had started his PhD in physics in Poland and got the opportunity to continue it in Ireland. As he remarked, he found language acquisition and adjusting to a new place reasonably easy. We were meeting in his office, at the

university, where he worked. Pawel was the only person who preferred the interviews to be conducted in the English language.

#### Louise (25 yrs old)

Tall, very professional looking, bright girl with short dark hair and glasses. She is very perfectionist, slightly shy, very well organised. I am meeting her at her home, in a small rented apartment in Blanchardstown, Dublin. She can only find some time for me on Saturdays, working during the week and studying at the same time. She came to Ireland with her boyfriend during the holiday break at the university, where she was doing her Accountancy course. They planned to work during the Summer time and get back home in early September. However they stayed and Anne decided to start anew with her degree in Dublin.

#### Peter (30 yrs old)

Bright, cultural, young man. His parents were Polish, but he spent some years in Australia, where his parents migrated. He graduated in Philosophy in Poland and is pursuing his PhD in Physics at university in Dublin at the moment. He lives in Dublin, where we were meeting at the university. His perspective encapsulated the periods when he stayed in Australia, Poland, France and – eventually - Ireland.

The participants of the study undertaken consisted of a very small group in regard to both the character of research, and the tool being used, which is Narrative Inquiry. Narrative Inquiry was chosen as the research tool because it is particularly suited to attempting to meaningfully access and accurately explore the sequences of events that make up people's lives.

Another layer of the process was selecting the population to be surveyed. Those selected were students who had already gained BA or MA degrees in Poland, were quite fluent in English and were also continuing their studies in Ireland. It was also the group of people who continued their study after spending some time in Ireland.

I did not know any of the participants before beginning the research. Some of them I met through the courtesy of my friends who recommended them. Two of the people that I met through the courtesy of the International Office in one of universities, which however could not give me Polish students details due to confidentiality issues but have sent my details to those students who agreed to make contact with me. Firstly, my interviews concerned mainly motivational issues and students experiences in higher

education in Ireland and Poland. During those conversations it turned out that ‘identity’ becomes very important issues in those people narratives, so it created the need to expand conceptual framework and develop on the work of other theorists, like Martin Bloomer (*studenthood*) and Elżbieta Budakowska (*identity, borderless identity*). I also looked at this phenomenon through the lenses of Bauman’s *fragmented identity* and *drifting identity* concepts.

During analysis I supported myself with the RANLHE and PRILHE projects mentioned in the literature review, intertwining their findings with the data collected, on some occasions. Whilst analysing each narrative I was marking those statements, which corresponded to my guiding assumptions.

I did not want to direct and guide my interviewees to give the expected answers or those which would fit into my assumptions. However, on a few occasions I have presented very briefly some theorists’ (mainly Bauman) theories to encourage a deeper discussion. However I consider my own personal experience as the valid part of the study.

The auto/biographical I is an inquiring analytic sociological...agent who is concerned in constructing, rather than discovering, social reality and sociological knowledge. The use of ‘I’ explicitly recognises that such knowledge is contextual, situational, and specific, and that it will differ systematically according to the social location...of the particular knowledge-producer. Thus the autobiography...of the sociologist becomes epistemologically crucial no matter what particular research activity we are engaged in. (Stanley, 1993, pp. 49-50)

This quotation indicates the importance of elements in the researcher’s identity and social position to the way the research is being approached and analysed. The researcher’s personal experience and self-reflexivity influences strongly on the choice of methodology and the epistemological approach, as well as a theoretical and ethical arising from it. Some scientists have been accepting the auto-reflective approach taken by the researcher, especially the feminist sociologists. I have been influenced by the writings of Gillie Bolton, Nod Miller and Linden West and their way of locating themselves in the research and its analysis. This chapter takes the personal form and I am reflecting on my own narrative here for the valid reasons. In constructing this research and presenting the narratives of Polish immigrants studying in Ireland and creating their new identities and lives in newly acquired settings, I am also telling the story of my own professional and personal development. It seems to be accurate to locate some fragments of my own life history in this text. My own history, identity and



transitions, undoubtedly have the impact on the perspective from which I view the subject matter.

I think that it was this sudden realisation of the impossibility of separating personal...and professional (research) concerns and the recognition of the complex interplay between the primarily intellectual activity of doing research and the inner emotional life of the researcher which brought me to my present belief that all social research constitutes an autobiography of the researcher. (Miller in West, 2007, p.173)

Certainly my epistemological stance is affecting the way that I approach my research topic and the questions posed. My own background – where I am coming from, what I believe in, or using Bourdieu's (1990) expression, what is my habitus- my attitudes and dispositions, everything that I have acquired during my previous years, which has shaped my attitudes, perspectives and my understanding of things.

In humanistic approach – Carl Rogers (1994) who argues that the environment we grow up in can have a fundamental influence over our personality and our whole life. Both of these stances reinforce each other or at least do not contradict. The important aspect of them is that habitus is not shaped once and for all, being passively reinscribed but can always be a subject to modification, depending on life circumstances and the knowledge gained.

#### **4.7 The ethical issues concerning the research process**

I am aware that my own biographical affinities and experiences may have influenced the research process, but also knowing my frame of reference, and where it comes from, I was able to reflect critically on them. This is of benefit to the whole research process and added originality to the findings.

In qualitative interviewing, the research findings are dependent upon the participants' willingness to cooperate and/or share their perspectives and sometimes very personal experiences. I have informed my participants of the objectives of the research as well as their right to confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. I have informed all participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Taking the Narrative Inquiry as the method and the Constructivist Approach seemed to be the most suitable for the research purposes. It is not easy to be a good and objective listener, when people share their experiences and the emotions associated with them. There were many issues resonating in me, as I was having similar experiences to some extent. I also had my own feelings and experiences and frames of references, which

were affecting my perception of the stories being told. The theoretical framework has also built the lenses of perception and understanding of those narratives. It is impossible to be totally objective. The researcher is not transparent in the whole process, and does not have to be interested in producing the objective knowledge (Malec in Bron & Kurantowicz, p.288). The research respondents shared the parts of their lives, seen from their perspectives.

Although I did not know anyone of my interviewees before, I was not, however, an 'outsider for them. I was a student myself, as well as a Polish person, who had come to Ireland. There were similarities in the experiences of entering higher education in Ireland, shared by me and all my respondents. Although I did not want to influence students with my experience and insight, I have shared some issues about myself and the theoretical assumptions concerning the thesis. I used my own stories as the ice breakers to help the interviewees feel more comfortable during the research. It has helped them to notice the sameness and likeness of the experiences and reduce the tension that they felt during the first meetings. The introductory meetings were usually most stressful, as students felt inhibited to some extent by the use of a voice recorder. None of them had been recorded before and they experienced the strange feeling associated with this process, because of the irreversibility of the words being said. In order to reduce this tension, I agreed with the students to send them transcripts of the interviews within a few weeks after recording. They had time in their own private space to read them and decide if there are any parts they wanted to change or remove from the transcripts. This was the case with one student, who asked me to remove a big part of the interview from the transcript in order to avoid distress to his close friends, if anyone of them happened to read his words in the future. This part of the interview was removed from the Appendix.

Although there was a list of questions for respondents, no one was pushed to meet and expand on all of them. The purpose for those questions was to start the discussion and let the students unfold their stories in their own way. I did not pursue a topic if someone was not willing to share her experiences about particular issues. Each person was to tell her own story. She was deciding what side of herself she was going to show, what was important in her narrative and what identity position she wished to take. The relations between respondents and the researcher are very important and the atmosphere of mutual understanding, trust and respect has been considered a very important issue in the whole process. 'Narrative rights are not only a question of who is allowed to tell her version, but also about who is allowed to listen to a story, and eventually, to dispute or

comment on the narrative' (Horsdal, 2004, p.11). All the interviewees were informed of my appreciation for taking part in the research. Each person influenced me and affected my way of perception. They opened new interesting discourses and questions about the world and the role of higher education, which I believe may be the subject for more work.

The next stage of writing and analysis was the marking of the parts of transcripts which have been considered as valuable for the thesis purposes, and which I planned to translate and quote in the dissertation. Those parts needed to be agreed again by the students. In this way they were, to some extent, co-constructing and co-creating the work along with the researcher.

The originality of the work was the specific context of my interviewee's life circumstances and also my own autobiographical approach.

## **4.8 Comparative Analysis**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I --  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken

In my last chapters, I have placed the findings, which are divided into sections, according to the themes the research concerned. There are themes concerning motivation, perspective, identity and so on. I have also compared the interviews with the findings of research groups of the RANLHE and PRILHE projects. There are also new, sometimes surprising, themes emerging in the conclusions.

The interviews gathered over a year of time create a great repository of knowledge. They deal with such themes as emotions, feelings and experiences of young people. They tell the stories about the complex ways of life and the art of decision-making,

dealing with challenges and about determination, motivation and struggle to fulfil goals. It is a fascinating journey into other people's curiosity and openness to the world, to what is new and challenging, and to development. Those narratives are deepening the knowledge about higher education in Ireland.

Every person is a unique, interesting personality, each participant is in some way fascinating – for her ambitions, intelligence and determination. What is common to all of them is the pursuit of development. However, it is not possible to generalize their characteristics to the Polish community in Ireland. On the contrary, I would argue they constitute the elite group among their community. They stand out for their attitudes towards work and life, desire for self-development and self actualisation, ambition, linguistic abundance and an individual's manner. To make a comprehensive and coherent analysis of the data collected in the research it is necessary to undertake a complex and diverse approach, to be able to understand multitudes of perspectives and different angles of experiences. Why is this complex approach, entailing both sociological and psychological understanding, valid for the thesis purposes? The phenomenon of human motives and experience of multiple transitions, especially in the postmodern era, is too complex to be viewed from only one perspective. The portrayal would be too flat to understand its wholeness. To see the problem in its richness of multiplicity and variety, the researcher needs to see it from the perspective of the educator, psychologist, sociologist and historian, as the wholeness of life is embedded in complex interconnections and possibilities:

especially in the wake of the postmodern 'turn', the boundaries between sociology and philosophy, political science, geography and social psychology have become fuzzy and loose. Postmodernism 'has spread like a virus through the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities eating away at the boundaries between them' (Maclure 2003 in Ball, 2004, p. 4).

Subjective differences are crucial in order to understand human motivation. Getting the more complex perspective in this particular study demands including the theory of subjectivity and micro-level behaviour to complement cultural and macro-level analysis (West, 1996).

#### **4.9 Motivational studies. Approaches to research and the data collected**

When writing about motivation, it is a difficult task to find the literature which would coherently describe the phenomenon. There are many approaches to the subject and the best option seems to be to take most of them into consideration. The research

undertaken in this thesis employs some psychological theories concerning motivation, as well as sociological approaches. Relying on West's research about adults' motivations to enter higher education, there are four main psychologically based approaches to motivation.

The first of them is derived from Jungian ideas of lifecycle theory, emphasizing chronological stages in human development. Each stage has its own needs and demands and there is a need to find meaning, or increase satisfaction, in life, to integrate self and the drive towards wholeness.

Another approach is derived from Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The lowest levels are usually fulfilled during childhood by parents or carers. The highest needs appear later in human development and only when the lowest have been satisfied. There is a need, appearing in adulthood, for achievement and confidence as well as for the self actualisation.

A third approach concentrates around the differences in personality traits. What it means is that people can engage in education for different reasons, according to their characters and temperaments. There are social needs, like longing for contact with others, because of feeling lonely, or marginalized. There are people who desire development and who are 'learning oriented'. There are personalities highly devoted to the particular subject they want to gain knowledge of.

The consecutive research strand is about the decision-making theory for interpreting the sequence of the choice of decisions that an individual makes. It is not focusing on the origins of the observed behaviour but rather on what can be empirically tested, on the observed actions. (Levinson, 1978, Maslow, 1968, Houle, 1961).

Sean Courtney presents a sociological perspective on motivation to learn, perceiving it as a way of managing change, particularly at times of crisis. Change may be due to personal or generational difficulties, or even national, economic, or systemic upheaval. Each crisis which leads to fragmentation of personality and deep questioning of the self and identity might provide an opportunity to learn and increase self-awareness whilst in transition towards a better understanding of the self and integration of the individual. This theory strongly correlates to the work of a Polish psychologist and psychiatrist called Dąbrowski, who developed the theory of Positive Disintegration. This theory describes a person's development as a result of accumulated experiences. Dąbrowski (1986) also identified a very interesting aspect of human development, which is the way a person faces his own anxieties, and resolves the challenges. Each crisis or change in life trajectory leads to personality disintegration according to Dabrowski (1986). He

calls it 'positive disintegration', if the person can achieve a positive and developmental solution to the problem faced. This is the vital developmental process.

Dabrowski also developed the 'developmental potential' concept, which describes the factors unique to each individual, when striving towards autonomous personality development. Those factors include innate abilities, talents and the individual's drive toward autonomy, and each one is very different to the other. Getting back to Courtney, he suggests that individuals are engaged in the struggle to reconstitute a self or to build a new identity. This can be achieved through work and education. In addition, other people are necessary and essential to an individual's success in this struggle. As Honneth argues, the role of others, significant people who recognize and support the individual's efforts in proper time, is invaluable. Courtney as well defines learning in social terms, underlying the role of significant people and a supportive culture.

Giddens adds that the context in which an individual happens to live nowadays, constantly brings people to such crises but creates also the opportunities for self development. Sociologists like Giddens and Bauman are in agreement about the belief that global economic forces are changing and deskilling communities, forcing individuals to take risk and construct more of their meanings and biographies in conditions of distressing insecurity. Giddens explains the concept of 'reflexive project of the self', as the strive to sustain a coherent self, in a continuously fluctuating, revised, biographical narrative, as a survival necessity (Giddens, 1991). The secure and coherent self is open to new experiences and to becoming 'the fully functioning person' (Rogers, 1994). There are people who are much braver and more open to taking a risk and face the challenge. Those are my respondents. To employ some psychoanalytic theory, the quality of the basic relationships with main carer in the childhood and the environment which enables children to progress towards a securer sense of selves plays crucial role in her ability to cope with life challenges in adulthood (Wolf, 1988, Frosh, 1991, Bowlby, 1991).

#### **4.9.1 Methods and Narratives**

The research explored motivations and individual stories through the interviews. The conversations were initially semi structured, but over time some of them became unstructured, and interviewees were allowed to tell their stories in the most comfortable way for them, sometimes diverging from the main theme. Their stories became open ended and reflexive. What students tell about their lives and motives is never complete and evolves over time, the same as life does. The transcripts are open to further

interpretation and what has been placed in this volume is seen greatly through the researcher's own story. There is a need to admit that the stories told by the research respondents were resonating in some aspects with the writer's own narrative. It does not mean though that the research is not true in scientific terms.

The assumption in the present study is that autobiography, far from being the enemy of insight and profound knowledge, is a powerful and natural resource to be used to understand others' life histories; and that empathy and relatedness are essential to telling stories. We constantly employ our experience to make sense of what others say and our social relationships in everyday encounters. In research, objectivist, detached methods can alienate, disempower and silence people and impoverish their narratives and their potential contribution to understanding them (Oakley, 1981). The capacity for dialogue and shared insight is strangled in its infancy. (West, 1996, p.19).

Apart from implementing the right tools for interpreting the data collected, there is a great need to be able to understand the learners themselves, their inner selves. This task demands imaginative empathy and the ability to immerse oneself into someone else's world. It is the ability to notice the insecurity others feel and the demands put on them by the ever changing and 'fluid' world around. It is also the ability to detach oneself when there is the need, as some stories are very different from the researcher's point of view, as human personalities are diverse. The narratives revealed some of the psychological and social issues, but they do not create any final conclusion that might be applied to the whole cohort of immigrant students in general. It is about the potential in each person to create her own path of life and her own meanings and agency. It is about empowering herself and getting the support at the right time from some significant others. It is about the life twists and turns and the strength which enables people to challenge the post modern life conditions they happen to live in.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Migration experiences and traditions through eyes of Polish writers.**

#### **5.1 Introduction.**

International migration is as old as the history of humanity. Population movements have always accompanied demographic growth, political conflicts and economic changes. People were always moving in pursuit of a better life conditions or being forced to do it by circumstances. The present times, however have brought a completely new face of migration which has never been experienced before. It is the reasons for migrational movements which have changed substantially. On the other hand international migration has never been as pervasive as it is today. It has never been so politically and socio-economically important for its linkages with complex processes affecting the entire world (Castles, p.260).

The very meaning of travelling has been changed in the era of the time and space compression. Contemporary migrants are very often the co creators of the reality as the natives. The society becomes more and more the melting pot, the ethnicity blend and 'the mosaic of diasporas' (Bauman, European Culture Congress inauguration 2011).

I have made references to the examples from the literature, to recall the most recent history of Poland. There was historical fragility of belonging to Poland, particularly in the last 100 years. Czesław Miłosz, Polish Nobel Prize winner, writes about Poland and its history and the time when it was under German and Soviet occupation, which is still vivid in collective memory. Older generation remembers it all very well. There was a double occupation in Poland. Some of the territory that had belonged to Poland before the war was under Soviet occupation, and the rest was held by the Germans. He writes about the time of the World War II and horrifying movement of Polish people:

World War II broke out as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, which contained a clause stating that the Polish state would be divided between Hitler and Stalin. The Soviet Union's occupation of eastern Poland resulted in mass deportations to the depths of Soviet Asia and in incredible suffering. The Soviet system yields little to the German in terms of cruelty. Those who are surprised by Polish hostility toward the Soviet Union fail to consider that every second family in Poland had someone who was deported to Soviet camps and prisons (Czarnecka and Fiut, 1987, p.83).

The post-war Poland was a very difficult place to live as well, and the socialist system has not left too much space for the development of the individual or for free will.



Miłosz was asked by Czarnecka, about how he felt while being a migrant himself, and if America remained a “land of great loneliness” in his opinion, he answered:

Like millions of other Europeans of my generation, I was not in a position of my own choosing. The system had been changed in our country without our approval. And Poland's subjugation, the occupation began in 1945, was a hideous thing. It's very difficult to resign yourself to your country's loss of sovereignty. Of course, at the same time I had been opposed to the situation in pre-war Poland, one that had been very difficult to accept. It had been a society of extremely strong class divisions. The overwhelming majority of people simply had no chance of advancing in society. Poland could not industrialize, because of lack of capital. My point in all this is not to put socialism and capitalism in opposition, comparing what's good and what's bad about each. That's comparison that shouldn't be made, because it doesn't lead anywhere. We know there's no parallelism. The communist system is simply parasitic. It couldn't exist if there weren't some margin where people could pursue some private economic activities. The main point here is that considering one system unbearable doesn't mean you accept the other system with open arms. I'm laughing – because this may just the way life is. But that doesn't mean that person has no dreams, no vision of some different and better society.(Czarnecka and Fiut, 1987, pp.93-94)

A whole generation later, individuals happened to live in the time of capitalism, free market democracy and global changes. The above mentioned movement was part of history but now young people are moving but in pursuit of education, economic change - even if it is to a great extent imposed by the absence of opportunities at home.

## **5.2 Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert and Homesickness**

Miłosz was writing beautifully about the homesickness and a great longing for his country, while living and thriving in Californian exile. He safely returned to his native country when socialism declined. One of the most influential European poets of the second half of the twentieth century, Zbigniew Herbert, whose life and work were shaped by World War II and life under Poland's communist regime as well, travelled to the West, too - but found himself returning several times to a system he had never served. He wrote about this decision in "Mr Cogito - the Return". This is a part of the poem below:

2  
so why does he return  
ask friends  
from the better world  
  
he could stay here  
somehow make ends meet  
  
entrust the wound

to chemical stain-remover

leave it behind in waiting- rooms  
of immense airports

so why is he returning

- to the water of childhood  
- to entangled roots  
- to the clasp of memory  
- to the hand the face  
seared on the grill of time

at first glance simple the questions  
demand a complicated answer

probably Mr Cogito returns  
to give a reply

to the whispering of fear  
to impossible happiness  
to the blow given from behind  
to the deadly question

Mr Cogito is a figure recalling Latin: 'Cogito ergo sum': I think therefore I am. And that includes the unthinkable and the borderline-rational. In "Mr Cogito - the Return", Herbert goes back to Poland knowing "he will regret it greatly". He wants his own language and the West's consumption bores him. Herbert identifies with his country as caring "about his own wound". He wants to return to "the treasure house/of all misfortune". He recognises, that this is the yearning for "impossible happiness" but also "entangled roots".

In my work I was trying to find out what has been left from those people who were longing and yearning for their native country in the contemporary generation. The outcomes are quite surprising, as the attitude towards the home country has changed within this particular generation considerably. For a long time people, were yearning terribly for their home, and today's migrants also feel nostalgia, but the very different kind of it. This is not longing for going back. The issue is being discussed broader in the next chapter. Stanisław Barańczak has shown, the fundamental opposition is that of 'the realm of inheritance' ("*obszar dziedzictwa*") in Miłosz writings versus "the realm of disinheritance" ("*obszar wydziedziczenia*") in Herbert's writings. Herbert's hero is always suspended between East and West, between the past and the present, between myth and real life experience, primarily because of historical events in which the

biographical incidents of the poet coincides with the fate of Poland: the loss of his own native land is caused by Poland's loss of independence (Czarnecka and Fiut, 1987).

For Miłosz disinheritance is an inevitable part of the human condition, an in-between state natural to every inhabitant of the earth: man is always between nature and culture, history and transcendence,. For that reason Herbert and Miłosz interpret the Fall differently. For Herbert, it is a symbol of a loss of an idyll-personal, patriotic, cultural. For Miłosz, it is the image of existential division. Herbert sees himself outside the gate of Paradise; Miłosz, in the shadow of the tree of knowledge (Czarnecka and Fiut, 1987, p.159).

Those are the examples from the literature to picture the longing for the home country from the perspective of Polish poets and writers, who were at the exile during the socialistic regime. I wanted to contrast them with the contemporary situation of Polish students, who moved to another country but their motives and experiences are very different. This can be applied to the bigger picture of migration phenomenon on a global scale.

The very interesting aspect of this work is the transcript of personal life transitions. As Giddens noticed-the emigrational movements are encouraging the reflexivity of the self. The respondents of this study have shared their perspectives and reflections about their transitions and challenges that they had to face along the whole way, to adapt, to assimilate, to renegotiate their identities. They were open and honest about their changing frames of references and re-evaluating of what had been taken for granted when in their home country. They were very honest talking about Polish biases and complexes. They described of how they felt from being firstly strangers in Ireland to slightly moving to feel the otherness in their own country. This was a very interesting outcome of the study undertaken. Most of them felt to some extent uprooted and alienated in both places. The interesting point is that the way they miss their native land has changed. It is a very different longing in comparison to the homesickness, all the Polish people felt through the generations. This phenomenon does not concern only Poles, but all the historical nations, on the exile, travelling in pursuit of better life conditions or because they had being forced into it by external circumstances have shared the similar traits of homesickness. At the present, probably as never before in human history young people miss their country in a very specific way, not really wanting to move back there.

In order to explain this phenomenon I have framed this perspective within the thoughts of such writers as Bourdieu, Bauman, Bloomer, Budakowska and some other sociologists. Budakowska explains the borderless identity concept, Bauman discusses

the profound changes in individuals identity, caused by living in the state of constantly changing external circumstances, unpredictability and liquidity of the postmodern world of neo-liberal capitalism.

Because the main characters of this study are Polish students in Ireland, the work had become the transcription of the Irish educational system, seen from the perspective of immigrants and non-traditional students for the same reason. It is an important perspective, because each European Union member needs to adjust its educational system to the growing number of migrant and non-traditional students and cultural diversity in Higher Education settings. Both policy and curriculum has to evolve along with the changing socio-cultural conditions within the European Union.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Findings, motivations and experiences**

#### **6.1 New paths, new challenges, different perspectives.**

What a wee little part of a person's life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself. All day long, and every day, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his thoughts not those other things, are his history. His acts and his words are merely visible, thin crust of this world, with its scattered snow summits and its vacant wastes of water – and they are so trifling a part of his bulk! a mere skin enveloping it. The mass of him is hidden – it and its volcanic fires that toss and boil, and never rest, night or day. They are his life, and they are not written, and cannot be written. Every day would make a whole book of eighty thousand words – three hundred and sixty-five books a year. Biographies are but the clothes and buttons of the man – the biography of the man himself cannot be written.

( Mark Twain, 1996, p. 9)

During my sixteen meetings with my narrators, who were sharing their stories with me, I received or, maybe was rewarded with the vivid, rich and diverse and multi-layered stories about the experience of higher education while being a foreigner. My interviewees were sharing the joy of their success but also their feelings of uncertainty or doubts, inevitably accompanying facing the challenges at some stages of their life. Despite many differences in narratives, in regard to the language used, the way of providing the story or the parts of life they wanted to share with me, I can still take all those stories as one big narrative and treat it as one issue. My respondents incorporated me into some parts of their life story, which has become the specific social world.

Biographies are mostly analysed as an individualistic way of understanding the social world. However as Barbara Merrill points out, a biography is never fully individual, as each person relates to significant others and social contexts when constructing a biography. It is possible though to understand shared experiences of the social world using biographies as the tool. (Merrill in West, 2007, p.71).

Along with the decline of the welfare state in Eastern and Western Europe, came the increasing individualisation of society. Class and collectivity are becoming the out of date concepts in the academy along with the increasing importance of the individual and individualisation (Merrill in West, 2007, p.72).

individualising tendencies permeate all aspects of life including education. Collective community issues have become redefined as individual ones requiring individuals to map out their individual life projects, coping strategies and to take responsibility for their own learning

(Merrill in West, 2007, p.72).

Along with the freedom to choose own learning direction, each person becomes responsible for his own career and his entire life project.

Assisting individuals in their search for meaning and in the development of their survival skills contributes to the privatisation of adult education, which is by no means incompatible with its instrumentalisation and marketisation

(Finger & Asún, 2001, p.119).

The academic discourse has focused more on issues of individual identities, and less on class, which according to Crompton is viewed as irrelevant. The individualistic approach has been largely influenced by the omnipresent postmodernism and the subsequent demise of meta-narratives and the project of modernity (Merrill in West, 2007, p.72).

However class is still present in the life of the individual, it is no longer regarded as the key basis of the person's social identity. This identity is shaped mostly by consumerism and globalisation. The understanding of the class concept should be redefined in the knowledge society. Bauman (1998) emphasises the different shift in class division, different to the one influenced by the work of Marx and Weber. He writes about the poor, as the reserve army of labour in post-industrial society. They are becoming often deliberately forgotten, as "the poor are not needed and so are unwanted" (Bauman, 1998, p.91). The transition to an information or knowledge society has created a new form of social division and inequality. There is the division between those who possess knowledge and those that do not possess it.

All the above ideas will be outlined further in the findings below.

The emigration processes are said to be the inevitable part of the life in a post modern world, borrowing the phrase from Bauman.

What is special in Polish context is that a stream of around 2 million young Poles have left the country during the last 6 years. (Ligus R. from University of Lower Silesia, Wroclaw). The migration became the important and common phenomenon, as there is a big cohort of Polish people leaving their home country to work or study abroad.

## 6.2 Motivation

Kate is an example of one student who came to Ireland to study. She notes the role media played in that decision. While reflecting on motives to study abroad, there is a need to notice and remark the picture of Ireland created by media and by stories heard from others. Kate remarks:

*There is this idealised picture of Ireland and of the Irish in Poland. It was ...like you know...this romantic vision...the evergreen land, where people are joyful and like to sing and drink and are so open, friendly, and then there's the fight for independence that was similar to Poland's, the Celtic culture, dwarfs, goblins, druids. It looks so romantic when you live in Poland... I think we can learn a lot from the Irish (Kate).*

Many people living in Poland has the distorted image of Ireland and other Western European countries, which are being perceived from the economic conditions only. This view is separated from all the other complex issues concerning the life abroad, which become visible after arrival.

And also the imagination that starts from thinking of a 'better life', what often means looking for a better job, rising standards of living, making better economical conditions (Ligus, 2007).

This picture is often modified by the reality later on, after arrival, but in the case of young people (I was only interviewing relatively young people among 25-36 yrs old) it stays very positive. Maybe it is not the dreamland, the land of ease and luxury, but it is certainly the place of new possibilities, perspectives, and the stay and studying here adds to self-worth, self-esteem, and the courage for new challenges. As Suzanne puts it:

*So, I finished my studies, graduated in October, and I always wanted to obtain a doctorate degree. So, I found myself free from exams and assessments in July and I had couple of free months. I decided then to come here and make a lot of money (smiling ironically). It was because I had my brother here...so I wanted to travel for a couple of months and then return home to Poland and apply for a Ph.D. I started work, and it was not as marvellous as I had thought it would be and I was not making a lot of money and actually it was all much harder than I had imagined it would be (Suzanne).*

Suzanne tells her story. She also did not know much about the country she was planning to live in for some time. Her decision was spontaneous and her image of Ireland was not reflected in the reality she saw after arrival. She mentions the way many people perceive Ireland and England, which is based on the stories from others working abroad. Those stories are partly made up in order to make an impression or hide the hard conditions people were facing when working abroad.

*Ireland? I knew almost nothing about it. I had a very general image: the green island. After coming here I noticed that it was very different. It appeared as though the land was not so green; I would say that the prevailing colour was the colour of mud and heather. I pictured Dublin as another Vienna and I was very surprised after my arrival. Maybe my economic expectations were high. It was because all the people returning from excursions to London or Ireland were kind of, you know... they showed off a little, they had swagger and they were very much in a boastful mood: 'Ah well, yes, I earned so much over there!'. No one mentioned that they had worked 70 hours per week at the kitchen sink. No one even mentioned it. They painted such perfect images of the country: that you arrive there and the money is almost lying on the streets ready to be picked up. So this was my expectation as well. I thought that life must be so easy over there, that I could earn a fortune and go wherever I wanted to (Suzanne).*

Some similar stories were shared by the other respondents however they did not have so high financial expectations. None of them felt prepared for the journey and no one could honestly state that they had gained sufficient knowledge about the country.

*I had no images of Ireland. Only perhaps from our friends who were living in Ireland at the time and who would sometimes come to Poland. They would tell us a few things about the country. It was the only place outside of Poland where we had friends (Louise).*

*The English culture is completely different; the first thing that strikes you is that you are treated like an adult there. I liked it very much. I didn't have to explain everything that I did. They are not so scrupulous, and not so small-minded (Anne).*

Starting and continuing higher education abroad is not an easy decision. There is a number of factors influencing the decision and playing a crucial role in students progress. There are finances, interests, goals, life circumstances, self awareness among those factors.

All the students had a strong motivation to learn. They had completed a postgraduate qualification in their country of origin and have planned to continue their education anyway. However none, except one doctorate student, who had been transferred to Ireland in agreement between his Polish university and Irish college, had known before that they will continue their education abroad. One girl wished she could study abroad, but this seemed to her, an unreachable goal, because of financial reasons. She remarks:

*Me and my boyfriend, we wanted to study abroad anyway. It was out of curiosity. What would it be like? But you know – expenses (Anne).*

Engagement in learning is the outcome of several factors and the complex interaction of them. One of the most important motives, especially for women is self-development. Today's women have more opportunity and desire to pursue their career. Becoming a



wife and mother is not any longer the goal that they are striving for. Although the interviewees have mentioned the possibility of getting married, no one has put this as their main priority in life. It is of some importance, however, it is left in the background of everyday life. It is a huge shift in their life trajectories in comparison to the previous generations of their mothers and grandmothers

### **6.3 Experience after arrival. The students' assessment of the institutional support at the university**

In general, the data collected suggest that all the respondents had a positive experience of being a student, with an exception of one girl, who has started her PhD in one Department, but has not felt that she is being supported and informed by the staff. However the respondent mentioned here applied for another course next year and her experience changed into very positive and good future prospects. Students in general viewed the college as a welcoming place, where the pedagogic body did not create any distance, rather on the contrary, professors were found to be friendly and helpful. Anne made the comparison between the support she could expect at a Polish university and the one she got when graduating in Ireland:

*Well, if we talk about the dean's office, it was one of those places, a place detested by students. When we talk about the lecturers, they look down on you, indeed. Although I think that one of the reasons for this, perhaps the main one, is that classes are too large. When I was in my first year, there were maybe, let's say 130, maybe 120, students in a class and only half of them, maybe seventy per cent, graduated eventually. Really you were treated as if you were a nobody to them. It is completely different here [in Ireland], it's the total opposite. You are like a partner to them and classes are small. There were thirty people in my course and that was the biggest intake they had had. I did two courses and there were twenty people in the second. So, you have the comparison now. And it was a very nice approach. You can go out with your professors; they will go to pub with you. You can email them and ask for advice and they will respect you. They will give you references. You feel supported. In Poland you are not respected, you don't matter to them (Anne).*

Barbara had similar impression:

*My experience after arrival? I would say that I feel much better here, to be honest. Even the single fact, that there are no matrons in the dean's office here – such a thing can take its toll in Poland. Maybe I'm exaggerating; maybe it depends on the college and on the phases of the moon and other kinds of things. But I have to say that when I would meet my administrator here or the lecturer or was getting a cheque for students from Social Welfare, I never felt like, you know, that I was unnecessarily occupying their precious time (Barbara).*

## 6.4 The financial issues concerning attendance and participation in HE

The discussions about the finances and the economic benefits of graduation played an important role in the interviews. It should not be surprising, as the contemporary world as has been mentioned many times in conceptual framework and literature review is concerned mainly with credentialisation and economic outcomes of higher education. It is the world as Bauman and others stress that values the market and the economy. The possibility to get the City Council grant for continuing higher education has been a major trigger for most Polish students, who had been awarded with it to start their masters or doctorate in Ireland. This could be considered as the big advantage of Irish Higher Education attracting students from abroad.

*And also the fact that I don't have any grant to finance my doctorate. So it is like juggling, between work and doctorate, and there is not enough time for study. So all this learning is not an adventure, it is much less joyful than previous time in Poland. All those students years in Poland, they were typical, stereotyped years of studying, where you have many friends, partying and outing. Now, I simply I don't have time for it. (Suzanne)*

Suzanne describes her PhD as constant juggling and balancing time between work and study. She compares it to the time when she was studying in Poland and she did not have to worry about finances as her mother was supporting her.

*And I was told that there was something like the Dublin City Council and that you can get grants from there, and I got one and they paid for my studies. I mean, something like after six months, I knew I would apply for this course and that I had a chance to get this grant. I started to save money as well. Because I knew I would be a student and I wouldn't work and so on. But it was thanks to this grant actually (Kate).*

Kate on the opposite got Dublin City Council grant and it motivated her to apply for her course.

*I got scholarship, so it was for me, it was a lot of money. But economically it wasn't motivation, but I didn't really have to struggle, I have to be honest and the research program was sponsored by a grant, so it was reasonably secure, so. At the time I was much younger than now, and now I have better understanding, but at that time it just looked fine. And someone told me to have the money and to do something that you like to do. I took the opportunity to take it forward to explore it, so it was perfect (Peter).*

## 6.5 The validity of family and friendship in getting the challenge to start education. The support of friends or family living in Ireland as the reason for coming to the country.

There is a significant difference between the migration of previous generations of economic migrants from Poland in the time of work and travel restrictions. Słowik continues referring to work of McHugh that contemporary migration is an ongoing

process and should be perceived as an open voyage. It also relates mostly to people who are or feel dislodged from places, and are in constant motion, as the contemporary tourist generation according to Bauman, who are people with attachments and connections in multiple places. They are becoming a generation who lives in the moment, not looking back or too much concerned with the future.

Another reason for moving to Ireland was the support given by someone from the family or close friends, who has already lived in Ireland.

*And yet, I decided to start things off here. We had decided to come here but for only three months. It was holiday time. We wanted to gain some experience. You know, everyone was doing the same. It was summer time and other people were travelling too. And it was always like this. This concept was attractive to me. Me and Mariusz, my boyfriend, we had started to study in Poland, but we had always wanted to study abroad. We were curious about what it would be like. But, you know, there are costs involved. You need to rent a flat; you need to have a source of income. We did not have a job at the time and the only option we had was to study full time in Poland and live with our parents. Beata and Krzysiek (Christopher), they were living in Ireland, and they invited us and so we decided to go. This is why I chose Ireland, because our friends were here and they invited us and helped us out at the beginning (Louise).*

Only one of the respondents came to Ireland with the intention to continue his doctorate at the university in this new country. He had been offered a place by the University to continue his research. His case is the exception in my research, as the rest of interviewees came to Ireland with no plans according to their future. They knew very little about the Irish education system and did not think of studying here. Most of them wanted to work for a couple of months and move back to Poland in order to continue their education. As Aneta Slowik (2009), lecturer and researcher in the University of Newcastle UK and University of Lower Silesia, Poland concludes from her research about the relation between models of knowledge and learning/living in educational contexts as crucial problems in the field of immigration studies that today's migrants tend to construct migration as an action which is easy to take, and does not need long term preparation or neither much of consideration.

*It is hard to fully appreciate where we have got to. Personally, I believe that I am very lucky to be here. I would not have started those studies if my friend had not helped me. I would not have even known about them. I would not have even thought about studying and I would probably be still working at the washing sink, right? So this is what I think, there are many people at a certain age, middle aged perhaps, who are going actually nowhere. No luck, maybe (Suzanne).*

However the university and City Council financial support has played a vital role for students and the help delivered by partners and friends was and has been irreplaceable. The stress is put especially on encouragement during the earlier stage of approaching academia and giving information and advice.

Each person's life is different. Each person carries an abundance of thoughts and his own personal history within him. Mark Twain quoted at the beginning of the section, noted it is a rich mine of information about the human being, however never fully accessible.

The migrational processes expand and diversify both the experience and perception of the individual. As the above chapter argues migration became the common phenomenon since the 1990s. Young people travel without sufficient knowledge about their country of destination. This chapter indicated the surprising outcome that interviewees did not know Ireland at the time of making the decision to go abroad. The consecutive chapters develop this finding in more detail. Those young students possessed only general, very blurred vision about the green land, which has been derived mainly from media sources and from their friends' accounts.

Very often the only reason for going to Ireland was the support offered by friends and relatives during the initial stages of finding a place to rent and job seeking. It was more like having an anchor, which enabled them to feel safer in a new and unknown land.

Initially they did not plan to enter university. This decision was occurring to them later on. On many occasions the incentive for entering the university was the City or County Council grant and scholarship (in two cases) as a financial support. Frequently those young people had to work part-time to finance their study and maintenance. In most circumstances or cases they had very positive experiences in regard to university staff support.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Students as contemporary tourists and sensations seekers: Bauman's drifting identity.**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

To return to the issue of what motivates individuals to study abroad the economic reason is not the only driver. Students also share non-economic reasons like self-realisation, self-development or simply the desire to try something new and challenging. Some of them state these motives as their only valid reasons for graduating in Ireland. It is not my role, I believe, to justify their statements but they would strongly correlate with some findings and conclusions (presented at SCRUTEA) made by the Irish team (RANLHE project) – ‘the students we spoke to were clearly not seeking status or prestige alone but rather recognition, which touches on both one's private sense of self and one's ‘public’ self’ (Fleming & Finnegan, 2010).

In study committed to constructivist practices, the researcher would not be seen as “the knower”, but as this inquiry involves investigating the experience of migrant students, it is, of its nature, exploratory and open ended, with the centrality put on the voices of the participants. From a constructivist perspective, this demands a qualitative strategy of enquiry which allows researcher to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p12). Knowledge comes from experience in the first stance and what each individual constructs within their own minds, is their reality. Knowledge comes from the creation of meaning that occurs as a result of life experiences. Some of the respondents were introduced to the social theories underlying the study undertaken, not to direct their response but to reflect on their own experience. They could notice which theories explained what they were feeling and which could resonate with their own experience. It is the trust in the participant and his ability to analyse, investigate, collaborate, share, build and generate knowledge based on what they already know. Some of the respondents indicated that Bauman's drifting identity and his notion of life liquidity to be an interesting concept and possible explanation of their own experience. Although they did not identified themselves fully with the concept, it has resonated with what they felt about themselves and their life condition.

When asking about their knowledge of Ireland before coming to this country and the necessary preparation, most of the respondents answered that their knowledge of this country was very small, if any existed at all.

*I can't remember, if I thought anything about Ireland. I think I didn't know anything. Maybe I had just general association with the green island, which turned to be not so green when I arrived here. It was more sort of heather and I don't know, the colour or mud everywhere. I imagined Dublin as the second Vienna and I got very surprised. Maybe I had too many economic expectations, because all the people coming from London, were you know showing off (Suzanne).*

That was quite a surprising outcome of my research. As the main assumption was of finding some marking points of attractiveness of the Irish education system and some more facts that would attract young Poles in a specific way to going to that particular country of origin. There is, however, the significant absence in this particular research in Irish education that would attract foreign students. Mostly it has been stated during the interviews that young people wanted to spend a nice time abroad, try to face some challenges and improve their language '*in the real English-speaking world*' (Barbara). Their original intention was to return to Poland after a couple of months. They usually had some exams to pass or were planning to apply for study after coming back. Kate came to Ireland after gaining her B.A. in English Philology. There was not much planning around it. She decided to stay in Ireland for couple of months, a year preferably, to improve, to master her language, to experience something new, and mostly to make forays into new challenges. It was not her first journey abroad. She went to Holland after her First Certificate for one year, leaving her astonished and worried parents. There was a great deal of curiosity and courage in this decision, as well as the need for adventure and a strong trust in her ability to cope with the unexpected. She says:

*I went to Ireland for fun and entertainment. I had also studied English Philology and I wanted to spend some time in an English speaking country, to be in touch with the native language and culture. It is like a part of my study, which I think my university should have provided, i.e. such a year abroad. Well, maybe now it is more natural, you know those Erasmuses and, you know, we joined the EU, so you do know languages, don't you? At that time you had to organise everything yourself. I did organise it, and decided to go for one year. It was a plan: I will go for one year, get to know the subtleties of the language and culture, and return to do my Master's in Poznan (Kate).*

She went abroad with her friend and as she said it was a totally spontaneous decision and she did not give too much attention to financial issues at the time of making the decision.

*It was a total breaking away from home. I came to my friend out of the blue one day and said: Arek, we are going to Ireland for a year. What do you think? And he said: OK. So we went. It was something like that; a spontaneous decision. And that was what I was thinking – that the one year would pass quickly and in meantime I would improve my English and get to know the culture a bit... and, you know, it wasn't about money for me (Kate).*

Anne shares a similar story. She also finished her B.A. in Poland and saw the possibility of going to Ireland as an adventure. She was concerned with finances and her plan was to earn some money and improve her language and get back to Poland in order to continue her study. The main reason was however the challenge itself, the need for adventure, entertainment and fun.

*This whole adventure with Ireland, it was a funny thing actually. I finished my B.A. I mean, I hadn't had my viva yet. I had to write my dissertation and I didn't feel like writing at all. I had one more exam left to pass. It was English, I suppose. I remember there was this requisite at that time at my university that you had to pass a language exam to graduate. So, I thought I needed to master my English and my auntie lived here. She was a midwife, so I made up my mind; I don't know... everybody I knew was going to the States, for student exchanges or something. And I never had a chance to go, or get an Erasmus. I always wanted to go but I never had the opportunity. It was expensive. There were not so many grants available at that time. Poland was just joining the EU and the number of people getting grants and on exchanges was limited. And to go abroad cost a lot of money – you had to have it. My parents couldn't afford it. They would have had to have sent me at least two thousand euros so I could at least get by. So, there was no opportunity for me. So, I decided... ok. I will go. And I did. I went with my girl friend. It turned out later that my auntie didn't help me much... ridiculous but that's a different story in itself. Anyway, after a week's time we were staying over at our friends' place. I started work soon after with Anka. We had fun. I said – ok, I will make some cash. I had decided that I could master the language and buy a new car. Well, a funny little car. So there it was, I came here, I started to work and eventually September came. I had to get back to Poland to pass this language exam to graduate. I thought to myself: well, I have work here. Maybe I can stay for another year? I stayed and in the meantime I was accepted for an M.A course in Poland. But I thought that I needed a break for one year and I stayed in Ireland. I was working in a pub. One day I had a chat with the manager and I told him that it wasn't right to be sacrificing my B.A. for a simple job in a pub. So I decided to find a job in a bank. I got one. It was quite easy to get a job in a bank at the time. Four or five months had passed since my arrival and I considered getting this new job to be a success. I started to work and the year passed quickly and I thought to myself... I have a decent job here, I will stay. Maybe I will contrive something with respect to studying here. I went on a so called Bankers course – it was a course for bankers and finance specialists. My manger recommended it to me. I always felt bad that I hadn't done my master's;*

*that I had a lack of education and I decided that I needed to do something about it. And I did (Anne).*

Both girls quoted here, Anne and Kate, knew English quite fluently and were in their early twenties, at the age when young people have or want to decide what to do with their life. They did not have to worry about work as much as they were or could be still supported by their parents. Not being burdened by any financial obligations or duties, they had the freedom to experiment with trying new ways of living having in mind that they could move back home if in any unfavourable situation arose. They constitute a new generation of Poles, open for challenges but also having the opportunity to travel and feel quite safe in their search for new career prospects and opportunities. They are not restricted by national borders and are eagerly taking the opportunities which life offers them. They position themselves more at the tourist point on the tourist-vagabond graph. They do not feel so much rooted to one place at that stage in their life. Kate, who provides English classes with both very young people and members of the older generation as well, summarizes it in this way:

*However, I have chatted with younger people many times and it is so normal for them. I mean it is normal for them to change their job every few years and when they stay at the same job for a couple of years, they feel that they have too much stabilisation. I think this can be achieved with particular occupations. There are occupations where people have the opportunity to change their work place. This is the case for computer programmers, for example. There is a demand for them and they can easily find a new job. While when considering other occupations and other people, I think this idea might be a problem for them (Kate).*

She also has very interesting reflections about Polish students mobility and the reasons they are taking the challenge:

*Besides, I think Poles are hungry for travel. You know, the borders were closed for a long time and travelling is a new thing for us actually. When you think more about it... my parents, for example, my Mum went to the Soviet Union by train. It was a Friendship Train. It was such a journey, you know. I can recall her telling me fantastic stories, like about people who were retail trading unofficially; they would trade in taxi cars. So, that was what travelling looked like for us. No wonder we are hungry for it, for travel. But I think that when we will satisfy this hunger, people will want to settle, they will feel the need for security and stabilisation. I imagine that we have to get fed up with travelling in the end. You know, we learn our entire lives, and it is good to learn. But there is a thing about learning for your own self. We need to distinguish this from gaining new qualifications and new ones after that, again and again – new faculties and courses and postgraduate courses. Everybody is doing this. And when you work you need to do courses and be competitive all the time, you know. Otherwise there will be someone more competent and skilled than you are and it is mad, when you think about it all (Kate).*



All those girls are on the stage, when they do not need to settle for good. They find it enjoyable to travel and be on the move. Travelling is a big adventure and what they prize the most is the pleasure of meeting new people and visiting places, and forming their identity on the basis of constantly new stimuli. Kate has recently found herself at a different stage. She has begun to need some stabilization.

*I don't know. I think I am quite open-minded. But I am not sure if I could start afresh in a new place again, I cannot imagine such a thing right now. I could go again for some time but not for a longer period of time to start anew in another country. I lived in Holland for some time. Now I am here and I like travelling but I do need some roots in the end. I am uprooted and I feel it has become important to me to be anchored down and have a family (Kate).*

Contemporary students are creating a new generation, which will soon achieve a considerable share in European public life. They will create a new future for Europe. They will mark out new paths for development. They are already creating a new shape for the whole society. It is this new society, brought about in the time of neoliberal capitalism, which perceives things from a different perspective. As Bauman noticed on the inauguration of the European Culture Congress, Europe becomes the society of rich mosaic of diasporas.

This work, being the study of narratives of individuals who are graduating abroad, becomes an approach to giving answers to much broader questions and resolving deeper meanings. The analysis of narratives and discussion about the motivations becomes part of the broader discussion about the new face of Europe, about multi-cultural Europe, about the globalised world and about the thousands of paths and possibilities being opened for the individual, which at the same time are causing deep feelings of loneliness, individualization and fear which are inevitably connected with the freedom to choose but also the responsibility to choose the way of living a life in constantly changing and unpredictable circumstances.

Pawel explains that his main focus in life was on research and the choice of Ireland was dependent upon finding a suitable academic setting for his study. He was interested in:

*I was... at the time, I was fairly focused on this specific kind of research and there weren't actually many places in the world where this particular research was being done. And so there was Ireland, that group, and connections that the group had. There were a few other groups in other parts of Europe and Australia but there weren't that many. So, there was not really much choice. I was quite interested in my field of research. So, in that sense Ireland was actually as good a choice as any (Pawel).*

Not that the world has suddenly become submissive and obedient to human desire; as before, it all too often makes light of human intention and effort and easily twists and bends the effects of human labours. But this world out there more and more reminds one of another player in the game, rather than of the indomitable rule-setter and no-appeal-allowing umpire; and as a player in a game in which the rules are made and remade in the course of playing. The experience of living in such world (or is it, rather, the experience of living that world?) is the experience of a player, and in the experience of the player there is no way of telling necessity from accident, determination from contingency: there are but the moves of the players, the art of playing one's hand well and the skill of making the most of one's cards (Bauman, 1997, p.88).

What happens with human identity in the globalised world? Bauman remarks people are not building their identity gradually any more. It is also not imposed on them culturally and locally. The task of solid identity-building seems to be rather a hampering and unwelcome task. The question of identity is closely connected with the collapse of the welfare state institutions and globalisation with its multiculturalism, technological development and growing sense of uncertainty, caused by the threat of job loss and the general flexibility of employment.

Much like that global order which collectively underwrote individual life-efforts, the orderly (comprehensive, cohesive, consistent and continuous) identity of the individual was cast as a project, the life project. Identity was to be erected systematically, level by level and brick by brick, following a blueprint completed before the work started. The construction called for a clear vision of the final shape, careful calculation of the steps leading towards it, long-term planning and seeing through the consequences of every move. And so there was a tight and irrevocable bond between social order as a project and the individual life as a project; the latter was unthinkable without the former. Were it not for the collective efforts to secure a reliable, lasting, stable, predictable setting for individual actions and choices – constructing a clear and lasting identity and living one's life towards such an identity would be all but impossible (Bauman, 1997, p.20).

The study becomes the approach to answering the question about the role of education in 'liquid modernity'. Undoubtedly it has changed in the changing face of the world. It is the era which from one side is postulating and proclaiming the glory of education and from the other side raises the barricades on the way to achieving knowledge. The main purpose of education was the gaining of knowledge in order to prepare the person for living, for finding oneself in life. However, life itself has changed so profoundly and become so complicated that education, memory and qualifications have been devaluated along the way.

If education is supposed to prepare one to live then the situation and circumstances are making it impossible to become prepared. The task put in front of human beings seems unachievable, as how:

...to cut the infinite chaos of reality down to an intellectually manageable, comprehensible and apparently logical size, to present the discordant flow of happenings as a story with a readable plot – that seem cut to the measure of postmodern discontents: of the pains and sufferings of postmodern men and women, bewildered by the paucity of sense, porousness of borders, inconsistency of sequences, capriciousness of logic and frailty of authorities (Bauman, 1997, p.125).

## **7.2 Life has become episodic.**

After the long era when agriculture was the centre of most peoples lives life was turning around and time was cyclical. In the modern era, time is linear, as constant progress.

As lived by its members, time in the liquid modern society of consumers is neither cyclical nor linear, as it used to be for the members of other known societies. It is instead, to use Michael Maffesoli's metaphor, pointillist – or, to deploy Nicole Aubert's almost synonymous term, punctuated time, marked as much (if not more) by the profusion of ruptures and discontinuities, by intervals separating successive spots and breaking the links between them, than by specific content of the spots (Bauman, 2007, p.32).

Each point is pregnant with the promise of the better tomorrow, but no one knows which point, which promise, which possibility to choose in order not to loose the chance.

Pointillist time is broken up, or even pulverized, into a multitude of 'eternal instants' - events, incidents, accidents, adventures, episodes – self-enclosed monads, separate morsels, each morsel reduced to a point ever more closely approximating its geometric ideal of non-dimensionality. As we may remember from school lessons in Euclidean geometry, points have no length, width or depth: they exist, one is tempted to say, before space and time (Bauman, 2007, p.32).

Life, whether individual or social, is but a succession of presents, a collection of instants experienced with varying intensity.

The goal of this work is to explore who are the contemporary recipients of education. What is the student identity nowadays? What is the identity of the immigrant? Is he feeling different? Is he perceived as different? Going further, the study sets questions about the condition of modern capitalistic Europe and about the condition of an individual immersed in its liquid – neoliberal reality, the individual drifting, searching for his or her identity and their place in the world offering a mosaic of possibilities.

How much are we all rooted in one place, how much are we settled? I was asking people about where their place is, and if they are feeling settled. The answers have buffed me in the first attempt, but later I came to understand their real meaning with the help of Bauman's theories. To find a common denominator in the answers given – is the inability to define the where and if at all there is a place of permanent residence. One of the responses pictures it at its best: “*Nowhere is for good. Life is the adventure*” (Peter).

### **7.3 Transition-experience, perception**

The effort and determination visible in students approach to learning is one of the key characteristics among the respondents. It is strongly noticeable in their stories.

Being in transition stimulates people to change and learn. The more aware and open to new challenges they are, the more they want to expand their knowledge about a new culture and the more eager they are to participate in its community, artistic, academic or professional life.

*I feel that I cannot afford stagnation. I need to learn whenever I can by listening to the radio, watching television, talking to people, reading newspapers. It is not only about the language itself. It is about how people think, their mentality, manners, how they formulate their thoughts, what jokes they are laughing at. I can better understand them now but I still don't think I will ever be able to grasp it all (Louise).*

Ewa Hoffman, went through such transition, or rather how Agnieszka Bron calls it – ‘floating’. This description can be given to all immigrants and not only those who became students abroad. Floating is the transition which involves a basic uncertainty about oneself, identity, place and belonging (Bron in West & Alheit, 2007, p.216). One of the major characteristics is also the feeling of being fragmented, of not having the past, and not yet being able to create and know the future. Only two respondents admitted to feeling a similar way, but all of them have experienced it at the beginning. It could be for a very short period of time or much longer. To be able to cope with ‘floating’, Agnieszka Bron concludes that:

We need to move on and reconstruct biographically; we need to become more of a self while interacting with others. From such fragments, illusions and disillusion, a new whole is reorganised and created. Missing pieces, lack of any sense of authorship in life and continuous ambivalence do not make us happy. We need to react to find ourselves again fitting to social reality (Bron in West & Alheit, 2007, p.216).

According to the Mead's perspective individuals are constantly engaged in constructing and reconstructing selves. They do it through interaction and language learning, as the language shapes the identity. People are thinking in a particular language. Making and

remaking selves includes also all the processes of adjustment and readjustment to culture. The stories respondents tell change with the time. They can be called the temporal products, evolving along with the changed social position or different perspectives. They show that each life trajectory evolves and individual life, identity and social role is always open to new experiences and changes, regardless of the person's intentions. Each story is unique but the experiences of immigrants and non-traditional students have similarities, which can be grasped in the process of analysis. The findings enable others to understand each other better and to empathise with the people in transition, whether they are immigrants, adult students or people changing their life career. Capturing the processes of life transitions is valid in understanding human conduct but also in understanding the inter-subjectivity of human learning (Bron in West & Alheit, 2007, p.218).

The prevailing strategy is the '*carpe diem*' approach. Kate came *for fun and adventure*. Anne called her journey to Ireland '*the adventure, which was the funny thing actually*'. However, it is not in its hedonistic dimension and egoistic individuals aiming to satisfy their desires. It is not the outcome of the short-sighted thinking, but it is the response to the world deprived of the durable values.

In the world, where nothing is guaranteed, but bound with the possibility of notice-giving, regardless of how important the work or relationship might be, in the world which sparkles with many colours, which lures, but also blinds with the unpredictability and instability of occurrences – in this world, the strategy of living one moment only at once without long-term plans and commitments seems the only advisable solution. Melucci points out:

The unity and continuity of individual experience cannot be found in a fixed identification with a definite model, group or culture. It must instead be based on an inner capacity to 'change form', to redefine itself repeatedly in the present, to reverse decisions and alliances. But it also means cherishing the present as a unique, unrepeatable experience within which the individual realizes him – or herself (Melucci, 1989, p.110).

An ever growing number of postmodern men and women, while by no means immune to the fear of being lost and every so often carried away by the recurring waves of 'homesickness', find the open-endedness of their situation attractive enough to outweigh the anguish of uncertainty. 'They revel in the pursuit of new and untested

experience, are willingly seduced by offers of adventure, and on the whole prefer keeping their options open to all fixity of commitment' ( Bauman 1997, p.13).

Bauman often remarks on the ambivalence which is characteristic to the sense of identity nowadays, which is the nostalgia for the past and homesickness on one side and on the other the full admittance for the 'liquid modernity'. This issue is discussed more broadly in the consecutive chapter.

The tourists embark on their travels by choice – or so, at least, they think. They set off because they find home boring or not attractive enough, too familiar and holding too few surprises; or because they hope to find elsewhere more exciting adventure and deeper sensations than the homely routine is ever likely to deliver. The decision to leave the home behind in order to explore foreign parts is all the easier to make for the comforting feeling that one can always return, if need be. The discomforts of hotel rooms may indeed make one homesick; and it is gratifying and consoling to remember that there is a home – somewhere – a retreat from the hurly-burly where one could shelter, where one could be unambiguously, unproblematically *chez soi* – draw the curtains, close the eyes and plug the ears to new sensations, shut the door to new adventures...Well, the point is that such a prospect stays gratifying and consoling as long as it remains a *prospect*. The 'home', as in 'homesickness', is none of the real buildings of brick and mortar, timber or stone. The moment the door is shut from the outside, home becomes a *dream*. The moment the door is shut from inside, it turns into *prison*. The tourist has acquired the taste for vaster, and above all open, spaces. The tourists become wanderers and put the dream of homesickness above the realities of home – because they want to, because they consider it the most reasonable life-strategy 'under the circumstances', or because they have been seduced by the true imaginary pleasures of a sensation-gatherer's life ( Bauman 1997, pp.91-92).

Pawel stated clearly that besides some family members, he does not really long for his country of origin, in the sense of the particular place limited by borders. His feeling of missing the country does not become homesickness.

*No, it was always like this, even in Poland. Maybe it helped me, you know, to move. It's not really a cutting of ties, but the connection with my 'homeland' is kind of flexible. It's only a few thousand miles, really. I wasn't homesick, really. I was sometimes excited about going back but there was more excitement about going back rather than about coming back, if you know what I mean (Pawel).*

All of those young people have their place in Poland, where they come from and which they miss to some extent. Although this longing does not really mean that they want to go back any day soon. They acknowledge that the place stays dear to them, however as the time goes by, it becomes more hazily mystical in their memory and less of a real house made of bricks. The Polish reality is rather coarse and not so longed for. It is nice to visit Poland when on vacation, just for a moment and happily return to new place of living.

Bauman touches also upon another important issue. It is the problem with the great depth of uncertainty and ambient fear which lies in the recesses of the soul of the individuals exposed to the unforeseeable. Consumption is not only the inculcated way of living, fuelled by the ambient advertisements. Consumption becomes the way of escape from the torments of worries and fears. Searching, choosing, sensation-seeking becomes the goal itself, and lets the person get focused, occupies the mind and in this meaning it makes all the worries vanish for some time. 'The life of a consumer, the consuming life, is not about acquiring and possessing. It is not even about getting rid of what was been acquired the day before yesterday and proudly paraded a day later. It is instead, first and foremost, about being on the move'(Bauman, 2007, p.98).

Suzanne mentioned that she stays where she feels good at this moment and added that it is hard to predict the future.

*You see, I am not sure. It actually doesn't matter that much to me where I live. Really, to be honest, I think I am starting to like Ireland. It's about time too, considering how long I've been here. The weather ceases to disturb me that much. However, it's hard sometimes. I think to myself that I don't feel like starting over again somewhere else. So I am here now doing what I do. But what will happen next? (Suzanne).*

Anne came to Ireland in 2006 with no particular plans for staying long. She graduated, started a new career path in Dublin and eventually moved to Singapore. It seemed to her that she would get better opportunities there, however she could not say for how long she would stay in her new country, probably as long as it is profitable.

*Why am I leaving? I have been in Ireland for almost five years. I have had enough of this country. I've been keeping an eye on the economy here and I think this country is over. That's my opinion. It's about politics and it will get worse, I think. I also think people here have changed their attitude to migrants. It is different now compared to when I came to Ireland. People have their own problems now and they don't want, I mean, they don't need more migrants. So, when I finished my studies here and got the degree, I decided that I wanted to leave, that I was fed up with this country. I had this predicament at work, you know. I didn't have enough courage to quit, to end it definitively. The problem ended up solving itself. I always thought that everything depended on you, that you are always the master of your own life. And it turned out that not everything depends on you, actually. My department was closed and twenty people lost their jobs. I'm fine with this; we got redundancy. It's good money, so when it happened I thought to myself: 'this is great. Now I have motivation to go abroad'. It pushed and inspired me to start anew in another country (Anne).*

As the main characteristic of the post-modern time is the discontinuity of life, the constant new beginnings and ends, the main characteristic of the approach to life is flexibility. Flexibility means adjusting to new circumstances, catching the moment as it

is and using it fully. It also means not binding to any place, avoiding ties, as the situation changes and one may not be able to take advantage of new chances.

One of the identity types in this fast-changing world is the *transparent global identity* (Melosik, 1998, p.48). This global identity came out as a response to the needs of big corporations and international institutions. They need the experts who cope well with the rapidity and frequency of changes in their lives. Such people have to change the place of destination and culture along with their job demands. Such personality usually does not feel strongly connected to any place or any cultural basis. One can experience fondness occasionally. Melosik characterises this identity as well integrated and career-focused (Melosik, 1998, p.49).

To keep the game short means to beware long-term commitments. To refuse to be 'fixed' one way or the other. Not to get tied to one place, however pleasurable the present stopover may feel. Not to wed one's life to one vocation only. Not to swear consistency and loyalty to anything or anybody. Not to control the future, but refuse to mortgage it: to take care that the consequences of the game do not outlive the game itself, and to renounce responsibility for such consequences as do. To forbid the past to bear on the present. In short, to cut the present off at both ends, to sever the present from history. To abolish time in any other form but of a loose assembly, or an arbitrary sequence, of present moments; to flatten the flow of time into a continuous present (Bauman, 1997, p.89).

The approach described above very often changes as the person gets older and becomes more reflexive and wants to start a family life. Kate described the changes in her personality after her few years in Ireland and not having permanent position, which would secure her future. Kate also compares the present with the situation of the previous generations of her parents and grandparents. It captures very well, the changes in the current approach to life, shaped by external factors:

*As I said, previous generations had one job: it was their first job and they stayed in it till retirement. It was a job for 30 or 40 years. This was a normal occurrence and something obvious. You could move up slowly in your career in this one place and your position would get stronger the longer you worked there. It is totally different now, indeed. I think it is true that globalisation and the capital movement have influenced this. This is why people move, why they travel. This movement is connected with capital flow; people travel in search of jobs. Work is not stable in one place for a long time. It's the cheaper work force that matters. I think this is a consequence of globalisation: the flexible labour laws, the fact that you don't have social provisions, permanent job position security; you may not even have an officially signed contract with your employer. You can be fired one day and be left with nothing. So then you get up and go and you are on the move again looking for another job. This is normal now. Everyone wants to survive and if one is forced to, one will change their place of work. This is also my situation. I am a qualified worker and this is an advantage but I still don't have contacts and no social security. I will*



*have a job until June but what will happen to me in September? I may not have my position anymore or I may have my hours cut to only a few per week, which is not sufficient to make a living.*

The consumerist ideology is considered by some as non-repressive in identity-building as it offers the full spectrum of choices for its design according to individual tastes and preferences (Melosik, 1998, p.52). This neo-liberal approach promotes the fragmentation of identity, as the person can be everyone little by little, she can construct herself of many small pieces, according to her individual preferences. People also need to find the fullness and completeness of their lives. The external pressure for constant change and avoidance of being fixed is not natural for a person's well-being. It brings the feeling of diffusion and the need for stability and meaning (Melosik, 1998, p.61).

As Thomas Eriksen argues in his work, *'Tyranny of the Moment'*, it is much harder and difficult to create the systematic story, ordered in developmental sequences over the course of a life. The cause and effect association does not apply to the sequence of life episodes. As time is compressed in the information age of the globalized world, life events are squeezed into 'ever-decreasing periods' (Eriksen, 2001).

Globalization as a concept refers to the compression of the world and what follows is the intensification of consciousness about the world as a whole (Eriksen, 2001). As the world shrinks, people are getting closer to each other in some sense. The consciousness about these interconnections gives a sense of both opportunities and of vulnerability (Eriksen, 2001).

The logarithmic growth of knowledge production is another sign of the times. Never before has humanity produced so much information in such a short period of time. Eriksen says that during the last 30 years, there has been more information produced than during the previous 5000 years.

But the extreme production and availability of information through the mass media and internet has not, surprisingly, led to a more enlightened population, but to more confusion (Eriksen, 2001). One can notice that knowledge is flowing like the waterfall. It is inseparably connected with the so-called threshing machine crisis. What does it mean? The threshing machine was invented for the separation of grain from stalks and husks. How to separate the useful knowledge from husks and weeds? Is there a way to satisfy the growing sense of ignorance? The more I read the more ignorant I feel. How

to distinguish what is relevant from what is irrelevant. Bauman says we live in an informational fog. The visibility is reduced, limited. This type of crisis is the fertile soil for education to find new ways of development. The role of the teacher has also changed dramatically during recent times. He is not any longer the 'gate keeper', who possesses the valid knowledge and can pass it on to his pupils. The knowledge is broadly available, so the authority of the teacher has become lessened, and his role has changed. Bauman reflects on the culture, knowledge and the times it came to us to live in "No claim about the superiority of one culture over another can be sustained today". Today's Europe sees the diversity and the wealth of variety as its virtue. 'To live with Another, live as Another for Another' (Bauman, the European Culture Congress, Wrocław, 2011), is the fundamental task of the individual - both on the highest and the lowest level ...therein perhaps dwells that specific advantage of Europe, which could and had to learn the art of living with others.

"The sacredness of the smallest details" is how William Blake would have called the spirit of Europe. It often turns out that in the matter of diversity of language, culture and society, a very small distance, in the order of twenty kilometres, divides two completely different worlds. Europe will perish if it does not fight for its languages, local traditions and social autonomy. It comes out that the main task for European citizens is to acquire the ability and the art of everyone learning from everyone. George Steiner, an influential European-born American essayist, philosopher, literary critic and educator, persuades us that the main task facing Europe today is not of a military or economic nature, but rather a "spiritual and intellectual one".

Globalization, or the fluid modernity, cannot be treated as a jigsaw which we can reconstruct according to some given pattern. It should be understood as a process, and its understanding and analysis, as creating new identities, during the time of multiculturalism and easy solutions offered by internet.

The question of identity is connected with the collapse of welfare state institutions and the growing sense of uncertainty. Sociologists, like Bauman and Sennett link the threat of job loss and work flexibility to the corrosion of the character of modern man. The corrosion of character, appearing expressly in the recent work of Bauman, is the most striking feature of the ambient fear, characterising actions, making plans and decisions by Western society members (Bauman, 2007).

Bauman often stresses the contrast between the seductive mobility of the global elite and the misery of people being stuck in locality. The turn to identity might be seen as a process of the redefining of the self and recovering one's own history. This is how the characteristic for the identity awareness ambivalence is created - this ambivalence is the nostalgia for the past from one side and the full acceptance for the 'fluid modernity' from the other. The author is saying that even though people around him expect him to define himself, and to possess a serious and well balanced picture of his own identity, he cannot satisfy them. It is because since he became the 'man on the move', he had to break off with his so called 'natural environment'. There is no place where he could really fit in. Everywhere he goes, everywhere he lives he fits in only partially and is always the outsider, even if only to a small extent. This is the situation when nationality becomes of special importance. He states his awareness of sharing the same fate with millions of refugees and emigrants as, along with the globalising tendencies, the number of such people increases each year. (Bauman, 2007, p.15).

In the postmodern reality the world seems to be fragmented and the individual's life amounts to random sequences of episodes. There are too many ideas, rules and communities around, which impedes the ability of identities to be constant, continuous and coherent.

#### **7.4 Where do I belong? Being a stranger in both countries.**

Another theme is the theme of belonging - although Irish peers are found to be very friendly, open and hospitable – the feelings associated with a long-term stay in Ireland are the lack of something sometimes not accurately defined. It is not homesickness. Some call it an uprooting. There is also a longing for a connection with the home country.

Another noticeable feature is the feeling of detachment from the problems of their Polish friends. By this I mean they are not sharing the same problems and understandings as their friends who stayed in Poland. It is like being a stranger in both countries.

I am a stranger from some other place and time, a sort of spirit that has materialized and is asked where he comes from. Basically, the situation is a very realistic one, because whenever I'm asked about my hometown or my native country, I have exactly the same feeling – that I come from another planet, another time, another epoch (Miłosz, 1985, p.244).

Miłosz describes the experience of being an immigrant and the longing for the homeland, which becomes more distant, unreal and mythical in memory as time passes.

Students have noticed one important feature of the immigrant who visits his country after some period of time. They started to feel separateness from their colleagues and friends in Poland. They observed the local customs and the places from another perspective and the things for so long taken for granted, are not being perceived in the same way any longer. This situation leaves them feeling strange in their home country. Kate describes the feeling of this alienation in Ireland, but later she also mentions the similar feeling when goes back home.

*Well...yeah...when you just live at home, when you've never left your home town or city, then you want to travel. That's the way it is. I have a colleague who is envious of me that I can travel here and there, that my life is so full of adventures. On the other hand she can't see that I am away from the family and that in some sense I am a stranger. There are pros and cons.*

As Alfred Schutz writes, such a person “accepts the ready-made standardized scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him by ancestors, teachers and authorities as an unquestioned and unquestionable guide in all the situations which normally occur within the social world”(Schutz, 1964, p.95). Everything that was so obvious and unquestioned is being seen differently at the moment. It is creating the feeling of some alienation from one side and the more objective perspective on the national customs and imperfections. In her work ‘Teacher as Stranger’ Maxine Greene has written about this changing perspective of the homcomer, who looks inquiringly and wonderingly on the world, and ‘notices details and patterns in his environment he never saw before’(Greene, 1973, p.268). It is like looking at things through new eyes and not being able anymore to take the cultural pattern for granted. The individual must ‘interpret and reorder’ what he perceives ‘...through the light of his changed experience. For a time he feels quite separate from the person who is wholly at home in his ingroup and takes the familiar world for granted’ (Greene, 1973, p.268).

*And now, I think with longing for the Mazury (‘Masuria’) region. I miss it immensely and I always go back there willingly. At the moment, however, I don't think that I could return there without feeling foreign to it because I feel bit alien in my own country. And so I am with no roots and without a place of my own (Kate).*

This chapter dealt with the diversity of reasons for which young people go abroad and enter university. The findings of this research overlap in this context with outcomes of

the projects mentioned in the literature review. The RANLHE project findings indicate the importance of self-development and self-realisation as well as recognition for students (Kurantowicz and Nizińska, 2010). The economic reasons did play an important role, although not the most important in the final conclusion. It strongly correlates with the theoretical framework and the strive for recognition described by Honneth and Roger's theory of self-realisation, as well as self-actualizing tendencies inherited in each human being. Similarly as in the RANLHE report and the study done by an Irish team of mature students in Irish HE institutions (Fleming, Loxley, Kenny and Finnegan, 2010), which included migrant students, the above research showed that students highly valued higher education in Ireland as a transitional space. It enabled them to achieve a greater level of career choice, broaden their horizons and gave them an opportunity to renegotiate aspects of their personal identities (Fleming, Loxley, Kenny and Finnegan, 2010, p.2). The Irish team had also the finding about migrant students who wanted to access a form of social inclusion through education in an Irish institution. However, it was in the further education context and did not apply to this dissertation. The reason for this discrepancy may lie in the fact that my respondents consist of young professionals, who already locate themselves on a decent social level. The habitus of those students allowed them to feel familiar in the world of academia, even if the language spoken there was not their mother tongue.

In constructivist approach, the guiding assumption would be that social reality is not 'out there', independent of the knower but is constructed by and between personal perspectives based on experience and may change over time. (Gergen: 1999). The constructionist position would therefore have considerable appeal. As a consequence, I would seek to understand the 'complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it' (Denzin and Lincon 1998, p. 221). It is important to be aware of the important cultural, social and historical contexts that help to shape the construction of the experience of reality

However the Polish reality does not change from the objective point of view and it does not change for friends and family living in Poland. The perception and perspective of students have changed. They perceive Poland differently and they feel themselves strange, even if in the same context. The context has not changed but their internal structure has, so their perception is different.

Another noteworthy finding is the discrepancy between the initial research assumption to find some features of Irish universities which attract foreign students. None of the

respondents indicated any such a feature. It was the opposite, they have noted that their university enrolment was rather the convergence of diverse circumstances and opportunities occurring during their stay in Ireland. This may be a valid indicator for policy and curriculum makers in Irish education, especially in the age of the current recession and prevailing neo-liberal, market-oriented world order.

The above chapter also signifies the high mobility of some social classes. Bauman describes the drifting identity as the outcome of liquid modernity. The individual's identity becomes also fluid and fragmented at the same time, as life itself becomes episodic and consists of many fragments. It is necessary to state that the group of people described in this dissertation consists of young professionals with no bounds like family (except one married person, with no children though) or mortgages to pay. They have greater mobility than other social groups and they are more likely to travel according to market shifts and occurring opportunities. Another important issue raised in this chapter is the feeling of strangeness, reflected in the interviews with respondents stating that neither their 'old' countries nor their 'new' felt familiar to them. Polish customs and personal interaction were not so obvious any longer yet they had not yet been replaced by similar Irish customs and personal interaction. In essence there was a void in their lives where deep human bonds seemed to be missing. Poland was being missed as one would miss family and friends rather than being missed as a country or nation or indeed a geographical entity. There is the loneliness of the emigrant but also the positive side of getting distance from what is familiar so that change is made possible. Maxine Greene offers a useful look at the role that a stranger or being in a strange place for instance, plays in learning, as outlined by the sociologist Alfred Schutz.

## Chapter Eight

### Bourdieu's sensitizing concepts and students' experiences

#### 8.1 Educational qualifications and social 'connections' network

*Thanks to the fact that I study at university I started to work here as well. It is not a full time position; only a few workshops with students and a small research project as there was a need for someone who speaks Polish. Although I think that a career here needs to be taken in small steps. These connections are useful. (Suzanne).*

Generally speaking interviews with students showed that participating in higher education in a different country and gaining a diploma from a foreign university had changed the sense of who they were. It has influenced strongly their own capability and self worth.

*I undoubtedly acquired a lot of practical knowledge... it gave me a lot of... it's based on connections, what people you know, the financial market here is quite small. When I was studying here, I had the opportunity to meet many people in high positions. It is about the companionship. They cooperate together and help each other. They will help you in many of life's circumstances. It helps a lot, like, for example, when you want to move to Hong Kong, they can know someone there or in Singapore, right? And I have relations with managers there. There are many Europeans and Irish as well over there. I am in touch with a girl who is a supervisor of the same department I was working in but in a different Bank. So these connections mean a lot. I know it would be too hard to meet such people in Poland. There is this 'title-mania' (where overemphasis is placed on the importance of an academic title): "you are nobody and I am someone very important, so you better stay away". You cannot make connections with people like this. It is not like that here. So it gives me a lot of confidence. Also, there are not so many people here that have the same qualifications as I do. I can feel privileged and very qualified; I have higher qualifications than most people I know. I can also feel more confident and at ease when talking to people on managerial positions. I know the way that you should speak to such people. The way you talk here is important. There is a specific language with specific phrases. Again, graduating has helped me in broadening my world perception. This would almost certainly not have been possible if I had stayed in Poland (Anne).*

There is a great role of acquiring social and symbolic capital, mentioned by most of the respondents. Barbara puts it this way:

*And here I know what to do; I know who to talk to. My school has prepared me. I am told how I should behave according to different circumstances; what potential obstacles I may come across on the way. They have given me a picture of reality for me (Barbara).*

According to Bourdieu, we could suggest, students acquired new social and economic capital. It happened by acquiring new self image, new competencies, cognitive ones and social as well. They have also acquired new social positions, becoming ‘experts’ in their subjects, in their studied disciplines, in their work place and their social environment. As Bourdieu, eloquently described:

Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations (“connections”), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title nobility (Bourdieu, 1986, p.16).

Suzanne made the observation:

*Really, to have a position in the market here, to get a post at university, this Ph.D. is... you know... to tick the box on the list of requirements, right? What really counts... are all those articles you write and publish, isn't this true? You are becoming a professional, the specialist in your area. There is big pressure on social networking here. It is about showing up, meeting and creating this network to become known in the area. I think it's easier when you know the right people. I frequently meet people who ask me: 'listen, would you like to do this or that project?' and there is no ad anywhere about this job, and I always say, 'sure I do'. I think it's more informal here (Suzanne).*

Peter mentioned the importance of having the diploma as the valid symbolic capital:

*Yes, yes, indeed. It is completely different when you have this piece of paper stating your degree on it. People treat you differently when you have it. This is undoubtedly of importance to me. I have a big net of contacts with people around the world and I know that because of my degree in philosophy I enjoy respect in this area. I may know exactly the same things as other people, have a large knowledge-base but without the degree, discussions would be totally different. So, personally, it's important to me, this regard that I get (Peter).*

The time and effort put into the process of gaining new knowledge and skills had been perceived as one of the best life decisions. It is hard to see it when people start their degree and everything may look scary, when there are many doubts and anxieties. The anxiety feelings are always coupled with leaving the comfort zone and starting something new, with finding yourself in the strange situation. How people react to the situation is dependent on their own personality traits, but also the role of learning facilitators, peer support and the overall attitude of the institution they are working/operating in these all plays crucial roles in students succeeding in HE. The prize may be very big. As Rogers explains, it brings more freedom to human beings and the ability to stand for herself and decide about the life conditions she wants to live in:



It is the realisation that 'I can live myself, here and now, by my own choice'. It is the quality of courage that enables a person to step into the uncertainty of the unknown as she chooses herself. It is the discovery of meaning within oneself, meaning that comes from listening sensitively and openly to the complexities of what one is experiencing. It is the burden of being responsible for the self one chooses to be. It is a person's recognition that she is an emerging process not a static end product (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

To make the analogy to Fromm and Bauman's view of the post modern condition and human place in it, there is a very interesting point to be made here. Bauman writes about a contemporary generation of tourists, who are making the progress towards being more flexible and adjustable to the labour market. They are tourists in search of security and employability. However Bauman argues that the generation, which has moved from a socialist to a democratic system, they fear the loss of their sense of security. What can be argued from the students' point of view is that they are people who are able, to some extent, to combine newly gained freedom with some sense of security as well. It is this courage that enables them to face the challenges but also become more qualified and benefit economically. They are gaining mobility - inside the country of studying and also in the EU - as a result of the Bologna process and national regulation regarding the process of study and employability.

They are also having the ability to influence the changes within HE institutions, which are becoming, through the EU policies, more willing to listen to students' needs and allowing them to articulate their perceptions. This process can make the HE institutions more open to transformation in the nearer future. The new generation is transforming not only themselves, but they are the future for society, becoming the active agents of changes introduced on many levels, also on the institutional levels.

The capital they gained within the institution is the enduring benefit. One more time to quote Bourdieu:

Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. And the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, (Bourdieu, 1986, p.15)

However for those young people university itself is not perceived as an exceptionally privileged place because they had always planned to gain HE diplomas (i.e. in Poland).

*I guess, I don't know, I was always a very good pupil and I simply always had very good grades at school. It was so obvious when I was growing up that I would go to college. I don't know; I never considered the fact that things could be different. I don't know how the idea came to me because my parents never told me. I mean, they did not encourage me. I wanted to learn myself. I had exceptional marks and it was somehow obvious to everyone that I would go to college; there was simply no other option (Kate).*

Looking back they they had not specifically planned on graduating in Ireland and the circumstances and life transitions and opportunities, which appeared in their lives, have created them as non-traditional students in a foreign country. Studying in a foreign country was felt as a privileged position by them, for a variety of reasons. The recurring theme was the opening up of new possibilities for the future and the opportunity to gain completely different experiences of studenthood in comparison to being a Polish university student:

*Actually, it was like... I wanted to take a year's break and come here, just for a holiday to master my English first of all, you know, with natives. Secondly, I did not want to stay at home because every summer so far I had been spending with my parents and there was nothing exciting about it.... So, after one year, I changed my mind and I said: "ok, let's do an M.A. I cannot get a stipend as I am starting anew. But I will tick the box and when I am rich I will start another course". So, you know, I was surfing the Internet and I found this course at UCD and I fell in love with the campus from the very first moment I saw it; I liked it so much. How can I explain this? Sometimes something strikes you so hard and you just know that it is it. There doesn't have to be a rational reason for it (Barbara).*

All of my respondents were doing well at the universities in Poland; they were perceived as intelligent and bright students in the academic environment and some of them have mentioned that they were perceived as very intelligent at home. Continuing the study was probably the natural form of development for them. The thing is they had not expected to graduate in another country. Most of them came here in search of jobs and just after graduation. They wanted to try new challenges, to try new paths for life, and in most cases they also planned to earn some money. It was the set of circumstances and good friends' or partners' support that has made them think and start a new career abroad.

## **8.2 Studenthood and higher education as a transitional space**

There is a growing number of researchers dealing with the problem of identity as a significant dimension of the learning experience (Barbara Merrill, 2007, Tedder and

Biesta, 2007). The simple act of getting involved in an education programme is deeply affecting people's sense of who they are.

Studenthood is a distinctive form of identity because educational programmes themselves are almost invariably associated with transition. The formal status of being a "student" is relatively clear cut in higher education, where people are required to undergo prescribed procedures which clearly designate them as being students. The status of student is also a transitory status, after which most will expect to become something else – a graduate, who will enjoy graduate status in a credentialist labour market (Field, Morgan-Klein, Fleming, Finnegan, Holliday, West & Merrill, 2010).

There is also a strong connection between student identity and institutional culture in higher education. An important factor for understanding studenthood as identity is the massification process in higher education. Higher education institutions are losing their elite status and this is also affecting the identity of student. It is not so highly distinctive but rather becoming the normal route for young people, more like an extension of primary and secondary education.

Studenthood is also a status that has some constrictions. It is temporary, so is limited by time between entrance and exit; it is also restricted by university regulations (assessments, deadlines for papers submission, timetables for attendance, etc.). We can suggest studenthood is a provisional, temporary identity associated with ceremonies and symbolic practices and rituals, like the ceremony of graduation. (Field and Morgan, 2010).

Another part of the transitory nature of being a student is its involvement in future prospects. Learner identities are expressed by different ways of seeing the future self. It links to EU discourse of lifelong learning and the need for continuity in acquisition of new abilities. These are the resources which can empower individuals and enable them to succeed in liquid modernity

### **8.3 Studentship and Learning Careers. The Social Conditions of Studentship according to Martin Bloomer**

From interviews carried out on this study with participants, there appear to have been many different factors which have had a bearing upon and indeed also have had an influence on studentship. Taking into account the words of students, the out-of-course experiences were no less important than the in-course ones. Some of students have claimed openly, and some have mentioned subtly, the fact that during the time they

have completed their degree they have become ‘a different person’ (Bloomer, 1997, p.138). What exactly does it mean and how does this fact affect the whole lives of students?

*I think that if I had stayed in Poland I would be shy now and have much less confidence. I would be afraid of life and wouldn't know how to approach the job market, where to even go. I was struck by the support I received here at university from the very beginning (Louise).*

It means personal growth and development, along with gaining new knowledge and an emerging new personality.

Pierre Bourdieu (1977 a) describes the ‘system of dispositions’ which is framed within social and cultural experience and which in turn allows an individual to give meaning to the experience. It is a person’s habitus.

Habitus includes transportable dispositions such as way of thinking, values, and patterns of interpretation. One’s habitus operates at two levels: it determines what and how one perceives, and also what expressions and actions one generates and in what manner...Habitus is not an individual phenomenon, a logic derived from a common set of material conditions of existence (Okano, 1993, p.27 in Bloomer, 1997).

Individuals have the opportunity for changing their taken for granted frames of reference, through the newly acquired tools of reflexivity and critical approach to the social values and culturally conditioned perspectives. Suzanne describes her start at the university as the immensely liberating process.

*I can remember that, first of all, I had never ever felt before so intellectually free and liberated. I would never have thought that Ethnology would be so liberating. It questions everything and has disputed everything that had seemed so obvious to me previously. It has taught me to see things from a different perspective; to think and wonder over every single thing. It is called reflexivity here, isn't it? Secondary school teaching was so different; you had to learn something off by heart without questioning it. So college was like a big ‘Wow’! I mean everything was a ‘Wow’. I moved to a new town, I started anew in a different place with new people. It was great and I was doing well at university. It absorbed me completely, this kind of life. Besides, learning has never been a problem for me, so it was all a very pleasurable experience.*

The learning careers and all the social experiences taking place during that time, are contributing to habitus and are shaping the students’ predispositions and dispositions to learning. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus has been considered very relevant to the present study for its accurate description and analysis of young people’s learning over time. ‘Habitus allows for the dialectical interplay of the objective and subjective while

providing some opportunity to account for both continuities and transformations in dispositions to studentship and to knowledge and learning' (Bloomer, 1997, p.141).

The habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production – and only those (Bourdieu, 1990, p.55).

In this approach the habitus cannot be seen in a deterministic view. Although it sets boundaries to actions, it has to be seen more in its orienting function than a determining one. The work of Phil Hodgkinson may be helpful here to give some insights into the development of habitus:

A repertoire of schemata contributes to the dispositions that make up habitus. As new experiences are gained, schemata are modified and developed and as they change so does what is recognised in the surrounding world...the life history of the individual shapes and is shaped by his/her common experience (Hodgkinson, 1995, p.92).

Learning happens within the schemata of the cultural and social contexts within which it is located. People bring their frames of reference and their personal histories into new social contexts and new learning opportunities.

In the study that has been undertaken by Martin Bloomer, students were making the reference to significant changes in their wider habitus, which included transformations in their predispositions and most fundamental dispositions (Bloomer, 1997, p.152). Those transformations accompanied changes in personal values, the identification of new personal needs and a new priority given to things:

If these types of transformation of habitus, arising out of the interaction of existing habitus with newly perceived structural opportunities, can prompt changes in personal values, motivation, locus of control and, in effect, personal identity, it is to be anticipated that these, in turn, will prompt new horizons for action, new experiences and insights and further transformation of habitus (Bloomer, 1997, p.153).

This means that personality is not fixed or relatively constant. It is also in contrast with the description of the learning process in terms of some sequence of psychological states. The approach quoted above shows that personal identity, habitus and dispositions are ever-changing – as the process of life and experience unfolds – each of them is finding 'a new equilibrium as newly perceived structural opportunities disturb the old' (Bloomer, 1997, p.153).

Going further, the learning careers refer to the development of students' dispositions to learning and knowledge, as the result of the influences of many factors, including social, which are barely predictable if at all. Learning careers describe transformations in habitus, dispositions and studentship over time. Those transformations are happening, as the life goes on, and for this reason they cannot be fully predicted.

Along with the changing life path and habitus, people are deconstructing and reconstructing their perceptions and purposes.

The concept of learning career places studentship, learning and personal development in a dynamic, mutually constitutive, relationship. Inter-related as it is with the theory of habitus, it also links, dynamically, the formation of personal identity and dispositions to the transformation of social, moral, economic and other conditions. It thus has the potential to yield not simply the knowledge that young people 'act upon' learning opportunities in the ways that they do through their studentship but to generate an understanding of why they do (Bloomer, 1997).

#### **8.4 The graduates' post-degree destination in the labour market**

The interviewees in this particular research, however non-traditional in the meaning of coming from different backgrounds and not having English as their primary language, did not come from disadvantaged sections in the meaning of poverty and poor working class families. On the contrary the majority come from families where literacy skills and education have been highly valued. In addition, they were all perceived as very intelligent and bright young people in their environments. Their challenges concerned the foreign language acquisition and strange environment to work, live and study in. However, they went a long journey, often challenging and demanding courage, at the end of which journey they had found it worth the effort. They are all stronger, more self aware and happy people at the moment. They do realise their potential and the benefits from the credentials they gained:

*I mean, yes, first of all, besides having gained knowledge during those studies, the Irish have also now a different attitude towards me. Whenever I say that I have graduated from Trinity, this is the key word that opens all the doors for me. I even remember that when I completed the degree and was looking for a job, my friend told me to apply for allowance. I remember going to the Health Board and when I said that I had graduated from Trinity, it was like, 'aaaah aah, yes'. His approach was completely different to me. 'Someone like you will surely find a job immediately'. And indeed I found one quickly. But you could feel it, this different approach. Poznan University tells them nothing. What is it really to*

*them? But a master's at Trinity sounds familiar. They know it. I am 'one of them'. I am from Trinity; there you are, you can work for us. So it changed greatly, my position in the labour market. Thanks to it I am working in my profession and am happy about it (Kate).*

These young people's stories are of great importance in offering the insights into the educational experience and how it correlates with their desire for respect and recognition and with how it builds up their self esteem.

This chapter relates to the conceptual framework and indicates that graduation abroad adds to self worth and offers the acquisition of new skills and qualifications. It develops also the Bloomer's theory on student-hood as a part of ever-changing identity. The student identity is provisional although cherished by most students for its symbolic practices. Their identities can be forged by spending time together studying, researching, socializing, attending events and generally enjoying the shared experience. This highly dynamic identity transitioning process is empowered yet also limited by the philosophy and structure of the institution, the time-frame and the deadlines for assessments and other constrictions and opportunities present on their course. The chapter stresses also the importance of cultural and economic capital acquired with graduation and this itself is an important resource to cope with the demanding labour market.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Reflections about Polishness, Polish identity.**

#### **9.1 Self-image of Poles in contact with another culture. The sense of identity and Polishness**

Is it an easy task to assimilate with natives? Has their sense of being Polish lessened? Is there something like a new Polish Irish personality, identity?

Is it possible to understand another culture? To melt into it, get involved and drift into it, so one can be able to feel like you are at home. Maybe it is the language, which creates the border, behind which the mentality, emotions and historical experience become inconceivable. Katarzyna Tubylewicz (2005) states that even when we try and struggle to understand, to become close, make friends, there is always something that makes us different. It is the language, the conscious, the biographical dissimilarity, which precludes us from the deeper and fuller communication. It is possible however to learn new ways of living, to adjust and even laugh at the same jokes, but it is the only way around it. To be the emigrant, means you have lost your own place, that you can not go back, or even stay stronger - there is no way to get back.

In constructivist approach the personal, biographical dimension of perception is at the core of each individual understanding. Centering individual constructions of reality, does not discount the importance of external structures in those processes of construction.

Human beings are limited with their ability to perceive the nature of things using only their senses and conscious thinking for the process of cognition – life experience is the reflection of a person's historical, personal, social and cultural background. If learning takes place on the basis and through the previous experiences – the learner's biography plays a crucial role in the interpretation of new experiences and its integration.

Pawel describes his experience of feeling to some extent less Polish as the time passes and he gets used to the new environment:

*I had an interest in Polish politics for a long time up to the point when I stopped feeling like I could honestly contribute to it. I have a right to give input into it. But, as I said, I don't plan on going back. I think it's almost unfair for me now to contribute or have a voice in deciding the government or deciding on the president if the results of elections will not affect me. So at the moment, on that basis, I don't actually vote even if I have the opportunity to do so. I am still formally registered to vote in Polish affairs but I would not do so. I will vote in the local elections here when the paperwork for my Irish citizenship will go through. I do intend to fully vote in the elections here. So I*



*have a much greater interest in the politics here. There are a few people like me, a few colleagues of mine. Irish politics are obviously of great importance to us now.*

First and foremost of the findings is the sense of being Polish experienced even deeper and more consciously that during all the years of staying in the home country. Being a native in Poland is taken for granted there, but it becomes an issue when in another country. Here, in Ireland, being Polish becomes much more vivid, touchable and noticeable from the outside. It is the feeling of being a stranger. People deal with it in various ways, some are getting adjusted and seem to melt somehow into new reality, feeling like ‘a fish in the water’ borrowing the phrase from Bourdieu (1990).

The first reaction is inevitably the sense of strangeness, alienation even, to some extent. I feel different, I cannot change my Eastern European accent, and everybody is noticing my nationality. I am the Other in this country:

*well, there were moments, there is always. I have to be honest, Ireland is quite good in terms of tolerance. When I came in I was to say the only Polish in the county, definitely in town. There is bit of anonymity coming with it. People are ‘so where are you from? Oh from Poland, oh very good. Where is Poland?’ whereabouts in Poland? Always the same questions, and there was a period when I was getting annoyed. As it was, oh you are not interested in me as a person, its more of which county’s from. But I got used to it (Pawel).*

After some period of time there is another stage – the adjustment phase, or the getting accustomed stage. Whatever has been perceived as the pointing out and exposing the otherness of Polish identity, now is being seen as manifestation of friendliness, interest or the clumsy approach to start and maintain a conversation with a stranger on the street. The fact of other people paying attention to Polish otherness becomes accepted, however still noticed.

## **9.2 The language issues. Being Polish.**

Although all the respondents were fluent in English, they also mentioned about the challenge involved with learning and working in a foreign language. For some of them it came easier to cope with adjusting to new circumstances. They do realize that, even when acquiring the necessary vocabulary, their Eastern European accent is noticeable. Sometimes it causes them to feel alienated, but not in all cases. It would correlate to personality rather than a factual state of being marginalized.

*Every time I raised my voice, I could see someone hadn't understood me, someone hadn't grasped my accent. I am constantly reminded that I am Pole. I wasn't a Pole in Poland. I was just a girl, a student, another person. And here, here I am very much Polish (Suzanne).*

*That's one of the good things for hard sciences, that you don't have to learn English (Peter).*

*I think from the second year on, I would have to read and study scientific journals and to some extent interact with others in English. It was limited, even if you go to conference, generally there is someone who knows English better than you. I say you can stay in the shadow. You can get around without conversing a lot, but still develop your understanding of the language, and you are waiting for more written forms. I thought I had reasonably good vocabulary. That's what I thought before coming here. In terms of conversation I was never really forced to do it (Peter).*

### **9.3 The mythological fairyland**

I am sad, Saviour For me in western skies  
You poured out a radiant rainbow array;  
In azure waters you quench before my eyes  
The fiery star of day...  
Though You gild the sky and sea for me yonder,  
I am sad, Saviour!

Like empty ears of corn, their heads erect,  
I stand bereft of surfeit and of pleasure...  
To strangers my face has the same aspect,  
The silence of azure:  
But to You my heart's core I'll uncover,  
I am sad, Saviour!

Today when lost in the wide sweep of the sea,  
One hundred miles away from either shore,  
The flying storks above me I could see  
In a stretched out skein soar.  
That once I knew them on a Polish pasture,  
I am sad, Saviour!

The rainbow of lights which in sky's canopy  
Your angels have spread in an enormous string,  
Some other people hundred years after me  
Will look upon - dying.  
Ere to my nothingness I humbly surrender,  
I am sad, Saviour!

*Written at sunset, at sea off Alexandria.*

(Hymn by Juliusz Slowacki Translated by Michael MIKOS)

The above is one of the best known poems from Polish Romantic Literature, describing the poignant feeling of the poet in exile, who suffers homesickness. This is the poem Polish children usually have to learn by heart in primary school.

For immigrants, moving to another culture can trigger a cultural shock. An individual can feel overwhelmed by different cultural and social values and habits. It can subside as the time goes on, however at the first moment people are developing different kinds of coping strategies. It can be a bigger appreciation of one's own culture or the opposite – criticising and denying it. In many cases it is making continuous comparisons between new and old, looking for familiarity in food, music, symbols and choices. Sometimes the best choice seems to be deciding to learn the language and cultural codes in order to integrate and assimilate to the most possible extent to the new culture and society (Bron in West & Alheit, 2007, p.206).

The same applies to the students, who are facing some shock, when the style of academic work differs from that which they experienced in their home country and what they were accustomed to. Although they have been studying before, they are facing unfamiliarity in the new learning context:

*I am pregnant with the images of Poland, pregnant and sick... The largest presence within me is the welling up of absence, of what I have lost. This pregnancy is also a phantom pain... Not everything there is old-fashioned, not everything here better! (Hoffman, 1989, p.115).*

It seems very interesting – the phenomenon of not noticing to be Polish when in the home country. Nobody living in Poland thinks in those terms, but rather as being male, female, student, mother, daughter, worker or whatever social role the person is playing. After the border crossing, the cultural distinction is felt very explicitly, especially at the beginning. The longing for Poland becomes tangible as well - however these feelings are not always well defined. Most people do not wish to go back to Poland, and their homesickness articulates rather the longing for their childhood and the feelings of security related to that time. Some people have mentioned the romantic vision of the home country, resembling summer camps, the stories about the fertile lands and the old woods. It is the yearning for the affinity, esprit de corps, accompanying all the emigrants. There were the voices of Chopin music, the summer trips to the mountains, about the beauty of nature, sunny summer days and carefree school days. The memories

and longings revolve around the parts of Poland and Polishness which can be found in books, poems and songs rather than in reality:

*Poland is pictured in my head in this idyllic way in the sense that when I think about Poland, I can see the Bialowieża Forest, the Tatra Mountains, holiday views, and things like that. Every time, however, I return to Poland I see the poverty, at least in the place where I am from. People are poor. They don't smile. The shop assistants won't greet you with a 'hello'. I mean I always wait with longing to come back here again. I don't know whether I would like to stay here for good but what I know is that I won't go back to Poland (Louise).*

The image of the home has been created unrealistically. Such approach seems to be the natural order of things; human beings feel more secure and happier in the familiar environment and also among their family and well known friends:

*I remember how much I used to love coming back to Poland during the first few months of staying in Ireland. I mean, the very first moments when you leave the airport and when you hear people speaking Polish everywhere and the fact that you can understand everything so perfectly, every whisper, every context of the words being said and each joke and witticism. After some time this stopped being so important to me as I began to understand what was being said here more and more (Barbara).*

My respondents had previously felt more familiar in their own country of origin, however - with each month and year spent in Ireland – it was this new home country which was being perceived as more secure, understandable and familiar. Some of the PRL<sup>15</sup> remnants are seen as absurd from the distant point of view. Hence the reluctance to the homecoming at the present.

There certainly are financial reasons to consider also. All the respondents stressed the fact that Poland cannot offer them sufficient economic living standards, the ones that they have become accustomed to having whilst living in Ireland, even in these difficult times of recession, with the obvious uncertainties and concerns related to the crisis situation.

The next question which comes to mind in this context is the change in identity. My respondents are moving away from Polishness, in the meaning of feeling more detached from their home country. They are much less interested in Polish politics and getting more interested in the Irish ones and the Irish economy. Some are not interested in it at all. Talking to some interviewees you may get the subjective impression that they are still in prolonged suspension, somewhere in between two worlds – not any more in

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<sup>15</sup> PRL stands for Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, which is People's Republic of Poland. It was the official name of Poland from 1952 to 1990.

Poland but not yet in Ireland. They are not sure either if their future will be bound to this country. They seem to be always in growth and progress and marking up new aims.

The consecutive issue, very clearly noticeable in the interviews, is the division in the Polish population itself. Poles living in Ireland cannot be treated as a monolithic, uniformed group of people. There are differences in the mentality and life priorities among them. One of the respondents has stated it this way:

*Irish culture. I didn't like it as much in the beginning. There were many things that annoyed me. But this is something typically Polish where you critique everything – it's strong ethnocentrism. It is about comparing everything but always knowing that what is ours is obviously better just because it's ours. Later, I got used to Irish culture. I am starting to like it very much. I am beginning to appreciate the fact that people smile on the street to each other. And even if the common everyday expression 'how are you?' means nothing, it is still better than the cold looks you get in Poland (Suzanne).*

She adds more:

*I learned it here. I had no idea how things really are [outside of the country]. When you live in Poland, you can't see who we are, how we behave, let's say, can you? You grow up in it. You take it as something natural and it is so normal to you. And, you know, there are those rules that must be obeyed. Everybody follows them and that's how it is. I came here and it turns out that it doesn't have to be this way. We are the ones who created that culture and that atmosphere. And really, it can be different. I have learned from the Irish and I have chilled out more and totally changed my attitude to things. So, when I'm in the office, I do not expect the lady to do something for me because it is her job to do it, but I know she may not do it because, you know, people don't have to be competent, they are only human and they have the right to not do something and it happens to them to forget. But I prefer this human approach than the 'it has to be done because it is her job' approach! My way of thinking has changed completely for me. I have learned from them and I respect them for it. And college played a part in it all as well. So, I mean, when you study, they don't have to stand over you with a whip and force you to make progress. They can treat you as a mature person who has something valuable to say and can also contribute. This national culture is reflected in the academic culture here (Suzanne).*

*It is a well known fact that everybody here is so polite. Whether it is a facade or not doesn't matter much. It is just a different approach. It is what is so distinct from all those Polish manners. Each time I go to Poland I feel excited but I always come back so depressed that I feel like crying (Anne).*

*If I was to be honest I didn't know much about Ireland. I am not even sure if I could, before coming, if I could associate Ireland with anything in particular. Probably U2. I wasn't particularly fond of U2, maybe more culture than science. In terms of professional knowledge I would have much better understanding, of what's being done and who, what like various countries are*

*famous for. Although, now I am very proud of the achievement of the peers. I actually discovered that some of the people who had contributed to my own science were Irish, but at that time , no, I didn't actually have much of the expectation. It was more, o Jesus! Ireland!, let's see what Ireland is all about (Pawel).*

One of the conclusions of this research is that the group of people who have agreed to take part in the survey consists of an elite component of Polish cohort. Why such a finding? They are people aspiring to constant development, having high standards of personal culture, who are respectful to their cultural affiliation and grateful to what the other cultures are offering them. The same can be said about their companionship. It consists of people sharing very similar life priorities. They feel strucked and offended by the obscene behaviour and vulgarism expressed by their countrymen. They do not wish to be identified with this part of Polishness. On the contrary, they repeatedly deplore the bad example shown by some Polish immigrants, stressing that the latter have a strong tendency to generalize, stereotype and form opinions on the basis of personal and subjective experiences.

How deep are the implications of globalising processes for Higher Education? Within the bounds of only one generation's life, we have moved from the world in which most of the people could expect to get stability with a modest education, to the world in which education itself becomes the necessary economic condition to survive for most of the people.

## **Chapter Ten**

### **The Identity Concept**

#### **10.1 The changing self image and self perception**

Understanding how individuals themselves experience situations, and the meaning they attach to this, is helpful in understanding the dynamic interplay of structure and agency, self and culture, in a life (West, Alheit, 2006). The focus on experience as a basis for learning fits with elements of post-modernity such as uncertainty, rapid social and technological change.

A constructivist approach offers a different perspective to this of empiricist or positivist view which sees reality as universal, objective and quantifiable. The assumptions about knowledge built into this epistemology assume that a single reality exists for each of us and that it can be investigated systematically and quantified. They also value rationality, objectivity and detachment. I was interested in looking at how sense is made of the world and how it is interpreted by those experiencing it. This facilitated the exploration of individual positions while, at the same time, allowing common factors to be identified. This was a useful way, to look at people having, on the face of it, the same experience as being immigrant and studying abroad, but for whom the meaning and effects could be different. This approach recognises that our individual circumstances affect our perception and construction of 'reality' and that meanings may be varied and complex. It acknowledges too the role of social, historical and institutional factors in the development of experience.

Looking for comfort of living is followed by the process of redefining and re-constituting the identity. Interviewees making comparisons between the person they are now and that one they were while in Poland can reveal the major changes in personality and life perceptions. The identity itself is a big concept, which requires some attention:

*You know what? I can tell you that there is actually a huge difference between the person I was before leaving Poland and the one I am now after graduating here (Barbara).*

The experience of the studying was very positive for most of the students. They stressed the positive feedback from the university and good relations with professors and the feeling of being valued and respected. They all feel to some extent privileged to have had the possibility of learning and gaining qualifications and being part of the institution they studied at. Undoubtedly they stressed the diploma in Irish higher education

strengthened their agency and had opened more doors, which were closed to them before:

*I mean, I felt deserving before starting the course. I knew my own self-worth but now I think it is easier for me to convince the doctor or the gentleman in an office about my worth. So, I would say things changed a lot for them, not for me. That's how I would see it. I believe the Irish see me differently now because of the HE (Kate).*

Social development, economic growth, knowledge increase and new technology use have caused the increase in demand for a high level of competence, a variety of qualifications and narrow specialisations. Among the necessary competencies, there are both cognitive ones, like problem solving, critical thinking, knowledge implementation and social dispositions. There are also perseverance, internal motivation, responsibility, effectiveness, flexibility and stress management among those dispositions. These are all new competencies, which seem to be necessary when coping with job market demands. For many years, higher education's primary objective has been acquiring knowledge from a particular field of interest. Currently there is a trend and main target for tertiary education to support the development of students as reflexive practitioners, who are competent to practice their own critical reflection (Dochy, Segers, 1999, p.332).

During the late 1980's to the late 1990', there were many systematic transformations in Poland. This rebounded greatly upon the consecutive generations of Poles. The younger generation perceives the reality in a much different way in comparison to their parents and grandparents. Those Poles are creating a new emigrational generation and, although their predecessors were also migrating, the reasons for their mobility were different. They are not migrating to survive or to earn a living, but mainly because they want a better quality of life and many of them long for the possibility of a better and fuller life. They feel disappointed with the reality in Poland. There is noticeable division among Polish people abroad. The research responses have shed the light on this problem. There are Polish people who are well educated, hard working people. They travel abroad to continue their development and self realization, taking advantage of the new emerging possibilities, which have been offered by the European Union and globalisation. Those Poles are creating the new society and they have interests that they can see objectively when they distance themselves from Poland and Polishness.. They can easily notice the nation's vices and they do not wish to identify with them. This is a new generation which, although it does not deny its roots and appreciates its heritage, it also does feel like a world citizen, willingly familiarizing with other cultures and adopting their



customs. They can be Bauman's tourist generation, consumers, who are able to take from life whatever it can offer to them.

This group only represents an element of Polish society and their point of view changes considerably after graduation. It is the great transition for people. It gives them credentials but also changes their social and cultural capital, which is followed by changes in economic capital, no matter what the initial intentions were. The transition young students went through introduces them into the new world, giving them connections and relations, opening doors for new possibilities. It gives new perspectives and different lenses to perceive the world through and the world becomes a more hospitable place, where people are nicer and friendlier. The economic situation and mobility connected with the possibility of self-sufficiency and self-determination changes substantially an individual's perception and his frame of reference. The beautiful image of Poland held in memory starts fading away, and the realisation that the home country does not have much to offer any more comes with time. The Irish citizens are slowly becoming closer friends and good companions in life's journey. Some of the research respondents have met their partners in Ireland and that changed their situation and perception even more. There are factors strongly affecting their identity, which is not being built gradually, point after point like a building, rooted in one place. The modern individual identity is more like a costume, which can be newly acquired accordingly to the customer's tastes. The strategy is more convenient than the classic one, and gives the unlimited opportunities of choice. Education helps to find one's own path and helps to build one's own 'self', as it expands the perspectives as well as giving the possibility to find the mentors and authorities to follow in finding the desired life path. The teacher's role changes nowadays. He is no longer the 'gate keeper' but rather the mentor and fellow traveller on the journey through life.

People's lives are not determined in the Marxist's sense. The individual life history varies greatly with the life of Polish students' ancestors. The previous generation had, to a great extent, a pre-determined life path and career, in which the individual's life was circumscribed and bound to one place and social role. The major changes in Poland and other European countries intersect meaningfully with individual life trajectories.

Within just one generation, there has been a noticeable shift from the world in which a very basic education has been, in most cases, sufficient to provide a living, to a place where acquiring a decent position of employment in a world, where higher or further education becomes the necessary condition to survive in the market for the vast majority

of people. The reality became very complex and, in order to perform efficiently in it, there is a need for proper education, which would embrace not only formal education. There is a need for acquiring such skills as independent learning, classifying the knowledge acquired and the ability to implement it in solving the unforeseen problems and obstacles of everyday life. It also demands good communication skills, ability to cooperate effectively with others, self-reflection, critical thinking, creativity, multilateral activity and being professional in the demanded area (Dochy, Segers, 1999, p.333).

Those people have gone through the transformation, which encapsulates many spheres of life. Taking the challenge and the journey to the different country, where the culture differs, has become for them the journey through life itself and the transformative factor. They benefited from acquiring new cultural and social capital, new self-perception and higher awareness of the power politics and market mechanisms. They seem to be better equipped and more adapted to the changing reality:

*I have a complete picture of the world, of how it functions. I have worked for different companies and at university as well. I understand both of these worlds very well, so if I had to choose one from the other, I would know how to do it and how to function in either. It's fascinating how so much has changed for me (Peter).*

Some of the respondents were familiarised with the work of Bauman and they made their own comments on his writing. They do agree with his overview and admit that they do not have job stability and their positions might be very precarious. Paweł is the exception, as he is the only one among the respondents who possesses a permanent job presently, however he also admits that it does not mean he will be always working for this university. Even though some uncertainty is involved, all of those students have acquired a big dose of self-confidence, feeling of efficacy, competence and ability to manoeuvre in the market-driven world.

Has their identity changed? Certainly it did. Even the sense of being Polish has changed in some important ways. It has been influenced by the sense of being European and not bound to the locality. The attitude towards Poland is different. Suzanne makes the comment about Polish inferiority complexes, which are common among the Polish community, which results in attempts of belittling other nationalities. After staying in Ireland, those, who gave themselves chances for development and progress, are noticing

themselves how their mentality transforms, how their roughness decreases and the appreciation for a different culture increases:

*There is a big difference. When I left home I was a snot nosed kid who had no idea about life and how it works. I knew nothing. I can't remember now if I thought I knew much then. However, I think that such a callow youth as I was thinks that he knows everything, that the world is his oyster. But life in Poland conditioned me. Well... life itself did. When you get hit on the head a few times in your life you become more humble. I mean, not only as a student but, well, life itself shapes us. So I am a completely different person now. You can't compare the person that I was with who I am now. I could sit here and talk about this for hours.*

(Peter)

*If I was to compare who I was 11 yrs ago it was, this part of growing. I don't know how much of this can be attributed to this, and how much of coming to Ireland. I would say a fair bit actually. I couldn't really say I would be the same person if I stayed in Poland. I am not a particularly sociable character if I may put it this way. I have the feeling here, it is more open atmosphere, even at work, you are more on first person term, I should say on main terms. There is more interaction with the students as well, less barrier. We operate open doors policy. And its not in name, it is true. So its more interaction with the students. Which also means, even if you don't have not particularly, expressive person, you kind of have to develop in that sense. And that gives you , makes you feel better as well. When you can handle all sorts of people and deal with people more. So that's was benefit for me. I have the feeling that if I had stayed back in academia in Poland I probably became more like all the distant academic staff, maybe good professional, but you know they have their own ticks. I still have them anyway. But its probably, it would be more enhanced by the kind of the natural barrier between students and staff in university. I don't know how it is now. I would say changed a little bit, but not dramatically from what I hear (Pawel).*

## **10.2 The concept of identity in non-traditional and adult learning contexts**

Identity is a concept of significant relevance to define the dimensions of the learning field, especially in its non-traditional and adult learning context. It is because the concept of identity provides the intersection between the person's life, cultural space and historical transitions.

In today's world we are less certain about who we really are. Identity is no longer a given, but an open question. The memory and space are two fundamental pillars for identity creation, but they are becoming more problematic in the modern world, and conditions of postmodernity and its sense of rootlessness, where the artificial supplements are replacing memory and recollections, and where places fundamental for shaping the sense of individuality and uniqueness are becoming detached from the

physical space. This is a time of profound change, instability and liquidity, where the issue of identity receives more attention and meaning.

Identity can be associated with different meanings. Taking into account the psychodynamic tradition, which has been applied in psychology and humanities, we should start with Sigmund Freud, who was the pioneer at his time in problematising personality struggles in his theory of identification. Identity cannot be considered as stable and rational, but rather as an ever-conflicted tension between id and ego, conscious and subconscious mind. Some stability and cohesion can be forged in relationships, which can either create the basis for creativity and growth or the opposite. Psyche is shaped and influenced by social and cultural phenomena. Erik Erickson developed what has become a standard reference in understanding identity development through normal stages of identity crises (Bron & Kurantowicz, 2005).

Another approach to identity is taken from a sociological and anthropological perspective, which sees identity processes as consequences of meaningful human agency. In this concept, both the community and individual autonomy are necessary for creating identity. George Herbert Mead has developed the pragmatic theory of the self. A main tradition comes from symbolic interactionism. The self arises through the individual's participation in the processes of communication and interaction and all other forms of socialization processes. Anthropological traditions focus on the formation of cultural identities either at a whole society or community level.

The progress from modernity into postmodernity has led to many changes in understanding different concepts, the same happening to identity, which has become even more unstable, even more of a question, hard to define, to give it a solid construction. The postmodern social condition became dominated by new realities. One of them was the rise of new media technologies. These question and problematize traditional authorities. The messages passed through media provide "frames" for organizing experiencing, but also for blurring the line between the real and the image. They shape more fragmentary and fluid identity (Turnau, 2011).

The dominance of consumerism in society is another reality that the postmodern person happens to face. Ted Turnau, questioning identity in the postmodern context, has isolated two different aspects of consumer-oriented identity. One is the "plastic self," which is as flexible as possible to experience as much as possible, and the other is the

“expressive self” that “seeks authenticity and completion of the inner-narrative” (Turnau, 2011).

There are two separate dynamics, which are at the heart of contradictory and conflicting emotions; these are, from one side, the exhilaration of being free to construct the concept of the self and, on the other side, the deeply felt anxiety of not belonging, not knowing who we really are (Turnau, 2011). Zygmunt Bauman uses the metaphor of ‘smart missile’ with reference to what people must become, living in the conditions of unpredictability and uncertainty, where targets constantly change. In such world, human life becomes more unpredictable but also a person’s biography is at the heart of the learning process, in a dynamic, reflexive sense. (Bron & Kurantowicz, 2005):

Learning can help to create meaning and the sense of oneself and of others, via biographical, social, cognitive, gendered, embodied and emotional processes. Struggles over identity are at the heart of biographical and narrative research as they provide a wider context for understanding and theorising learning. (Bron & Kurantowicz, 2005).

The social transformations, innovative developments in science and technology, and other modernization processes, are highly influencing the growing interest in narrative-biographical methodology in research. Individuals are in some way forced into life long learning and to be creative in applying new procedures of acting and ways of thinking to be able to cope with daily tasks and problems.

Proven patterns and standards of behaviour appear inadequate and useless in changing circumstances. This situation of ambiguity resulted in weakening and disappearance of ties connecting the local communities, weakening the importance of traditional factors building a regional identity.

Nowadays the individual becomes more and more self reliant, for which phenomenon sociology has coined the term ‘the progressive individualization of the person’ and the concept of ‘risk society’ (Giddens, 1991).

Peter Jarvis uses the term ‘disjuncture’ to describe internal working models as the motives for transition to another place in order to adapt to the new place of living:

When individuals can no longer take their world for granted - a state that I have called disjuncture – there is a need to learn. Disjuncture may be defined as the gap between individuals ‘biography and perception’ of their present experience. In this rapidly changing global society everybody is constantly confronted by disjunctural situations and forced to adapt to them (Jarvis, 2006, p.216).

The decision to migrate is one of those adaptation processes. This can be called the radical event, because of its connection with adapting to a different social world and uprooting. As Ligus argues, the biographical identities are 'broken' and re-composed across new spaces or 'replaced' by alternative biographical projects (Ligus, 2007, p.277).

The experience of movement across spaces involves the major change in "routine and current portrayals of self, entails recasting and redefinition of past identity positions and urges the construction of prospective or projective future identities" (Baynham, 2006, p.376 in Evans R., 2009).

Along with contemporary processes of social transformations on a global scale comes the identity discourse. It is because nowadays there are noticeable conditions for constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing the identities of postmodern man. Fredric Jameson observes the relatedness of such disciplines as social anthropology and cultural anthropology along with sociology. It is because the 'foreigner is not a stranger in the meaning of being exotic anymore, the postmodern man is mobile , becomes a part of a new metropolis, having the status of migrant. Postmodern order and its intrinsic ambivalence, ambiguity, intensified by risk and unpredictability, are forcing the individual to constantly adjust and readapt to progressive changes around. The individual needs to give new meanings to her life in the context of many narratives (Jameson, 1991). Postmodernity, allows individuals to experience otherness and autonomy and becomes the powerful force pervading human life. Postmodernity is both state of mind, the condition and the stage of the modernity evolution. The growing multiplicity and complexity of the world calls upon the intensifying of the dialog to achieve better understanding, co-operation, tolerance and mutual respect between all the agents. Another valid dimension of the social context of cultural phenomena is the technological revolution and so called network society that follows. It broadens horizons and opens borders accessible for the ordinary man, which leads to intensification of differentiation of identity manifestations (Jameson, 1991).

For the purposes of this thesis, I apply the concept of *identity* in the meaning of the states of personal and social consciousness of the human being and his subjectively-experienced autonomy in the presence of others, as well as his sense of collectivity and likeness to others. For this case, the personal and socio cultural identity of the subject are two sides of the same coin, and can not be examined separately. The personal

identity is the awareness of the personal features and attributes of an individual, which creates both her sense of autonomy and likeness to others along with the sense of being holistically the same person in the continuity of time and consciousness (Dyczewski in Budakowska, 2005, p.120).

The social identity is determined by the person's participation in a variety of group situations and by the degree of his identification with relevant communities of reference. This identity results from our socialization and the more or less conscious transfer of norms and styles of living. Our identity is constituted by a process of change. It is conditioned by a changing social context and by the choices made by human beings.

Bronisław Misztal defines identity as socially mediated state of mind and human consciousness, formulated and actualized on the basis of cognitive, moral and political references (Misztal in Budakowska, 2005). In his explanation, identity is the kind of gathered abilities to dissociate otherness from sameness, the acquired cognitive skills, as well as emotional, moral and political ones, which helps the individual to find his locus in the universe. The outside, contextual conditions are the subject of continuous change, so our own position needs to be referred to in regard to situations, events, facts and actions undertaken by others. Identity consists of two major elements, the first of which includes: the set of qualifications, knowledge and moral dispositions, and the other involves the individual ability to make comparisons in relation to those and analysing the relationships between them.

The current increase in international migrations has already become one of the significant factors of socio-cultural changes in the postmodern world. This phenomenon presents qualitatively new challenges for both the hosting society and the immigrants themselves.

Many theories on migration were inclined to economic reasons, when explaining the nature, origin and evolution of different types of migration movements. However that was a good explanation in XIX century, and the immigrant was at that time the social actor who compared costs with benefits; he was moving to another place because he saw it as a profitable investment into his future. Migration often causes discontinuity in a person's identity. Social values, which form a basic component of one's identity, are getting transformed. Nowadays the immigrant becomes the more social actor, who co-creates the social reality during the process of movement. He plays an active role in a

globalised world. He wants to exercise the right to fulfil his work and career aspirations, to be productive, actively participating in the cultural changes in society, and influence the course of events. It can be added that the contemporary immigrant in the developed postmodern system is actually in the international system, not limited to a national state. In the postmodern order the national state has lost its sovereign role in determining the collective identity. The modern state serves the interests of individuals. The discussion on identity issues will evolve mostly around the individual identity, which adopts the more hybrid shape, than the one that is integrated with national identity of the host country. (Budakowska, 2005).

### **10.3 Being a global, borderless personality**

Pawel talks a lot about his changing perspective on migration and about leaving the sentiment for the home country behind, along with new emerging possibilities. He is one of the examples of students, who do not feel so strongly connected with their country of origin, in patriotic and devoted ways. They do not feel this strong attachment with natives as their previous generations:

*Maybe its just because of the way I think. I cannot thought in more abstract terms, so ..there was a period, especially it shows, you getting doctinated a little bit. So I had a very strong feeling about the fairness or the unfairness of history of Poland and then how the Poland is messiah, you went through all of this yourself. Poland as the messiah of the nations, but especially when you can step out a little bit you see it different. But even when living in Poland I have starred to see it a little bit more better. It was more the global perspective. I think the fact as I say, the culture becomes more global and the politics becomes more global. Everything and communication. And that puts things in perspective and not thinking in terms of individuals more than nations. So that you ..I have to be honest , the nation as there is no grievances, no wars, it really doesn't matter, right now. Especially in the EU, growing to something that looks reasonably stable. I think its not a big betrayal of Poland to feel European or global citizen as much as just Polish. In the way , I have to be honest, I would fell less Polish now, I would not stand out for the Poland, just for the sake of it. But yes, I have still sentiment for it, so I would value the point its valid, but not anymore just for the sake of it. So its not better, because its Polish, but its better because its better! (Pawel).*

The postmodern reality consists of plurality of diverse and heterogenous worlds, ways of living and local expressions of symbolic representations. The very versatility of social contexts is due to global transmissions of new ideas, symbols and values. The individual living in such a world needs to define himself anew, constantly asking himself – who am I and who do I want to be? If the person happens to be an immigrant, his choices are based on a broader spectrum of cultural reference. Budakowska uses the



expression of modern nomadism in accordance to the migration flows, which are not necessarily caused by economic reasons alone, and which can be characterized by regular movement of individuals as a way of living. The conditions of postmodernity provide the conditions for decentered multiplicity. It means and creates the possibility for drawing from the factually unlimited sources and possibilities of a variety of choices to construct the identity. It is the identity in the continuous process of becoming; the *borderless identity*.

Kate mentions the need for travelling and the weakened attachment to her home and even nationality:

*Exactly! When I lived in Poland I was much younger. Later, during my period in Holland, I felt precisely like a global citizen: more closer to a trans-national rather than just Polish. Anyway, it is not so easy with this Polishness thing, you know. I have Ukrainian roots. I would say that I am more Ukrainian than Polish because both of my grandfathers were Ukrainian and one of my grandmothers was Ukrainian as well. So, when I really think about it, I don't feel Polish that much but I am kind of attached to my Mazuria. And, for example, when I am in Cracow, I feel a bit of a stranger over there and not as if I was at home. But Mazuria... this is a place where I feel at home. But if I were to find a great job in Cracow, I would eagerly move there because I would do a lot for my dream job. But it is in Mazuria that I feel really great. However, I have always wanted to travel a lot. I have never wanted stay in one place.*

During the period of the last few decades, there has been an observable increase in the international population movements flow in the modern world.

The modern migration flows can be placed among the main factors of the social and cultural changes and transformations in the world. There is a need for a public discourse over the scientific research on the identity in the conditions of time and space compression along with the excavated trans-nationalism.

Pawel stresses that he has lost some of his national identity:

*In a way you could say that I lost some of the national identity if all of those things are important. And they are but we are in that time when, probably its more important to be global citizen. Like we are at the same planet, where everything is global, so if we can live together constructively, regardless of nationality. Even if you can make it, probably it will never happen. Even if the borders disappear, I think it will be a circle, things will merge again. But at this point. Probably I could make a point of following the traditions, but it would be effectively in a way mentally rejecting the fact, that there is a higher level now. We can work on not just making sure that our own tradition goes forward but what is good about the European culture in general, regardless if it comes from France or UK or Italy, or Spain or Poland.*

The increase in “transnationality” and the emergent modern nomadism are producing new and transient subjects, whose degree of reproduction of cultural values may depend on the subjective attributes of the migrating person, and on her preferences as to how to broaden her identity’s contextual referents. I am using the *trans-nationalism* expression in the meaning of the free border crossing and population movements on both economic and cultural levels.

*Nomadism* is based on the free movement, and more or less frequent place and/or work changes, and specific characteristics for the individual’s inclination to constant changes in her life. The changes concern many variables of her life. For example there can be the global elite of people from financial professions, who are constantly travelling.

The phenomena is being expressed also by the growing number of voluntary migrants, wanting to work and submerge in new cultures for periods of time, to visit many places and societies (Budakowska, 2005, p.57). Melucci writes about the need to reshape the identity, and teases the issue in this way:

The pace of social change, the plurality of memberships, and the abundance of possibilities and messages thrust upon the individual all serve to weaken the traditional points of reference on which identity is based. The possibility that an individual will say with conviction and continuity ‘I am x, y, or z’ becomes increasingly uncertain. The need to re-establish continuity of my biography becomes stronger. A ‘homelessness’ of personal identity is created, such that the individual must build and rebuild constantly his or her ‘home’ in the face of changing situations and events. (Melucci, 1989, p.109).

The increase of personal rights importance in democratising societies has led to the rise in human subjectivity and his growing creative values awareness.

At the present the immigrant has, to a much bigger extent, the opportunity for becoming the co-creator of the social reality in the host country.

The identity concept has been for a long time perceived within the framework of the nationality and within the national identity context. Whereas the very characteristic for modern times is the social mobility and the international nets of relations, which violate and break the established order of duplicity of the cultural and national models of the individual identity. The human being intersects throughout her entire life with many more new structures and sets of relations than previous generations. Postmodern society generates more opportunities for plurality and ways of living in multiple worlds of choice, many social contexts, ideas, symbols, and values. It creates the space for the reflexive ‘self’. The immigrant can notice that differences do not have to mean barriers but rather complexity. However it reduces the opportunity for rooting and rather

demands flexibility in identity creation, which becomes renegotiated, adaptable and adjustable to the new perpetually changing circumstances. Katzenstein has proposed to treat the identity concept as variable.

However, the words of one of the respondents contradict with the rest. Peter argues that immigrants should still have a strong feeling of their belonging to a particular country. Our country history and national identity is something that defines us and cultural differences are valid and create the beauty of humanity:

*I am certain, however, that national identity is important. It is very important. If it disappears one day and if globalisation saturates our personalities then I think we would only lose out because nationality and collective memory are things that define us. National identity is like a pillar, a mental pillar for a human being (Peter).*

Peter stresses how important are the roots for each individual and how valid it is to remember one's own country history and cultural outcomes. He believes that global identity is based on individualism and what is more important is the connection with own nation and national identity. This issue will be explored further in next chapter.

## **Chapter Eleven**

### **Implications and Conclusions**

#### **11.1 Recognition, credentialisation and habitus. Students' evaluations of their post degree transitions**

In the methodological chapter, I announced the set of questions, which has been intertwined into the plot of discussions with my interviewees. One of the main issues concerned the transitions students experienced and the layers of transformation. There were three main layers of those transformations: people changing themselves, people impacting on their environment, people being influenced by academia, by professors, by graduation as gaining credentials, and also they have changed their perception about their country of origin.

They have gained much broader views and perspectives about the world around and about their future possibilities.

Most of the respondents had previously planned to come back to Poland after a few months of work and /or after graduation, however when they eventually completed their masters or doctorates, their perception has changed thoroughly. No one of them at the present thinks about going back to Poland. Although some of them are not sure where their final destination point will be, their horizons have broadened and they may be looking for jobs in other English speaking countries.

Mentioning Honneth, and his concept of recognition and the encouragement of significant others in order to create integrated self, with high levels of respect, esteem and authenticity in life, I would argue it is visible in the narratives, how people are growing in their self respect and self esteem and also how wonderful the journeys are, which they have undertaken to find their life paths, occupations that can be enjoyed, and how to even be passionate about the work being done.

It is not that in each case the earnings have increased, but all the respondents agreed that they never regretted the decisions made, and that graduating in Ireland was worth the effort and devotion associated, if they had to really struggle to finance their studies abroad. They have also stressed the help and encouragement from their social groups, friends, relatives and other inspiring people they encountered on their way. It is necessary to mention that these participants already possessed high levels of capital resources. In that sense, they were a privileged group. The study did not pay attention to the impact of migration, higher education and job opportunities for other Polish with

less resources and capacities. It could be questioned if the same conclusions regarding their identity would be applicable to other groups of Polish migrants. There is a broad range of research on marginalized groups of migrants, however they are beyond the scope of this research.

In order to find the answers to the pervading questions, I need to get back to my methodology questions again.

What is the relation between studying abroad and the sense of stabilisation and security in life?

The answers given have clearly pointed out the fundamental correlation between those two variables. It has happened on a number of levels – better self understanding and self awareness, but also the graduation in a foreign language and country and recognition within academia and in the job market. All those factors reciprocally increased visibly their self esteem and trust in their own ability to make decisions, as well as their belief that they are resourceful and powerful agents of their lives.

This self awareness and increased world awareness and market orientation have markedly affected their life stability and sense of security and employability prospects.

A very interesting point raised in the narratives related to their perceptions in regard to their identity. How much do they feel Polish, Irish or global citizens. What other layers of multiplicity of identity have played roles in these young people's transformations and life transitions.

Generally speaking the financial benefits for graduates were relatively modest, however this is the beginning stage in their careers. During the conversations it became clear that they perceive their graduations as a great achievement, confirming and acknowledging their linguistic, occupational and professional preparation and competencies. It is especially important for the immigrants, whose professional competences and language acquisition skills are sometimes contested and even questioned.

The European Union approach to inclusion and diversity, which has enabled foreign students to undertake and complete education in other European countries, can be considered as a big step forward for those young adults in drawing the new shapes of their lives. It is an unbelievable opportunity for the young generation coming from post

communist countries, aware that those doors had been closed for their parents for so many years. It makes them open minded and open to new possibilities and democratic and neo liberal perceptions to life and the world around.

Obtaining the diplomas undoubtedly strengthened their self reliance and perceptions of self worth, and also makes them valued and respected individuals in their new social environment. The broadly understood success in starting and progressing a degree depends on many factors: on interconnected networks and relations, such as family and friends; workmates and work places; and on access programmes and institutional support, such as scholarships or city council grants.

*If I received a job offer in another country, it would only be my partner that I would consider: whether he could go with me. But with regard to Poland, I don't know if I could live there at the moment without feeling alien to the place. It's my family that I miss but if they could, if they agreed to come here, then I would not have to go to Poland even for a holiday. I wouldn't have to go there at all. Nothing draws me to that place (Anne).*

There are more questions posed in the methodology chapter that demand exploration and examination.

Why is the education system in Ireland attractive to foreign students and why have they chosen Ireland?

Although questions posed above might look similar, they concern two different issues.

The aim for this research project was to find some special values and attributes of Irish tertiary education, which has attracted students.

However, by doing qualitative interviews with a small number of respondents, it is not really possible to create any generalisations; but what has been clearly stressed by most of respondents was their accidental, rather than their intentional, decisions of continuing education in Ireland. Although some of the students did make plans to continue education, preferably abroad, the choice of studying in this country has been dictated rather by favourable coincidences and sets of circumstances. To list some of them, I will mention: having friends in Ireland, who would support and introduce them into the job market; having friends who can advise of possible educational possibilities; coming to Ireland for job purposes only, but deciding later to stay and continue education to improve their quality of life.

How were people transforming? What does this transformation encapsulate?

For sure the process of learning and the contact with a foreign environment was a great source of transformation; each new strange situation demands leaving the comfort zone, but also creates the opportunity for progress, in many meanings of this word, and for development on many levels. How were people transforming? Their self confidence has increased considerably, their ability to cope with multiple tasks, their employability and market orientation has expanded, but also graduation and the time spent abroad has noticeably affected their identity.

It is hard to assess if graduation alone has changed people; probably it was one of several variables influencing the transformation, but was maybe the major one. But the time spent in college has also been the time of full or part time work in Ireland, time of meeting new people and binding new friendships, dating and starting relationships, time of travelling and adjusting to a new culture and new customs. All of the factors mentioned above had a big impact on the personalities and perceptions of my respondents. They have all agreed to be different people in comparison to those leaving Poland a few years earlier. It would be too simplistic to claim that higher education alone has caused all those changes.

## **11.2 Why is the education system in Ireland attractive to foreign students?**

The analysis of the data collected allows only to explore this question in regard to Polish students and those coming from post communist countries.

The issue raised in each narrative was the comparison between Polish and Irish systems of tertiary education. As Ewa Kurantowicz and Adrianna Nizinska point out in their analysis of student data in PRILHE project that:

“ Polish academic circles are ones of the most difficult to introduce changes in daily practices of educating students, which results more from the internal mission (vocation) of these circles to ‘be critical’ towards external changes than from the routine in daily teaching practices.” In the further part of this article both authors write about the situation in the politechnical university in Wrocław and the university of Wrocław, which are quoted below, because those words strongly correlate with the opinions given by my respondents coming from other universities in both small and well developed towns in Poland:

both politechnical university and university of Wrocław are huge institutions, both managed in a rather oldfashioned way, so very often lack of information and miscommunication is seen as a serious constrain, although they both employing

many clerks and administrators. There is a lot of procedures, they're complicated and not always coherent with other procedure, responsibility is diffused and fragmented between departments and position.

Each one of my interviewees complained the excessively expanded system of administration in Polish universities with clerks not being helpful but rather creating more procedures and problems to overcome for students.

The Irish universities in comparison present themselves markedly well. The data gathered in the research provided by T Fleming, A Loxley, A Kenny and F Finnegan of *Life Experiences of Mature Students in HE institutions* suggests that access policies and initiatives have been recently very successful in supporting non-traditional, including immigrant, students enrolled in Irish tertiary education. My respondents had very positive impressions about the support given by the institutions.

*Regarding my studying in Poland, every time I used to return home after lectures, I would have this impression that I hadn't learned anything, hadn't accomplished anything, that it was all a waste of time. I hadn't felt appreciated there (Anne).*

That leads us to the collective memory theme and the remnants of old ideology in Polish tertiary education.

### **11.3 Collective memory in Polish society. What role does the collective memory, transmitted through generations, play in Polish society?**

How to accept that what is obvious to us may not be so for others? How many ways, on how many levels, do we discover the inaccessibility of another mind. And this makes for unease: if behind the words uttered in conversation lies another perception, another wisdom, then the words, although the same, must connote something different. Anyone who has ever taught in a school or a university knows it from experience – when casually invoking an unfamiliar name, or a Greek or Latin phrase which must be glossed before it can be understood. But such gaps in understanding, owing to a greater or lesser degree of literacy, are not the most grievous. We are beholden to our times, above all to the time of our youth; when that time turns out to be as remote and exotic for succeeding generations as the age of Philip the Fair, then our muteness begin to really press: how, in what words, to transmit the things witnessed, felt, things that for us are endowed with a horrifying concreteness? (Miłosz, 1985, p.9).

Each nation possesses its own history and culture. The members of each particular society share the same beliefs and know the same stories passed from one generation to another. It creates the specific frame of reference and forms of understanding. It is very important to many people. Peter has stated how important are the roots for each



individual and how valid it is to remember one's own country history and cultural outcomes. He says that the connection with own nation and national identity is a very important layer of humanity, and identifying yourself with a global citizen is like losing the part of yourself.

*Global identity is founded on humanism and individualism. The only thing that connects us all is the fact that we are human, all of us. And yes, this is what is common to us all and what the foundation of everything is. But nationality is built on top of this. Human beings have this basis and always will but they also need this other layer of nationality. And you may have it or you may not. But if you don't have it, you are losing out. Culture and nationality are things that take ages to build and define. I am not proud of the fact that Alexander the Great conquered half of the world. This just does not concern me had Alexander been Polish, however, I would be thinking otherwise. So, a natural part of a human is to be a member of society. The human being is a social being. When he doesn't have his nationality and anything to identify with, it is as if he is losing a part of himself. This is anthropology and it is natural for humans. It is like with music and the arts. Someone who is able to appreciate music and art is delighted and full of wonder at them but a person who cannot does not even realize how much he is losing out on (Peter).*

Each person from my respondents went through a specific transformation, characteristic for herself only. Their biographies are rich repositories of knowledge, however readable only while applying the whole variety of lenses, of frames of reference and points of view. Each life is embedded in richness of experiences and powers affecting the self formation. The researcher can not consider one's life without its socio-cultural, historical, psychological and political contexts. The narrative unfolds in the process of open conversation, showing sometimes exciting or surprising turns and twists of life. The narrative as well as biography is evolving; it is in the very process of becoming.

All my respondents belong to the generation, who consciously experienced the transformation of 1989, forming new types of identities, different to their parents. They apply new perceptions of democracy to everyday life.

Pawel mentions how his approach to tradition has changed after the longer stay in Ireland:

*It was a problem in my house. It was traditions because everyone else does it the same way. Like my home, it was a little bit, I don't want to use the word pointless. But a little bit forced. It wasn't natural. So it was small. And I am not particularly good at doing things that I don't see natural. I see the value of it. But just the way I was raised I don't really have this deep need to do things for the sake of tradition. So, in this sense I am not a good person to keep traditions going. I am aware of them, I don't dislike them, I wouldn't reject them, but if I stayed here for a long time, I wouldn't think it a problem to not*

*have 'makowiec' (poppy seed cake) or whatever else is considered traditional on a Christmas Eve dinner table (Pawel).*

All my respondents stressed the benefits they gained from the studies period. They meant not only getting the diploma but also the experience related to the graduation and university attendance. The friendship and old boys' ties were the themes mentioned on a few occasions. Those participants already possessed strong social and educational capital according to Bourdieu's theory, as powerful resources in market-driven world.

The recurring theme in every interview, however, I need to mention here: there was no question in the interviews that addressed the gap between Polish and Irish universities in their approaches to students. Some students stress the objective institutional attitude towards them at the Polish universities in comparison to the support and more collaborative approach in Ireland. There are still the remnants of the old ideology in Polish HE, according to the respondents. There are many office workers who seem to belong to the generation of 'real socialism'. This generation, as Ewa Kurantowicz remarks, was 'socialised by state educational institutions', overpowered by centralist management, 'binding ideology and the language of socialist propaganda'. People mention waiting in endless queues for dealing with any formalities, being treated like applicants or petitioners instead of partners for the discussion. Another issue raised is the feeling of helplessness and unawareness of the labour market and how to find himself in it. The unpleasant experiences with administrative staff at the university settings especially are still very vivid in the narrators' memories. The stories unfold sometimes complaints about some situations people had to face in Polish reality, but on other occasions they are presented in a humorous manner, as the way of coping positively with the past. We have coined the expression of 'absurdism as inseparable form of the Polish reality' to describe some events. It could be ranked as PRL everyday life reality that is left in collective memory:

*I wasn't sure if I would end up in Ireland. But to be honest, I did not plan on going back to Poland either. One of the reasons for this, small at the time, was that I think I didn't really fit in with the rigid academic structure in Poland. There was too much politics in academic circles, too much old politics from the communist era and the new – I don't even know how to call it. I found it easier here, more relaxed, (Peter).*

Polish people like to laugh at some historical occurrences, recalling e.g. two days queuing in front of the butcher's to buy fresh meat, in the forms of jokes, comedies and

stories being told. However, those films can be understood within the specific culture, the Eastern European one. A good example is the accomplished Polish comedy ‘Seksmisja’ (Sex-mission), which appears to be very funny to people knowing socialist reality but very unclear for Irish friends. At that stage the research revealed another dimension of cultural divergence, observable in the educational field.

*When I am with my Irish peers, I try to conform somehow to their culture. They think that Poles are a bit too direct or straightforward. But that's ok with me, I mean, I feel quite comfortable and natural around them but I know that there are some things that are not fully understandable to them. And looking at this from another perspective, I know I cannot understand all the things they say, you know, those cultural references. I know, however, much more now about this country and its culture and politics. I have an interest in it, but to give you an example about what I'm talking about: the Sex-mission movie has been translated into English. But they cannot grasp it. They don't understand it and it is not funny for them at all (Kate).*

When talking about Honneth's sensitising concept of recognition, explored in the Conceptual framework, we cannot investigate and examine it only from the psycho-social perspective. The three differentiated recognition orders in contemporary society, that Honneth is so broadly and comprehensively describing, are crucial to understanding the dynamics and history of capitalism and modern times (Fleming, Finnegan, May, 2011). Going further in this discussion, tertiary education is the place which enables students to build self-esteem through the knowledge and awareness that their work is socially valued (Honneth in Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p.161). It is the experience of being honoured by the community for the person's contribution through work. Work can be understood here not only as paid occupation but also as non-monetary activity in society, including non-compulsory education. It is especially important for young people coming from the previous political system, which strongly valued voluntary and non-monetary work for the society. It is one of the concepts which has been explored in the data analysis, creating a framework for understanding student experience in relation to their identity, agency, transitions and perceptions.

A recurring theme in student interviews was the issue of confidence. The phenomenon has many faces. Firstly it is worth pointing out that starting the course had been driven by the inspiration taken from someone from the individual's surroundings and that it demanded some confidence to come to the university. While levels of confidence at the beginning of course varied, some students experienced doubts about their capability as

they progressed. One of them dropped out after a year, to start again another course after a couple of months. This compares with studies provided by the international team on experiences of non-traditional learners in HE (RANLHE), where almost all students have experienced doubts, feeling inadequate, or 'not good enough' to be at university. But this difference is strongly linked with the fact they were mature students, feeling poorly educated.

#### **11.4 The construction of learner identity. Reinforcements and limitations**

In the Analysis of Student Data in the RANLHE report made by Polish team, there are factors identified which can both construct or limit the non traditional students' progress in HE. Some of them became useful for this research purposes.

Very often there are personal motives lying behind the decision of engaging in higher education. University becomes then the transitional space for personal change. It usually means for people coming from a foreign country the change in the life path, as gaining the validation for their job qualifications or moving from their firstly-obtained job (usually in childminding, cleaning or as a sales assistant) to more qualified positions.

Another factor taken into consideration is the experience from the initial education. This one for many non traditional adult students was usually bad experience, including conflicts with teachers, institutions and being labelled as a 'bad' or 'difficult' student. This, however, does not apply to immigrant students taking part in the thesis research. All of them had extremely good experiences in initial education, obtaining in most cases excellent marks, and had been called 'top' students. I believe, this is one of their most influencing motivations to continue studying abroad. It was the experience, which has encouraged them to educate in Ireland.

The consecutive important factor in the RANLHE report was adaptiveness to a new situation, which demands social and cognitive skills. It correlates to some extent with the age of interviewees, as younger people are much more adaptive to any new situation. The other important issue is the language, as some of the students have already come with very high language proficiency and that has only strengthened their confidence and the ability to adjust to new demands and has influenced their social skills obviously. The quality of relations with professors at the university was another

very contributing factor to the overall progress, and provided a great deal of support during the time of transition.

Another important factor, mentioned already is self-esteem and perception of one's capability to manage in a new, challenging situation, which is new social context and new curriculum. This factor was considered as motivational as well. The comparison of the Polish and Irish academic settings has put the Irish educational system in a very good light and highlights some weaknesses in Polish academia. In the RANLHE report there are also institutional barriers and lack of knowledge on 'how things work' at the university, which can be obstacles in both countries. Poles studying in Ireland have adjusted quite fluently to the new strange system, however the knowledge about the institution and regulations have been obtained from many sources, including of course the university itself, but to a big extent also colleagues, friends, and other social networks of support.

As had been mentioned in a few occasions above, each one of the interviewees has benefited greatly from entering higher education. I use the word entering as three of the respondents are still continuing education but are also stressing it as a very important factor in their life and career. Firstly the very visible point made by students is their growth of personal agency and the feeling that they are in control of their lives. It is pointed out when talking about the changes in life paths and future plans. Even the very fact that they all wanted, or at least didn't exclude, getting back to Poland when starting their adventure in Ireland and now do not even think about living in their country of origin gives a very clear statement about the changing perception. There are also new doors opened and new life possibilities, compared to what getting back 'home' may offer. A very noticeable feature is general personal development and courage to stand and advocate for their interests. They are much more brave in applying for new work positions, even when it demands moving to another country, like Singapore.

It is not a new or revealing statement to say that going through higher education creates more reflexive and critical individuals. The narratives have showed those new changing identities of some learners, whether they agreed it happened due to the college learning process or the time they have spent in Ireland, living their lives, which is an important learning process as well.

To summarise, many of the described benefits agreed with the findings from the RANLHE project and, as the Polish team finalised the analysis, those advantages have

not resulted strictly from graduating only. They simply come from experiencing HE, and even when some students declared the only instrumental motivation, changes were present, and altering young people's perceptions, attitudes and social skills (Kurantowicz, Nizinska, RANLHE, Student Report).

## 11.5 Implications

A journey is much like a river, beginning with individual droplets of water that link with each other and feed into streams that eventually become great rivers and oceans. Without these small droplets, the rivers would run dry and the oceans vanish. We are much like droplets of water: The paths we take both individually and collectively will influence others and change the future.

Educational change, like a river, will take time to reshape the landscape. Meaningful change seems to become less daunting when we look at one child, one classroom, and one school at a time. As with droplets of rain, it is the linking together that brings about a significant reshaping (Rogers in Rogers & Freiberg, 1994, p.).

I believe that the problem described in the thesis, concerns to some extent, each individual. We are all travellers through life looking for a better and safer future. We are all living in the condition of deep worry and insecurity about our life and the lives of our children. People described in the thesis are not some abstract, irrelevant social group – but firstly, they constitute strong groups in Irish society, they represent many other immigrants with their wants, hopes, needs and values. Secondly, they belong to a specific group of well educated elite of the European society in general. There are many analogies which can be traced to Irish professionals who were and are migrating abroad to continue their education and/or work abroad, especially now in the time of the present recession. Ireland and Poland went through the big economic, social and political transformations during the last decade, and are facing huge changes at the present.

There are transformations in the Educational Sectors in both countries, and EU directives and guidelines in accordance to the educational system and its adjustment to a growing number of non traditional students, to diversity and integration, social inclusion and migration issues.

Along with the collapse of the welfare state institutions, where identity was built systematically following the ready to use blueprint, came technological development, capitalism and flexibility of employment, a sense of a global mixing of cultures, people live in a time of perpetual present and perpetual change.

As in the findings, students have noticed the change in their sense of Polishness. Those people still identify themselves with nationality, not in a patriotic sense but rather in the appreciation of their cultural inheritance and roots. What is valid here is that the feeling of being suspended in between and not belonging anywhere, might give some indication into the insight of how Irish immigrants may feel abroad. The change in national identification can be caused not only by transitions in life but the forces of globalisation which diminishes the national borders and values diversity and multiculturalism as something good and beneficial. Universities can create a 'safer space' for life transitions (West, 1996). The recognition gained in and through the world of academia, as 'significant others' is important and often necessary to create healthy life strategies and self-esteem.

This thesis contains the critique of neo-liberal, free market economy and its influence over here in Ireland. To know the mechanisms hidden behind the democratic slogans is liberating and empowering to create the reality consistent with expectations of its beneficiaries.

The work addressed also some critique of the overbuilt bureaucratic system of administration in Polish universities, as the possible remnants of the old ideology. This is the place where change needs to be implemented and gradually is being introduced in order for Poland to keep pace with developing a higher education institution in Western Europe. The dissertation implicates also, that economic purposes although are valid for universities, are not and should not be the only important ones.

Friedman in his *The World is Flat*, points out that in 'globalization, individuals have to think globally to thrive, or at least survive. This requires not only a new level of technical skills but also a certain mental flexibility, self-motivation, and psychological mobility' (Friedman, 2010, p.276). Diversity, internationality and students mobility are important factors impacting on universities. There is a need to recognize that the nature and purpose of modern universities has been changed by globalisation.

One of the major forces influencing higher education today is inevitably a cluster of features that obviously signals a change in the scope of the relevant communities of reference, with the national more and more being supplanted by the international. The obvious aspect of this is increased mobility of students (Collini, 2012, p.16).

Young people are gaining mobility as a result of the Bologna process and national regulation regarding the process of study and employability. They are also having the ability to influence the changes within HE institutions, which are becoming, through the

EU policies, more willing to listen to students' needs and allowing them to articulate their perceptions. This process can make the HE institutions more open to transformation in the nearer future. The new generation is transforming not only themselves, but they are the future for society, becoming the active agents of changes introduced on many levels, also on the institutional levels.

Another important factor discussed here was reflexivity and life politics as a way of adapting to new problems in uncertain circumstances. Consciousness of an accelerated pace of social and economic change appears to be one of the defining characteristics of contemporary reflection (Collini, 2012).

In complex societies knowledge is increasingly reflexive. It is no longer merely a question of learning, but of learning to learn, i.e. of exercising control over cognitive and motivational processes and adapting them to new problems. Individuals find themselves involved in a plurality of memberships arising from the multiplication of social positions, associative networks, and reference groups. Entry to and exit from these different systems of membership is much quicker and more frequent than before, and the amount of time invested in each of them is reduced (Melucci, 1989, p.108).

It is always important to hear the voices of young people, of immigrants and to see their different perspectives. What are universities for? As Collini remarks universities are 'enabling individuals to place themselves in relation to the world, and especially to time' (Collini, 2012, p.198). There are more and more universities and their role changes accordingly. The population of students has changed considerably. Higher Education similarly to other institutions is subject to all of the processes of globalization. To know those changes, to be able to draw the new characteristics of universities is to see them from the perspective of their beneficiaries, the new cohort of non-traditional and immigrant students.

With the help and encouragement of significant others, education can be used to create more meaning, authenticity and agency within a life. It can be a resource, emotionally and intellectually to help participants to move beyond fragments.

Education is a supportive space during periods of change and uncertainty. For students, especially non traditional and migrant ones graduation relates to: acquisition of knowledge and credentials marked as employability outcomes, their language proficiency acquisition recognized, recognition of significant others, which further led to higher self-esteem, increased authenticity and agency in life, their self-recognition. Linden West research on adults motivation to learn in HE setting leads him to conclusion that it is often the struggle for more authentic selfhood (West, 1996).



For students, all the changes and transitions happened at the time when they were young and open for reflection and the influence of others as well, as critical assessment of their own core beliefs and internal structures

Those students perception can help to create more responsive to the cultural diversity system of HE. To know their needs – is to be able to create a more supportive learning culture/space

Education policy previously seen as national prerogative only – now is more perceived as an instrument for creating a united Europe

Major universities are complex organisms, fostering an extraordinary variety of intellectual, scientific and cultural activity, and the significance and value of much that goes on within them cannot be restricted to a single national framework or to the present generation. They have become an important medium – perhaps the single most important institutional medium – for conserving, understanding, extending, and handing on to subsequent generations the intellectual, scientific, and artistic heritage of mankind. In thinking about the conditions necessary for their flourishing, we should not, therefore, take too short-term or too purely local view (Collini, 2012, p. 198).

The findings enable others to understand each other better and to empathise with the people in transition, whether they are immigrants, adult students or people changing their life career.

## 11.6 Conclusions

There is no means of testing which decision is better, because there is no basis for comparison. We live everything as it comes, without warning, like an actor going on cold. And what can life be worth if the first rehearsal for life is life itself? That is why life is always like a sketch. No, “sketch” is not quite the word, because a sketch is an outline of something, the groundwork for a picture, whereas the sketch that is our life is a sketch for nothing, an outline with no picture (Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, 1984, p.8).

As higher education institutions begin to engage with a greater range of students, it is increasingly important that they take account of the learning biographies, narratives and attitudes of non-traditional students. There is a valid knowledge for universities in the voices of these learners, to embrace their perspectives, their learning experiences,

motivations and needs. They need to listen to those voices in order to adjust (culturally and structurally) to a more diverse population of students. What drives students in higher education, what they want from universities, are important questions in the development of a more responsive and culturally diverse system of higher education. The question of motivation seems to be of major importance in recent times. As Linden West points out there are reasons we should investigate a student's motivation in higher education to be able to create a more responsive and culturally diverse educational system, also to develop more supportive, learning culture. (West, 1996, preface, ix). Education should not be perceived in terms of a simple linear progression towards particular goals, e.g.: material security or personal agency, as many learners show their experience fragmentary, in which self is divided between privacy (private life) and public sphere (the world of academia) , between 'experiential ways of knowing' , which is personal, subjective and between 'academic knowledge'(West, 1996, preface). It strongly connects with the work of such philosophers as Fromm or Bauman, who write about fragmentation of human life and experience and there are human stories , which can reveal , how much education may offer a supportive space during periods of change and uncertainty.

Carl Rogers asks what is the main meaning of the education:

What are we striving for? Why is it we desire the best (however we define that term) in family life, in the school, in the university, in the community? It is, I believe, because we hope to develop the best of human beings. But rarely do we give explicit thought to the exact meaning of this goal. What sort of human being we wish to grow? (Rogers in Rogers & Freiberg, 1994, p.197)

The answers given by many theorists and students themselves may vary, however one of the main goals of education and development of human being is to become the fully functioning person on all desired levels. As the social being, on the personal, intellectual and emotional levels. To be economically secure. Rogers would add also to be 'the person open to experience, existential living and trusting self'.

This thesis described narratives of young people, who are migrating, graduating abroad and sharing their experiences and perceptions.

Their comments suggest that they feel less Polish, that they lost the part of their Polishness. They are open to new perspectives and possibilities, they take challenges

and risks and travel. Some of them already lived abroad, before their move to Ireland. Suzanne spent one year in Holland, Peter lived in France and Kate moved to Singapore. The feeling of losing some Polishness declared by those people and their resistance to come back to the country is puzzling. It puzzles especially when confronted with the emigrational history of Poles, Irishmen and other nationalities. The previous generations felt strong connections to their country, in terms of place, people and culture. They were homesick, while on exile, experiencing everlasting, all-embracing, burning nostalgia for the home country.

Ireland suffered twice from the Great Famine (1740-1741, 1845-1849, ), with millions of its people seeking new homes and survival on other continents (USA, Australia, Canada and other). Those who travelled had a strong sense of being Irish and their descents feel connections with their countries of origin. 'Far away fields are greener but Irishness runs deep', as Neil Godwin names it in Irish Times blog on-line<sup>16</sup>.

Some of their descendants are migrating back to Ireland. Wherever they are, they are cultivating their Irish customs and habits. There is American-Irish culture in the USA.

What has happened to young Polish emigrants? The data collected is sufficient for the thesis purposes but inadequate to make generalisations. It would be interesting to broaden the research to a bigger number of respondents and include Irish students migrating to Australia and other countries. There is another flux in migration of young Irish students to Australia, New Zealand, America, Asia, as the society is facing big recession at the moment. It would be very interesting to come back to those people in a few, maybe 10, years time and ask them the same questions again. How would their perception change during that time? How would they see and evaluate themselves?

There are some interviews with contemporary Irish emigrants in the Irish Times. *'Do I miss Ireland? Will I return some time in the future? The answer to both questions, this time around, is no. Why? Because I can't see Irish society changing for the better.'* Another quotation from Irish Times<sup>17</sup> (Kevin Ruairi). It is an interesting point made here, as it seems that, regardless of the nationality, the approach to emigration and homesickness has changed.

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<sup>16</sup> Source: <http://www.irishtimes.com/blogs/generationemigration/2012/01/10/far-away-fields-are-greener-but-irishness-runs-deep/>

<sup>17</sup> Source: <http://www.irishtimes.com/blogs/generationemigration/2012/01/23/when-will-ireland-grow-up/>

Taking into consideration the Conceptual Framework and the work of authors the thesis is supported with and their sensitising concepts, the attitudes and experiences of non-traditional students and emigrants can be scrutinized and examined.

Firstly globalisation and neo-liberal ideology, as Lynch (Lynch in Healy, Reynolds & Collins, 2006) noticed accurately, permeates into hearts and minds of people, changing their perspectives and creating consumers out of them. This is the hidden agenda of capitalist free market ideology, which the contemporary generation is being bombarded with on every level of their lives mostly through the media. The change in perception and worldview takes place on some unconscious level. People treat education and the world around in terms of commodities to purchase. There is no place for national sentiments in neo-liberal capitalism. What matters is measurable progress and effectiveness at work. Although neoliberalism plays important role in human life, it remains in background of my analysis and is not fully explored in terms of its relationship to these migrant experiences. It gives place to Bauman's theories as the main lenses through which those experiences are being assessed. However as has been stressed in conceptual framework, there are limitations to Bauman's theory, as it lacks applicable solutions to cope with our ever-changing, fast moving, liquid world.

Other theories help to illuminate possible strategies helpful in managing the complexity of life, like social and economic capital of Bourdieu, which empowers the individual and liberates him to some extent, in his struggle for a decent life. The concept of recognition by Honneth, which seems to be essential for self-worth and self-development has been stressed by many participants in this research, as well as marked as a key point in the findings of projects mentioned in literature review.

Suzanne explains that everybody feels less connected to his native land and temporary stay country as they need to adjust to changing economic markets and travel for work purposes. On the other side the narratives evolve with time and people start to mention the need for rooting and stabilization. *I feel so uprooted '(bezkorzena)'*, states Kate. One of the last interviews with Peter has brought up the theme of belonging and nationality as very important for self-creation and existence in general. Peter believes that 'global identity' does not exist, as the person who does not belong to any nation, who does not value her heritage, such person loses a huge part of herself, her own identity. We are strongly connected with our nationalities and history and this fact cannot be omitted. Indeed, all those statements do not contradict each other, if analysed through the lenses of sensitising concepts and theories.

One of the important issues is the above mentioned neo-liberal capitalism and its free market economy, which permeates the whole life of contemporary men. He becomes both consumer and commodity (Bauman, 1998). This approach pervades his identity, as survival in the fast changing and highly unpredictable surroundings depends on the ability to avoid being fixed and connected, and instead becoming someone on the move and, someone drifting with no obligations. Another issue is the influence of globalising tendencies and multiplicity of cultures, symbols, languages and meanings bombarding individuals through the media and information technology. Globalisation is connected with time and space compression. The disembedding and interconnectedness as certain characteristics of globalisation seem to affect human being and his renegotiation of himself. Limiting oneself only to the immediate locality is a disadvantage; openness means survival and development. The increased interconnectedness results in cultural hybridity and cosmopolitanism (Eriksen, 2001). The access to knowledge and variety of codes, symbols and cultural modes with information technology as a driving force offers unlimited possibilities of choice to the individual. The choices concern the living style, home, job, education and even identity. Multiplicity of choices offered does not make people eternally happy. On the contrary, it leads to confusion, anxiety and fragmentation, or using Fromm's expression to the 'fear of freedom'. People are becoming partly everything, and indeed nothing in particular. Surprise and the unexpected are inevitable aspects of a realm of freedom, where preconditions have little part to play. People's lives are parts of a 'story-in-the-making', of discovering who they might become (Greene, 1994, p.501).

Honneth's sensitizing concept of recognition sheds more light on students' experiences. Graduation abroad gives them credentials in another country but also it provides a deep sense of recognition. Social recognition leads to increased self esteem and self realization, as well as to the sense of identification with new social group. They feel familiarity with the place, they are recognized, respected and trusted. Another thing is identification with the world of academia and student life ('studenthood' according to Bloomer) and eventually with the work place. Recognition is inseparable with connectedness and familiarity. Some students mentioned the sense of estrangement in the context of Poland. What has been familiar and close, is now seen through the newly acquired perceptions and changed referencing points, and becomes strange and unfamiliar. Maybe there is a sense of disappointment with own country, as some respondents mentioned that Poland has nothing to offer them anymore, in terms of

living standards. In this sense the foreign country offering better life conditions and recognition becomes more familiar.

However, to follow the thoughts of Capra, we are all living in the global net of interconnectedness; are creating the one big organism as the whole. 'The new paradigm may be called a holistic worldview, seeing the world as an integral whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts' (Capra, 1996, p.3).

The universe is no longer seen as a machine, made up of multitude of objects but has to be pictured as one indivisible, dynamic whole whose parts are essentially interrelated and can be understood only as patterns of cosmic process (Capra, 1982, p.66).

People cannot close themselves in their nationalities and localities, because it limits their potential and growth. In this sense interviewees feel less Polish but rather globally interconnected. To be a whole means also the unity and indissolubility of the past, present and future. In this meaning it is true, what Peter said, that one cannot forget his nation history and cultural roots. There is a big collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992, Olick, 2007, Assman, 2005) and it has its traces in each individual. This memory is an inherent part of people and is imprinted in their identity. What was interesting, during the later interviews, the older of the students were more often mentioning the need for stabilization and cultivating some Polish traditions. Maybe then, the global or borderless identity is only one of many facets of fragmented identity of the postmodern person. As the whole this identity is fragmented and difficult to grasp, almost liquid, as liquid is the postmodern reality.

*'I answered a 'no' earlier to my own question, if I missed Ireland. That's not strictly true. Sometimes I think about the people I've known a long time, the countryside, the music and the history of the place, and I do pine for it. A recent enjoyable encounter with another Gaeilgeoir here in London made me realise that there is a part of me that will always remain Irish' (Kevin Ruairi, quoted earlier).*

There are some excerpts from American and Polish literature in the thesis, picturing the feelings associated with the loneliness when abroad and longing for the home country, experienced by the previous generations of migrants. Engagement with literature, even in scientific work, is always of benefit, as Greene (1979, p.133) states, 'the lived world can be illuminated and enlarged through engagements with imaginary worlds'. She talks about encounters with 'imaginative literature as they advance the search for meaning that goes on throughout life' (ibid.).

A great amount of work has been done about emigration and its correlation with postmodernism. There is also a lot more to be done on changing perspectives, new forms of higher education and growing numbers of non-traditional and migrant students in Ireland. There is always the possibility to see more, when ‘seeking the kind of repleteness of interpretation that is only achieved when works are read from multiple perspectives’ (Greene, 1993). The society is changing and progress in many areas of life accelerates. The work presented above was not meant to give ready and simple answers but to present diverse perspectives. While engaging with the world of diverse voices, the same phenomena may look different and seems to be always fluid, always in process, as life itself. As Greene captured it:

‘I make this a tale of a search for meaning while walking the tightrope, trying – in a world without benchmarks – to keep moving, to keep asking, to keep trying to create identity’ (Greene, 1993).

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# **Appendix I**

## **The research questions**

I have began my research with interrogating the learning and transition processes in my respondents lives, through posing the following questions:

1. What is your background? Was there tradition in your family of working or studying abroad?
2. Did you know someone in Ireland in the time, you decided to move here?
3. Why have you chosen Ireland as your destination country?
4. Why have you chosen this particular course?
5. How do you consider your study today. How can you evaluate it from the perspective of employability, language acquisition, self worth, self development, cultural understanding, friendship.
6. Was it your decision, did someone influenced/encouraged you?
7. Who are you now? How can you define yourself? Can you make the comparison between the person you were, when leaving Poland, and the person you are now? What do you consider had the major impact on the changes you are noticing within yourself?
8. What is the experience from your student hood that you can recall, that became imprinted in your memory? Was it good or bad experience? Did it mark any turning point in your life?
9. What idea did you have about Ireland before coming here? How can you picture it?
10. How did it change since then? How can you see Ireland now?
11. Is this your place of destination? Can you imagine yourself living here in 10- 20 years?
12. Do you miss Poland? Do you feel Polish? Do you feel connected with/responsible for Poland?
13. What is most important in life from your perspective?
14. What have you learned about yourself during those years in Ireland?

## Appendix II

Polish minority as non-traditional students in HE in Ireland. Motivations, experience, perspectives.

A Study being undertaken by Kamila Sobiesiak – in the Education Department at the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

Notes of guidance for interviewees and conditions of use form,

1. This particular research project is concerned to understand the motivation and an impact on life stability of Polish minority students getting their degree in Ireland. The methodology involves conducting a series of interviews over a period of time with a view to understanding participation in learning, and motivation more generally, in the total context of a person's life history and current circumstances.
2. I am conducting interviews with eight students from a number of institutions. The students have been chosen from Polish people continuing their education in Irish higher education settings.
3. Given the potentially sensitive nature of the material, you have an absolute right to refuse to answer any questions asked as well as to withdraw from the research at any stage. I will be careful not to push you in directions you do not wish to go.
4. You have the right to withdraw retrospectively any consent given and to require that your data, including recordings, be destroyed. Obviously, it is important for the researchers to know your position as soon as possible after reading transcripts. Refusal or withdrawal of consent would normally therefore be within two weeks of receiving a copy of the transcript.
5. Confidentiality is the key issue. I will provide each interviewee with a conditions for use form which will allow you to preserve anonymity if you so wish. As a general rule the material is to be used for research purposes only (unless prior permission has been obtained, for example to use tapes in teaching). I will take all steps, if this is what you desire, to preserve your anonymity in the presentation of personal narratives.
6. Each of you will be given transcripts of your interviews and, if you wish, a copy of your tapes. You may edit the transcripts as you see fit and I would like you to return the final form of all transcripts two weeks after the final interview in the stamped, addressed envelope provided. The final edited versions of the transcripts and all the tapes will be kept with me. Apart from me and my supervisor, any other access will be with your permission only. I will also try to arrange at least one event to which all participants in the project are invited, which will provide you with the opportunity to discuss and criticize my findings and analysis of motivation.
7. In general terms these procedures are informed by the British Psychological Society's Statement of Ethical Principles which are set in January 1993 edition of *The Psychologist*.
8. Thank you for your help in and contribution to our research.

Sources used as template:

1. National University of Ireland Maynooth. University Policy Documents on Ethics in Research. 2. West L. (1996) *Beyond Fragments, Adults, Motivation and Higher Education. A Biographical Analysis*. SRP Ltd. Exeter, Great Britain

## Appendix III

Kamila Sobiesiak

### POLISH STUDENTS IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION SETTINGS MOTIVATION CONDITIONS OF USE FORM

1. I agree to the material on tape and transcript being used for research purposes as part of the above project, subject to the specific conditions specified in the notes of guidance attached to this form. I understand access to it is restricted to Kamila Sobiesiak and Rose Malone, unless specific, additional agreement is obtained.
2. I request/do not request (delete as appropriate) that my anonymity is preserved in the use of the material via the use of pseudonyms, etc.
3. Any other comments

Signed

Name

Address and telephone number

Date

Sources used as template:

1. National University of Ireland Maynooth. University Policy Documents on Ethics in Research.
2. West L. (1996) *Beyond Fragments, Adults, Motivation and Higher Education. A Biographical Analysis*. SRP Ltd. Exeter, Great Britain

## Appendix IV

Interview with Anne, our second meeting

March 14th 2010

and quiet coffee shop in the city centre.

Mała kawiarenka w centrum miasta...moje kilkuminutowe wprowadzenie....

...

*...i on pisze o tym, że ludzie, którzy żyli w krajach totalitarnych, socjalizmie, komunizmie, nie mieli wolności osobistej ale mieli poczucie bezpieczeństwa, ponieważ państwo było państwem opiekuńczym. Czyli mieli pracę do końca, wszyscy mieli warunki bytu zapewnione. Nie wolno się było wychylać, ale takie podstawowe poczucie bezpieczeństwa było. Polska przeszła ogromną transformację ustrojową i w dzisiejszych czasach jest ogromna wolność jednostki kosztem braku poczucia bezpieczeństwa. Ciągłe musisz włączyć o tę pracę, o utrzymanie się w tej pracy. Ludzie pięćdziesięcioletni są zwalniani, nie mogą utrzymać dłużej swoich stanowisk, nie wiedzą co dalej robić. Jest ciągła potrzeba podnoszenia swoich kwalifikacji. Czy jest to lepsze, czy jest to gorsze, zastanawiają się nad tym filozofowie. Moja praca dotyczy również problemu tożsamości. Mówi o tym jak zmienia się nasza tożsamość. O tym czy czujemy się nadal Polakami, czy czujemy się bardziej obywatelami międzynarodowymi. Bauman używa wyrażenia 'kultura włóczęgów', czyli ludzi którzy nie czują się przywiązani do jednego miejsca, którzy są w takim miejscu, w którym jest im akurat najbardziej wygodnie, które spełnia w danym momencie ich potrzeby.*

- Śmieszna sprawa, bo podobną pracę pisałam licencjacką. Pisałam o tych programach edukacyjnych, tych unijnych i jak one wpływają później na jednostkę. Później pisałam jak to wpłynęło na życie tych osób, jak to zmieniło ich postrzeganie świata. Tylko bardziej musiałam to pisać na psychologię bardziej, trochę antropologię. Był ten aspekt psychologiczny.

- *To bardzo ciekawe*

- Znam chłopaczka, który jest Australijczykiem, Autralijczyko-Polakiem. Jego rodzice byli Polakami. Przyjechał na studia do Polski, bo stwierdził że chce studiować w Polsce. On jest filozofem, kończył filozofię w Polsce. On mówił że się strasznie w Polsce studiowało. On po dwóch latach przerwał, pojechał do Irlandii, bo musiał odpocząć, bo on po tym studiowaniu w Polsce. To nawet nie chodzi o to że stresujące doświadczenie, ale to jak się ludzie odnoszą do tych studentów.

-*Ty też masz takie odczucia, bo robiłaś licencjat w Polsce, tylko może on nie dał Ci jeszcze takiego wglądu, bo masz porównanie, bo studiowałaś i w Polsce i w Irlandii.*

- To znaczy tak, wydaje mi się że to zależy wszystko od wydziału. Słyszałam o takich wydziałach, że jak wchodzisz do dziekanatu to mało cię tam kurcze nie zabiją, jest taka atmosfera. No u mnie przynajmniej tam nie było takich układów, być może dlatego że była młoda pani, być może jeszcze nie zmęczona życiem, nie wypalona zawodowo. Więc z nią się wszystko załatwiło, to znaczy czasem miała swoje humory ale można było zawsze wszystko załatwić, więc to było ok. Jeżeli chodzi o dziekanat, to był jednym z takich głównych, najgorszych miejsc dla studenta, żeby wejść. Jeżeli chodzi o wykładowców, to rzeczywiście wykładowcy traktują Cie bardzo z góry, ale to jest też ze względu na to że klasy czy tam grupy są bardzo ogromne. U mnie na roku, było



zaczynając powiedzmy sto trzydzieści, sto dwadzieścia osób. Skończyło, no może nie połowa, no może jakieś siedemdziesiąt pięć procent skończyło. Ale to rzeczywiście byłeś traktowany jak nikt. Tutaj wręcz przeciwnie, jesteś traktowany bardzo partnersko, klasy są małe. Na tym kierunku który ja studiowałam, bo ja dwa kierunki studiowałam, to powiem Ci że było około trzydziestu osób, no to powiem ci że to był no największy rok jaki oni mieli na tym kierunku. Drugi mój kierunek był dwadzieścia osób, więc no całkiem fajnie. Możesz pójść z wykładowcami na piwo, zupełnie na innej zasadzie. Piszesz im maila i jesteś zupełnie inaczej postrzegany, możesz poprosić o jakąś tam radę i się zapytać żeby ci dali jakieś tam referencje, nie wiem, czy coś takiego. A w Polsce to jednak jesteś takim nikim kto nie może, nie ma żadnego znaczenia dla nich i w ogóle,

[-the experience when studying in Poland  
- comparison to the situation in Ireland]

*well, if we talk about the dean's office, it was one of those places, the worst places for a student. When we talk about the lecturers, they look down on you, indeed. Although I think that one of the reasons, maybe the main one is that the groups are too large. When I was on my first year, there was maybe, let's say 130, maybe 120 students accepted and only half of them, maybe seventy percent has graduated eventually. Really you were treated as if you were no one to them. It is completely different in here [Ireland], the total opposition. You are like a partner to them, and the classes are small. There was thirty people on my course and there was the biggest intake they had. I was doing two courses and there were twenty people on the second, so you may have the comparison now, and it was a very nice approach. You can go out with your professors, they will go to the pub with you. You may email them and ask for advice and they will respect you, they will give you references. You feel supported. In Poland you are not respected, you don't matter to them (Anne).*

*A to jakie kierunki Ty studiowałaś?*

- Zaczy ja zaczęłam magistra of jak to się nazywa....*Masters of Treasury and Finance*, tylko że nie skończyłam tego, zawiesiłam to po roku.

*-Na jakim uniwersytecie?*

- Na DCU, obydwu na DCU. Ja trochę poszłam na głęboką wodę bo studiując Stosunki Międzynarodowe, co prawda robiłam specjalizację ekonomiczną, i trochę miałam tej ekonomii. Ale nie na tyle dużo żeby żeby pojsć na to na co poszłam. Te studia to są podobno najcięższe studia w Irlandii. Tak mówią. Bo to są dla maklerów giełdowych, dla tych *fund managerów*. I ja na przykład poszłam tam i wszyscy u mnie na roku. Wiesz na początku jest tam tak że wszyscy się zapoznają, taki tam break, coś takiego

*- Ice breaker*

- no *ice breaker*, no i wszyscy się przedstawiają i tak...no to ten jest maklerem tutaj ten jest maklerem tutaj, ten jest *senior fund managerem*, ten jest w ogóle *senior trasurer*, tylko ja jedna taka mała- no ja to jestem *bank assasi*(hahaha) no to taka jedna byłam, w ogóle byłam najmłodsza na tym roku. Więc wiesz, wszyscy ludzie mieli ileś tam lat doświadczenia. Zresztą, co ja zauważyłam, tutaj nie idziesz na studia, tak jak w Polsce jednym ciągiem. Kiedyś w Polsce było ze jednym ciągiem magister od razu. Ja już szłam nowym ciągiem, czyli licencjat, magister. Tutaj idziesz na tam najpierw licencjata, co cię interesuje, później idziesz do pracy, szukasz swojego miejsca w życiu,

co chcesz robić i później po paru latach idziesz na magistra i się w czymś specjalizujesz. To jest uważam dużo lepsze niż jak idziesz od razu i kończysz tego magistra w Polsce.

[ - comparison of two systems, few years ago there was not bachelor degree available in some university departments in Poland]

To jest coś co mi się tutaj właśnie podoba, że idziesz na to co cię w danym momencie interesuje i się nie przejmujesz, że to zrukuje twoją przyszłą karierę. Mam na przykład kolegę z pracy, on skończył biologię, bo go to interesowało, czy tam chemię z biologią, a później poszedł na to co właśnie ja zaczęłam, na tego magistra finansów, po paru latach pracy w banku, bo stwierdził że go to interesuje i był pierwszy na roku. W ogóle dostał nagrodę i potem super pracę, więc no wiesz zupełnie inne podejście, nie tak jak w Polsce, że wszystko robisz w jednym kierunku. Tutaj ludzie są, że te ich kwalifikacje się w jakiś sposób zazębiają ale oni nigdy nie robią tak, że wszystko w jednym. Mają dużo różnych, że tak powiem kwalifikacji, które razem w sumie współgrają. Mam teraz takiego znajomego, który kilka w sumie już kierunków skończył, bo on po prostu uwielbia studiować. Ma chyba 45 lat ale ciągle studiuje. On skończył, w ogóle pierwsze jego studia to były jakieś IT, później skończył jakieś takie, MBA zrobił, później strasznie dużo różnych, nie pamiętam, potem coś takiego związanego z Edukacją. Więc on ma kilka zupełnie innych, ale dzięki temu ma wiedzę bardzo dużą ogólną. Czasami w niektórych kwestiach to już jest za dużo uważam.

I co jeszcze tutaj mi się bardzo podoba, to to że powiedzmy możesz pójść do, na jakieś studia i zrobić uzupełnienie. Na przykład kończysz sobie jakiś tam kierunek, później pójdziesz na postgraduate. Gdybym teraz na przykład chciała być prawnikiem, to mogę pójść na dwuletnie uzupełniające i mogę być prawnikiem. Mimo, że studiowałam stosunki międzynarodowe. A w Polsce nie ma mowy. Musiałabym od początku zaczynać itd. Tutaj ten system edukacyjny jest taki bardziej flexible, taki dla ludzi nie? A w Polsce to jest wszystko takie ciężkie. A to co mnie najbardziej zrażało w Polsce jest to że masz, zresztą jak tutaj w ogóle dałam moje dokumenty, to oni byli w szoku, że ile ja zrobiłam przedmiotów, że jak to, w ciągu tam trzech lat, czy dokładnie nie pamiętam już ile te studia trwały, trzy i pół roku. No to ja zrobiłam chyba czterdzieści przedmiotów. W ogóle to lista ich była ogromna, chyba z osiem rodzajów prawa i lepiej nawet, ekonomii ile.

- *A co kończyłaś wtedy?*

- To były Stosunki Międzynarodowe, tylko że ja miałam specjalizację bardziej w kierunku europejskim. W każdym razie tam było bardzo dużo prawa europejskiego i ekonomii. No i ja po prostu miałam tyle przedmiotów i z tego mnóstwo przedmiotów które ci się w ogóle nie przydają, np. antropologia, no fajny przedmiot, no ale tak naprawdę to on mi się nie przyda. Psychologia też, socjologia, statystyka - studia takie humanistyczne, no nie i do tego statystyka. Mnóstwo rzeczy, zupełnie nieprzydatnych. A tutaj to z kolei konkretnie. Mam kilka tylko przedmiotów ale jest wszystko nastawione na praktykę, na praktyczną wiedzę, żeby studenci wynieśli coś z tych studiów. Ja studiowałam w Polsce na teoretycznie dobrym uniwersytecie i teoretycznie w dobrej szkole i w ogóle na dobrym kierunku. Ale jedną rzecz zauważyłam, że mam dobrą wiedzę ogólną, ale nic mi to nie daje. Jak rozmawiałam ze Zbyskiem w niedzielę, że mój ulubiony przedmiot na studiach to był savoir vivre, nie? No i poszliśmy, tam jest taka kawiarenka i oni wyjęli takie łyżeczki i była taka łyżeczka, która miała takie ząbki na końcu i ja się pytam, zgadnijcie do czego jest ta łyżeczka. Oni mówią- do czego? Do jedzenia grapefruita. A oni mówią a skąd Ty to wiesz? A to jedyna rzecz jakiej się nauczyłam na moich studiach, no nie? (śmiech)

No, i takie jest właśnie podejście, że uczysz się i masz strasznie dużo wiedzy, która Ci się na nic nie przydaje. Wychodzisz z takim, wszystkim i niczym z tych studiów. No i takie też podejście studentów, takie jest w Polsce, że oszukujesz na tych egzaminach, że to jest normalne.

- *Może nie jesteś w stanie czasami zdać wszystkich przedmiotów. Ja też miałam po 15 przedmiotów w semestrze i z czego siedemdziesiąt procent to takich jak mówisz, odjechanych, mnóstwo psychologii, jakieś historyczne, antropologiczne itd. I jest taka kultura, akceptowalność społeczna oszukiwania, a tutaj nie.*

- No tutaj absolutnie, możesz wylecieć za to ze szkoły.

- *Ale co ciekawe, że tutaj nie jest to akceptowane przez samych studentów.*

- Taaak, to wiem, to jest zupełnie inna kultura, co uważam że jest dużo lepsze. Co jeszcze, nie wiem, czy ty się np. z tym spotkałaś, bo u nas było to normalne, że np. parę razy tak się zdarzyło, że egzaminator wyszedł w czasie egzaminu i mówił: róbcie co chcecie. I studenci ściągali. Albo że np. takie krążyły historyjki, że rzucali prace i to co spadnie, jak spadnie to się zdaje lub nie. I z tego co słyszałam od koleżanki z WPS, to tak jest w praktyce, to jest. Albo ktoś jedzie na opinii, co nie?

I wtedy to wcale nie jest twoja wiedza, rzeczywiście sprawdzana, tutaj jest egzaminator z zewnątrz, tutaj twojej pracy nie sprawdza twój egzaminator, tak przynajmniej było na moich studiach, na moim kierunku. To jest bardziej takie obiektywne, czyli nie jedziesz na żadnej opinii. No nie wiem, w ogóle, w Polsce to studiowanie takie, no nic z tego nie wynosisz, to jest bardzo dużo, niby się uczysz, ale nic z tego nie masz. Tutaj na początku jak zaczęłam studiować, to bardzo ciężko mi przyszło. Aha, wróć, to np. studenci na SHG przygotowują się tylko na sesję. Mówi się że na SGH to się przygotowują przez 2 tygodnie, na UW to się przygotowujesz tydzień. No bo tak jest, w sumie to przez cały rok to sobie bimbasz, robisz co chcesz, chodzisz na imprezy, a później jest sesja i jest wielki kupiel. Bierzesz te plussze i te wszystkie inne i się uczysz nie. Ale tutaj jest fajne to, że się jednak uczysz na bieżąco i masz te sprawdzające te projekty, te assignments. Ja muszę powiedzieć że mimo iż nie skończyłam tego magistra to (krótka rozmowa o imprezie w Cafe Insane)

To w Polsce jest tak, że studenci się uczą tylko na sesje i ta wiedza jest tylko na chwilę. Na zasadzie że nauczysz się i zapomnisz. Ta wiedza tutaj to jest że uczysz się na bieżąco, że masz te projekty. Ja właśnie, to sprawiało mi trudność dużą. Bo jednak jak się pracuje i studiuje, to jest, masz mnóstwo tych projektów tych assignments, to jest ciężka sprawa.

- *Bo musisz się cały czas angażować.*

- Tak, tak, ale ja pomimo że nie skończyłam tego magistra, to po roku studiowania tam, mogę powiedzieć, że miałam naprawdę bardzo dużą wiedzę. Mogę powiedzieć, że więcej się nauczyłam tam w ciągu jednego roku, niż przez 3 lata studiowania w Polsce. Było inne podejście, było bardziej indywidualne. Np. nasi wykładowcy nam wysyłali jakieś ciekawe artykuły z Financial Times. Tak, aaa przeczytajcie sobie, bo to może wam się przydać. Takie bardzo fajne podejście i bardzo luźne. I na przykład, na początku było strasznie dla mnie dziwne.

Jest też że uniwersytet, np. niektóre wykłady mieliśmy w hotelu, bo oni wiedzieli że wszyscy którzy tutaj studiują, to pracują w finansach i oni nie mają czasu żeby jeździć do DCU. Więc było, mieliśmy salę konferencyjną i w środy były tam zajęcia a później w sobotę były na DCU. Ale to było fajne, że właśnie w czasie lunchu, to normalnie

wykładowca przychodził do tych studentów. Pogadał sobie z nimi, tam na herbatkę poszli, na lunch, w ogóle nie ma problemu. Nie było takiej bariery sztucznej. Poźniej się umawiali na piwo, i nie było problemu takiego jak w Polsce. W Polsce jest w ogóle kultura taka, że wszystko jest takie sztywne, wszystko na Pan Pani. To to coś co się u nas nazywało tytułomania, że zanim poszłam do jakiegoś doktora, to musiałam sprawdzać czy habilitowany czy nie. I dobrze napisać tytuł i kropki żeby dobrze postawić.

- *A tutaj do wszystkich się mówi na Ty i ważne są kompetencje, ta wiedza, którą oni mogą przekazać.*

- Tak a, tak tutaj łatwiejszy jest kontakt z wykładowcami, i nie ma problemu żebyś maila napisała, albo możesz zadzwonić na komórkę, jeśli masz problem. Większość tych moich wykładowców, bo to były studia wieczorowe, to oni pracowali normalnie, nie byli tylko wykładowcami. Był koleś, który pracował w Centralnym Banku, tam był jednym z tych szefów. Więc on robił tylko wykłady dla nas, dużo takiej wiedzy praktycznej.

- *Oni byli też profesjonalistami, nie byli tylko teoretykami, ale praktykami dzięki temu ta wiedza miała inne odniesienie.*

- Tak, a w Polsce to np. Ekonomii nas uczył taki facet, który studiował tą Ekonomię w latach 60-tych za komuny, to zupełnie inne podejście, inna też wiedza, potem ją cały czas tylko wykładał, zero praktyki.

Tutaj co mnie bardzo zaskoczyło, to mieliśmy Ekonometrię. I ta Ekonometria to były dwie takie lekcje, że mieliśmy co jest co, jakieś tam grafy, bla bla bla, a potem siedzieliśmy w laboratorium i robiliśmy to na systemach normalnych tak jak w banku to robią na analizie finansowej i mieliśmy na tym egzamin, że musieliśmy zrobić taki graf. A nie pisanie pierdół, że taki graf a taki graf, kiedy to nie jest potrzebne do niczego. To co jest potrzebne, to wiedza praktyczna. No i uważam że tutaj to jest super. Może rzeczywiście w Polsce jest ileś tam uczelni, ale poziom nauczania, to co się oferuje studentom, pod względem jakiś nawet nie materiałów, tylko właśnie dostępu do systemu, czy jak moja koleżanka studiowała tutaj na Chemii. Ona studiowała tam w Łodzi, i robiła magistra, tutaj poszła i chciała magistra zrobić. Ona była w szoku, jak zobaczyła te wszystkie próbki, o których ona czytała i wszystkie te rzeczy, gdzie chemia jest takim przedmiotem, że oni rzeczywiście powinni już próbować to robić. Gdzie w Polsce tak uczą, ona wszystko wiedziała z teorii, a w życiu nie widziała tego czy tego. Więc tutaj jednak jest to lepsze. Może nie wszystkie osoby tutaj idą na studia, może ze względu na koszty, ale jednak idą osoby, które chcą to robić, nie są zmuszeni przez środowisko. Bo w Polsce, przynajmniej jak ja szłam na studia, to że każdy musi mieć magistra, bo inaczej to sprzątaczem może być, nie? To lepiej trzy kierunki studiów, dwa języki i możesz siedzieć i sprzątać (śmiech). No u mnie to taka presja była, bo z liceum takiego liczącego się w Warszawie, to 100% frekwencja na studia. I to większość na studia dzienne. I było w ogóle jak to? Jak to jest możliwe żeby ktoś nie szedł w ogóle na studia. No ale presja była (śmiech zadowolenia).

- *A dlaczego akurat Irlandia?*

- Ta przygoda z Irlandią to była w ogóle śmieszna sprawa. Skończyłam licencjata, znaczy jeszcze się w ogóle nie obroniłam. Miałam do napisania pracę licencjacką, której mi się nie chciało napisać jeszcze. I miałam jeden egzamin, chyba językowy. Bo jak ja kończyłam to było takie wymaganie, że trzeba było mieć, obronić egzaminy tylko nie.

To było w ramach studiów, że jak kończysz kierunek, to musisz mieć zdany egzamin językowy.

- Ale taki, który uprawnia cię do studiowania za granicą typu TOEFL albo IELTS?

- Nie, taki First Certificate, tylko to jest taki uniwersytecki. A właśnie apropo tego to ci opowiem strasznie śmieszną historię. Nie wiem, czy teraz ci powiedzieć czy później (salwy śmiechu)

Aha, no i to jeszcze miałam właśnie do zrobienia i stwierdziłam, że podszkolę sobie jeszcze język. Aha i moja ciocia tutaj była. Ona była położną, no i jak tak się namyśliłam, nie wiem, wszyscy zawsze jeździli na jakieś tam do Stanów, na jakieś tam wymiany czy gdzieś. A jakoś tak nigdy tam nie pojechałam. Na tego Erasmusa zawsze też chciałam jechać, ale jakoś tak nie bardzo wyszło. Bo to dużo kosztowało. Kiedyś jeszcze nie było aż tak dużo takich tych grantów i tak dużo się nie dostawało, bo ja jak studiowałam to dopiero się dostaliśmy do Unii, to jednak ta ilość osób była ograniczona i to jednak było tak, że to były bardzo duże pieniądze. To bardzo dużo kosztowało, dla moich rodziców, to oni by musieli mi ze dwa tysiące miesięcznie wysyłać, żeby ja mogła się utrzymać. Więc dla mnie to nie było takiej możliwości, żeby ten, no w tej chwili to dla tych którzy się dostają to są całkiem dobre pieniądze. No na tyle, że mogą się utrzymać, może tam mogą jakoś tam trochę dorobić, ale tak jest ok., wystarczająco. No i stwierdziłam dobra, to sobie wyjadę. No i pojechałam z koleżanką. Potem okazało się, że moja ciocia też nie bardzo chciała akurat się mną zająć. Tak akuratnie wyszło, ale to już inna historia. W każdym razie po tygodniu, jak już tutaj byliśmy, zatrzymaliśmy się u znajomych. Tam zaczęłam z Anką szybko pracę, mieliśmy zabawę jakąś taką głupią. Powiedziałam, no dobra, to są wakacje, zarobię trochę kasy. W ogóle stwierdziłam, że podszkolę trochę język i zmienię swój samochód na lepszy. W sumie, śmieszny mały samochód. To mówię – o to sobie zmienię na lepszy. No i tak było, że tutaj akurat przyjechałam, później popracowałam tam i już przyszedł ten wrzesień. Musiałam wracać do Polski żeby zdać ten egzamin do tego licencjatu, żeby zrobić. No i stwierdziłam, mam pracę tutaj...aaa to może zostanę na rok. Zostałam na rok, w międzyczasie, już się dostałam na studia magisterskie w Polsce. Ale sobie pomyślałam, to sobie odroczyć na rok a potem wrócić. Tak wyszło, że pracowałam w takim barze. I tak rozmawiam z tym managerem, że nie po to studiowałam, żeby pracować za barem. No i tak się uparłam, że dostanę pracę w banku. No i dostałam, bo wtedy było bardzo łatwo dostać pracę w banku. To było po jakiś czterech, pięciu miesiącach pracy w Irlandii, więc uważałam, że to bardzo dobrze, uznałam to za jakiś sukces. Potem zaczęłam pracować, jak już minął ten rok, to stwierdziłam eeee, to jak mam tu już dobrą pracę to zostanę już. No może tutaj zacznę coś kombinować ze studiami. Poszłam na takie ....Bankers, to są typowo takie kursy dla finansistów, bankierów. To są takie, na taki kurs poszłam, bo mi to polecił mój manager. Tutaj miałam zawsze właśnie coś takiego, że tutaj nie robiłam tego magistra i że czuję się źle po roku bez kontaktu z jakąś taką edukacją, czułam się właśnie taka jakby ogłupiona i stwierdziłam, że muszę coś zrobić. I poszłam na to najpierw. Ale później pomyślałam, że nie. Ja jednak muszę zrobić tego magistra. No i się uparłam, właśnie pomimo, że drogi był ten magister, bo on kosztował 8 tys rocznie. No ale dostałam się, przyjęli mnie, to mówię, no dobra idę.

[-Motivation for coming to Ireland, support of family]

[-early experience after arrival]

[- motivation for entering higher education abroad]

*This whole adventure with Ireland, it was a funny thing actually. I finished my B.A., I mean I didn't have my viva yet. I had to write my dissertation, and I didn't feel like writing at all. I had one more exam left to pass. It was English, I*

*suppose. I remember it was such condition at that time at my university, that you had to pass language exam, to graduate. So, I thought I need to master my English and my auntie lived here. She was midwife, so I made up my mind. I don't know ...everybody I knew was going to the States, for students exchange or something. And I never had a chance to go, or get the Erasmus. I always wanted to go, but I never had the opportunity. It was expensive. There was not so many grants at that time, as Poland was joining EU and the number of people getting the grants and on exchanges was limited. And to go abroad it was a lot of money you had to have. My parents couldn't afford so much, they would have to send me at least two thousands so I could get by. So, there was no opportunity for me.*

*So, I decided...okay I will go. And I did so, I went with my girlfriend. It turned out later that my auntie didn't help me much...ridiculous but it's different kind of story. Anyway, after the week time we stayed at our friends. I have started to work soon with Anka, we had fun. I said – okay, I will make some cash. I decided I can master my language and buy a new car when back to Poland. Well, funny little car. So there it was, I came here, I started to work and eventually September came. I had to get back to Poland, to pass this language exam to graduate. I thought to myself - well I have work here, maybe I can stay for another year. I stayed and meantime I was accepted for the M.A course in Poland. But I thought I need a break for one year and I stayed in Ireland. It turned out that I was working in a pub. One day I was chatting with manager and I told him that I was not doing my BA to work in pub and I decided I will find a job in bank. I got it, it was quite easy to get a job in the bank at that time. It was four or five months since my arrival and I considered it as a success. I started to work and the year passed quickly and I thought to myself...I have a decent job here, I will stay. Maybe I will contrive something about studying. I went for so called Bankers – it was a course for bankers and finance specialists. My manger recommended it for me. I always felt bad that I haven't done my Masters, this lack of education and I decided I need to do something about it. And I did .*

Na początku jak poszłam, to byłam w ogóle przerażona, co to jest . I w rezultacie nauczyłam się wszystkiego czego się nauczyłam, zdałam ileś egzaminów, dwa egzaminy chyba nie zdałam. Pomyślałam sobie, że wrócę do Polski i po angielsku pójdę na studia w Polsce, na SGH. Ale w końcu nie wzięłam tych studiów, stwierdziłam , że zostanę tutaj. I ludzie z mojego kierunku, moi promotorzy przekonali mnie , żebym poszła na postgraduate. Jeśli czuję się , że to jest dla mnie za dużo magister, żebym poszła na postgraduate w tym samym kierunku. No i poszłam i skończyłam postgraduate. No i na dobre mi to wyszło, bo poznałam dużo ludzi z branży i mam te kwalifikacje, więc mogę wrócić do tego magistra, chyba nie wrócę. Bo raczej wyjeżdżam z tego kraju ale dużo mi to dało myśle.

- *A jak to się stało, że wyjeżdżasz?*

- A dlaczego wyjeżdżam..Ogólnie jestem tutaj już 4,5 roku, w lipcu by było 5 lat. Już mam taki przesyt tym krajem. Patrząc na ekonomię tutaj, że jednak ten kraj się skończył moim zdaniem. Oni mają tutaj politycznie, więc będzie coraz gorzej. Wydaje mi się , że stosunek do obcokrajowców się zmienił bardzo od kiedy ja tutaj przyjechałam. No ludzie są tacy, no nie chcą nas tu za bardzo. Oni mają swoje problemy, oni nie chcą kolejnych tam ludzi utrzymywać. Więc ja odkąd w ogóle skończyłam te studia, stwierdziłam, że chcę wyjechać, że męczy mnie ten kraj. No i do tego sytuacja, tak

wyszło samo z siebie. Bo ja bardzo chciałam wyjechać, ale jakoś tak nie miałam odwagi tak rzucić pracę, tak zakończyć wszystko definitywnie. A tu wyszło tak samo z siebie. Zawsze wydawało mi się, że wszystko zależy od ciebie, a tu jednak nie zupełnie tak zależało ode mnie, bo postanowili mój dział zlikwidować. Więc w tym momencie wszyscy, cały dział, tam 20 osób traci pracę. Ale dostajemy to redundancy. No i akurat ta firma dosyć dobrze płaci to redundancy, więc nie ma co płakać. No i jak ja się o tym dowiedziałam, to myślę super. Wreszcie mam motywację żeby wyjechać. To mnie wreszcie popchnęło żeby wyjechać.

[reasons for going to another country, job opportunity, connects to Bauman's drifting identity]

*Why am I leaving? I have been in Ireland for almost five years already. I am surfeit with this country. I am watching the economy here and I think this country is over, that's my opinion. It's about politics and it will get worse, I think. I also think they have changed their attitude to the migrants, it is different to when I came to Ireland. People have their own problems now, and they don't want, I mean, they don't need more migrants. So, when I finished my studies here and got the degree, I decided that I want to leave, that I got fed up with this country. There was the situation in my work, you know, I didn't have enough courage to quit, to end it up definitively. It came out itself. I always thought everything depends on you, you are the master of your life. And it appeared that not everything depends on you actually. My department has been closed and twenty people lost their job. It is fine for me, we got redundancy. It's good money, so when it happened I thought 'this is great, now I have motivation to go abroad'. It pushed and inspired me to start in another country.*

To było tak 3 miesiące przed tym jak to się miało stać. Więc tak zaczęłam rozważać gdzie bym chciała, no i tak zaczęłam rozglądać się. Na początku myślałam tak: Belgia, Luksemburg, tamte okolice. No ale akurat w tym co robiłam tutaj jest praca w Londynie. A ja uważam że w Londynie jest tak samo jak tutaj. Więc nie chciałam. Ale mam przyjaciółkę w Indonezji. I właśnie z nią zaczęłam gadać, ona jest z Hong Kongu. I ona mówi, a dlaczego nie chcesz do Hong Kongu? Tam są sami Chińczycy, oni po angielsku za dobrze nie mówią. Jedź do Singapuru, tam jest miks kulturowy, tam jest dużo Europejczyków i Amerykanów. Wszyscy mówią super po angielsku, to jest pierwszy język. Tam jest super ciepło. Potem okazało się że mam tam różnych znajomych i powiedziałam dobra- kupuję bilet i koniec i jadę (śmiech). A skończyłam pracę dwa tygodnie temu. Więc jestem tak na świeżo, zakończyłam z nimi.

- *Teraz przygotowania, to jest taki excitement, podniecenie. A co będziesz robiła w Singapurze?*

- Znaczący, to co robię teraz prawdopodobnie. Respondentem maklerów giełdowych, sprawdzam po nich czy oni wszystko dobrze zrobili, zgodnie z jakimiś tam wytycznymi, czy nie porobili błędów. To trzeba po prostu po nich sprawdzać żeby to poszło na rynek. Ciekawa jest praca. Stresująca ale fajna. A propos TOEFLa. Tutaj im wystarczyło że pracowałam w banku, nie musiałam zdawać żadnego egzaminu. A w Polsce, jak chciałam iść na studia na SGH, to musiałam zdawać egzamin- nie nie musi być. I zdałam tego TOEFLa.

- *A jaka była Twoja motywacja, bo w sumie zaczęłaś te studia już tu pracując, więc chyba nie do końca ekonomiczna. Czy chciałaś też rozwijać się?*

- W sumie ja zawsze chciałam skończyć studia, no nie. I dostałam się na studia w Polsce.

- *Ale skąd pomysł żeby studiować za granicą, czy ktoś podsunął ci ten pomysł, ktoś gdzieś mówił o tym w rodzinie, wyczytałaś ulotkę rekalmową, zobaczyłaś program w telewizji*

- w mojej rodzinie, np. mojego taty siostra, ona studiowała w Petersburgu. Tam też poznała swojego męża. Moi rodzice nie studiowali nigdy za granicą, ale z tego co np. ciocia mi opowiadała to fajnie było studiować za granicą. I to mi się spodobało. Później zawsze mnie ciągnęło gdzieś za granicę, żeby wyjechać. Zawsze wydawało mi się, że Polska, no nie chce mi się, nie chcę tam być po prostu. Kolejna rzecz że miałam dużo ludzi, znajomych którzy wyjeżdżali na te Erasmusy i tak dalej. No ale głównym powodem moim było w sumie to, że ja zawsze chciałam się rozwijać. Ja zawsze uważałam że studia za granicą więcej ci dają, chociażby pod względem językowym. No chociażby że bardzo dużo wiedzy zdobywasz, dużo się uczysz języka praktycznego. To też jest uważam że ważne. Poza tym kiedy kończę studia w Irlandii, nie wiem, jakkolwiek ten kraj jest, to te studia mają dużo większą wartość, niż nie wiem jakie studia w Polsce.

[ -more about motivation for going and studying abroad, family history]

- *To prawda.*

- Jednak to Irlandię wszyscy znają, to jest to strasznie dużo Irlandczyków wszędzie. No jednak Irlandia, no nie jest to może jakiś super rozwinięty kraj, ale jednak to kraj..

- *Przed wszystkim anglojęzyczny*

- Tak, to już dużo. Mimo że nie mają tak dużo uniwersytetów, ale jednak te studia są cenione wysoko. No i jednak te ich uniwersytety są wyżej niż polskie.

- *Tak, Trinity jest w pierwszej setce najważniejszych uniwersytetów na świecie. A chyba żaden polski uniwersytet się nie zakwalifikował. Jest jeszcze takie pytanie, jak się zmieniała Twoja perspektywa po ukończeniu tych studiów, to jest takie bardzo ogólne pytanie. Ja ty to odczuwasz, jak Ty się zmieniłaś, jako osoba, twoje postrzeganie rynku pracy, postrzeganie siebie, czy dało ci to więcej pewności siebie, jakiegoś tam rozwoju, czy czujesz się pewniej na rynku pracy?*

- No z pewnością zdobyłam dużo wiedzy praktycznej, bo nie miałam takiej wiedzy na temat finansów. Wyjeżdżając z Polski a na pewno interesowało mnie to ja nie miałam takiej wiedzy. Dużo mi też dało to tutaj np. bardzo dużo bazuje na kontaktach, jakich ludzi znasz, ten rynek finansowy tutaj jest dosyć mały. Tutaj studiując właśnie tak jak ja studiowałam, miałam okazję poznać dużo ludzi na bardzo wysokich stanowiskach. No i to jest wszystko takie towarzystwo, które ze sobą jakoś współpracuje, jakoś sobie pomaga. Właśnie to pomaga w różnych sytuacjach życiowych. Właśnie na zasadzie żeby zapytać się kogoś czy nie masz znajomego np. w Hong Kongu albo kogoś w Singapurze, nie? I dzięki temu ja np. mam kontakty z jakimiś tam szefami, bo tam jest bardzo dużo Europejczyków i Irlandczyków bardzo dużo. Znam dziewczynę, jestem z



nią w kontakcie, która jest szefem tego działu, takiego jak ja pracowałam, tylko w Bank of America. Więc w sumie jest dużo. Takie własne kontakty międzyludzkie. Np. w Polsce ciężko by mi było o takie praktyczne kontakty. No i jest właśnie tytułomania, że Ty jesteś tam nikim, a ja jestem bardzo wysoki ktoś, więc się lepiej do mnie nie odzywaj. Tutaj tak nie jest, to na pewno mi to dało. No i pewność siebie też, bo tutaj nie jest aż tak dużo ludzi, którzy kończą te studia, więc czułam się że mam dużo lepsze kwalifikacje niż inni. Wiedziałam o czym mówię, nie. To pomogło mi poszerzyć horyzonty myślowe i pojęcie o świecie.

[link to Bourdieu, symbolic and cultural capital]

[credencialisation]

*Surely, I acquired loads of practical knowledge ...it gave me a lot of...its based on connections, what people you know, the financial market here is quite small. When I was studying here, I had the opportunity to meet many people with high position. It is the companionship. They cooperate together and help each other. They will help you in many life circumstances. It helps a lot, like e.g. when you want to move to Hong Kong, they can know someone there or in Singapore, right? And I got relations with managers there. There are many Europeans and Irish as well. I am in touch with the girl, who is supervisor of the same department I was working in, in different Bank only. So it is a lot. Such connections. I know it would be too hard to meet such people in Poland. There is this 'title-mania'(the titling- the academic title plays the important role), you are nobody and I am someone very important, so you better stay away. It is not like this in here. So it gives me a lot of confidence, also there is not so many people having the same qualifications as I do. I can feel privileged and very qualified, I have higher qualifications than most people I know. I can also feel more confident and easy when talking to people on managerial positions, I know this language. It is important here how you talk, there is specific language, phrases. Again the graduation has helped me in broadening my world perception. I think it would be almost impossible if I stayed in Poland .*

- dodało ci to profesjonalizmu i kompetencji

-[recognition, self-worth, self-confidence]

- No na pewno czuję się bardziej swobodnie rozmawiając z ludźmi na wyższych stanowiskach i też znam ten język. Bo to też jest ważne, kiedy o czymś mówisz, to tu są bardzo specyficzne zwroty, np. w tym momencie byłoby mi ciężko mówić o finansach, o tym co robię, z kimś z Polakiem. To jest śmieszne, ale np. finanse czy ekonomię jak czytam to czytam po angielsku, jak czytam po polsku to nie rozumiem tego.

Więc na pewno pomogło mi to w poszerzeniu wizji świata, bo uważam że będąc w Polsce to to jest ciężkie.

- I uczyłaś się i pracowałaś po angielsku w tym zawodzie

- Tak, a poza tym wydaje mi się że książki do uczenia się polskie, są bardzo skomplikowane, to w jaki sposób jest ta wiedza wyłożona.

- Może teoria głównie

- Tak, ale to też słyszałam że tutaj z prawem jest tak, że u nas to prawo jest jakieś takie ...nie wiem

Tutaj to się nazywa że to jest 'case study', a w Polsce to jest wszystko nie wiem, milion ustaw, każda poprawiana i żeby w ogóle zdać egzamin, to uczysz się i...

- *Jest nadmiar tej wiedzy.*

- Tak, to to też nie?

- *I mówiłaś że tu już zaczął się kryzys, to jest gorzej, i pomyślałaś sobie że czas wyjechać, akurat tak się złożyło. A nie przyszło ci do głowy, żeby wrócić do Polski? Czy to nie jest związane z tym, że tutaj pracowałaś i studiowałaś i teraz kiedy sytuacja się zmieniła to cokolwiek się dzieje, nie myślisz już żeby wrócić tam. Bo jeszcze na początku pamiętam jak przyjechałaś, to jeszcze z tą myślą, żeby wrócić, nie? A czy ta zmiana nie jest też trochę związana ze studiami, że poszerzyły zakres twoich możliwości ale też perspektywę. Że ja mogę szukać sobie teraz ale gdziekolwiek na świecie, już nie jestem związana, nie muszę wrócić do mamusi?*

- Nie no na pewno. Bo teraz mam już tyle rozpoznawalnych kwalifikacji, że mogę szukać tej pracy. Mam i doświadczenie i kwalifikacje. Gdzie będąc w Polsce i mając te same kwalifikacje i to samo doświadczenie- to jednak nie bardzo, biorą pod uwagę takie osoby. Więc na pewno pomogło mi to w poszerzeniu wizji świata, horyzontów, jak już mówiłam. To znaczy nigdy nie pracowałam w Polsce, ale z tego co wiem, to trzeba być bardzo twardym, żeby pracować w Polsce.

- *Żeby przebić się i utrzymać?*

-Tak, i jest straszna konkurencja, straszne takie kładzie kłody pod nogi, no nieprzyjemnie, tutaj jest to jednak tak ok. No, pracujesz ciężko, ale przy tym się dobrze bawisz. Takie to jest zbalansowane, nie czuje się takiego wyścigu szczurów.

- *Na tym skończę dzisiejsze nagranie, bardzo długa ta rozmowa była, bardzo ci za nią dziękuję...*

## Appendix V

Interview No 9

March 30th

My second interview with Suzanne, quiet room at the university

- *To tutaj na socjologii oni też chcieli żebyś się zajmowała emigracją?*

- Nie, nie to była cały czas Antropologia. Natomiast na Socjologii, no właśnie musimy się upewnić że wszystko co powiedziałam jest anonimowe, trafiłam na bardzo fajnego supervisora. Ma tylko jedną wadę, że jest buddystą i uważa że jak będę wewnętrznie gotowa to mi się to samo napisze. A ja potrzebuje bata nad sobą i dyscypliny i struktury, jakiejś rutyny żeby coś robic. Zdecydowałam się, że będę pisać o tym jak ruchy społeczne włączają i wykluczają członków, w sensie cała taka wewnętrzna hierarchia w grupkach, które uważają że są niehierarchiczne. To też wynika z moich własnych doświadczeń.

- *Możesz to rozwinąć?*

- Czyli mieszkalam prawie sześć lat na squocie. I byłam bardzo zaangażowana w działalność anarchistyczną. I zawsze mnie uderzało, że wszystko jest zupełnie inne kiedy o tym mówimy a wszystko jest inne w praktyce, nie. I że jeżeli się czyta jakiegokolwiek prace o antyglobalistach albo squotersach albo anarchistach, to one są pełne tam tych ideałów a bardzo mało jest takiego praktycznego życia i tego jak sobie ludzie radzą z problemami. I byłam bardzo też zdegustowana tym wszystkim. Dlatego też przyjeżdżając do Irlandii trochę się odciąłam od tego. I właśnie poznając Lorensa, mojego supervisora postanowiłam to obrócić jakby w coś dobrego. Myślę sobie, dobra, to jest mój punkt w którym zaczynam i mnie bardzo wiele rzeczy odpycha w tych ruchach i wiele rzeczy mi się nie podoba. Uważam że jest wiele zakłamania i wiele dyskryminacji wszystkiego ale może popatrzymy jak można to obrócić ku czemuś lepszemu. Jak można się, nie wiem, zrobić bardziej otwartym na ludzi w tych ruchach i tak dalej. Tam jest takie idealistyczne podejście, że taka transformacja, nie.

- *Czyli że coś z tego wynika.*

- Tak, założenie tej pracy jest, że.. czy tego programu, który robię z Lorenssem, jest takie że ma zmieniać życie ludzi ku pozytywnemu. Oczywiście to się w trakcie okazuje, że ludzie to się wcale niekoniecznie chcą zmieniać i nie bardzo chcą się stawać otwarci. Po pierwsze to nikt nie bardzo chce słuchać o czymś takim, że uważam że twoje praktyki są np. seksistowskie i twoje... Rozumiesz ludzie tak naprawdę nie chcą słuchać o takich rzeczach i mało kto powie: O! nigdy o tym nie pomyślałem, dając innym głos, poromawiajmy jak możemy ulepszyć naszą grupę, itd.

- *Ale czy to nie wynika z tego że sama idea takich ugrupowań jest zła i zawsze to pójdzie w złym kierunku, czy że może idea jest dobra ale z kolei zawsze się to o człowieka rozbija. Człowiek jest jaki jest i większość z nas ma tam jakieś swoje kompleksy i w momencie kiedy staje na czele ugrupowania czy bierze udział to już te ideały trochę się rozmywają, nie?*

- No myślę, że wszystko zależy od ludzi.

- *Bauman też właśnie pisał że wszystkie idee tak na początku miały słuszne cele i miały służyć dobru i nawet komunizm czy socjalizm , oni też chcieli dobrze. Tylko że później gdzieś to się obraca na końcu przeciwko społeczeństwu. Coś co miało służyć interesom społeczeństwa, nagle obraca się przeciwko niemu, przeciwko człowiekowi.*

- Właśnie! Mnie to uderzało nie, tak jak mówisz, że wiele idei jest dobrych, ale jak się w to wglębisz to...taki Nastermachno był anarchista ukraiński – bóg wielu anarchistów, który generalnie powiedział, że zaprowadzimy rewolucję, uszczęśliwimy wszystkich, wszyscy będą równi itd., a komu się to nie podoba to po prostu wyrzniemy w pień. I myślę, to jest oczywiście takie drastyczne, ale generalnie gdzieś poniekąd widzę , że jest tak teraz nie? Albo ci się podoba, tak jak my uważamy , tak jak my myślimy, albo ci się nie podoba. Także nie wiem, o czym jest ta moja praca, bo jeszcze się za nią tak na dobrą sprawę nie zabrałam. Ale też duża część będzie poświęcona kulturze wizualnej w takich ruchach społecznych. Bo też uważam, że sposób ubierania się i sposób ekspresji wizualnej bardzo dużo mówi o Tobie i bardzo dużo mówi na kogo jesteś otwarty a na kogo nie jesteś otwarty. Chociaż może to jest tylko moje czytanie tego, nie?

- *Nie nie,*

- Bo myślę, że może ktoś się ubiera jakoś tak, żeby powiedzieć ‘ja jestem taki’ a nie tak ‘ja jestem przeciwko czemuś czy przeciwko tobie’

- *To bardzo ciekawe, a będę mogła poczytać twoją pracę, jak ją kiedyś napiszesz? Moja praca też po części będzie się tym zajmowała, tylko ja akurat mam bardzo dobre te doświadczenia tutaj, z tymi studiami. Ale może też dlatego że to jest ten taught, i że to jest grupa ludzi. ....*

*.....(kilka dygresji na temat własnych doświadczeń i zainteresowań na uczelni)*

- Bo jeśli się zastanowię, jak kultura wizualna odpycha ludzi i trzyma tych wszystkich anarchistów nie tam, w cudzysłowie.

- *Na uboczu społeczeństwa tak?*

- Tak i że im tak naprawdę nie chodzi o żadną zmianę, tylko żeby się czuć dobrze sami ze sobą, ..to zamykam się ja i skazuję się ja na siedzenie w takiej frustracji, rozumiesz przelewam takie nieprzyjemne emocje, nie? I dlatego chciałabym to obrócić w coś po prostu lepszego. Bo po co mi siedzieć cztery lata nad czymś co...

- *Bo trzeba podejść do tej pracy tak żeby ona ci entuzjazmu trochę dawała a nie frustrowała.*

- Dokładnie, także nie wiem jeszcze. Także być może jeżeli zacznę tak naprawdę, znajdę te kilka miesięcy żeby usiąść żeby to robić tak naprawdę, to może to ruszy jakoś.

- *Ale ty teraz pracujesz, na pełny etat?*

- Cały czas pracuję , także...Nie teraz pracuję na pół etatu, od roku pracuję na pół etatu

- *W Dublinie?*

- w Dublinie i tutaj, nie. Gdzie mogę tak naprawdę.

- *To też nie za wiele ci tego czasu zostaje.*

- *Wiesz co, może trochę tego czasu zostaje mi , tylko jeszcze nie umiem go sobie tak zorganizować, nie? I byłoby mi na pewno łatwiej mając właśnie jakąś rutynę.*

- *Ale PhD możesz przeciągać, nawet 5 lat to może trwać, tylko czy nie będziesz musiała też płacić za ten piąty rok?*

- *Nie wiem. Muszę się istotnie tym zainteresować, bo szkoda by było te 4 lata*

- *Szkoda by było stracić to co jest, bo dużo akurat wysiłku w to włożyłaś.*

- *Tak tak, myślę sobie że do samego PhD dużo nie zrobiłam, ale te wszystkie takie pokrewne rzeczy, nie? Dzięki temu że jestem tak naprawdę na uniwersytecie , zaczęłam pracować na uniwersytecie, tylko prowadząc ćwiczenia ze studentami, albo tam jakiś research project, który oni robili i potrzebowali kogoś, kto mówi po polsku. Więc chodzi mi o to. To są takie małe rzeczy, takie drobne stopnie w tej karierze , którą chcę robić w sumie. I na pewno to jest do tego przydatne. Choć z drugiej strony myślę że cała ta decyzja, to PhD za pierwszym razem i za drugim razem, to było takie na ‘hurra’ , nie wiedziałam za bardzo , nie wiedziałam tych wszystkich taught PhD, nie wiedziałam jak to wygląda. Wiedziałam zawsze że chcę robić, że chcę być badaczem. W Polsce żeby robić badanie to trzeba mieć PhD, tutaj nie trzeba . Wystarczy zrobić Applied Research Methods, czy coś w tym stylu, i jest niby roczny kurs i jest niby PhD, to znaczący są te uprawnienia.*

*[credentialisations, symbolic capital, social capital]*

*Thanks to being at the university, I started work here as well. It is not a full time position, only some workshops with students and small research project, as there was someone who speaks Polish needed. Although what I have in mind is that there are such a small steps in this career. Those connections are useful. (Suzanne).*

- *A widzisz ja też myślałam że tutaj też trzeba mieć doktorat żeby ...ja nie czuję się teraz na siłach żeby na uczelni pracować, bo wydaje mi się że miałabym duże problemy z wysłowieniem się, bo ja mam z tym po polsku nawet problem. A właśnie w badaniach, bo jest dużo tych, są te ogłoszenia o badaniach. Ale zawsze mi się wydawało że tam jest wymóg taki najczęściej że to PhD, czy doktorat, coś w tym rodzaju.*

- *Powiem ci że im dłużej tu jestem, to widzę że, że to jest bardziej wszystko elastyczne. Jest bardzo wszystko elastyczne. Myślę, ja nie wiem, ale wymyśliłam sobie taką statystykę. Ale wyobrażam sobie że w całej Irlandii może ze 100 osób ma doktoraty. Może z 200, nie więcej przecież. Na wielu takich uczelniach w stylu IT, te wszystkie Waterford Institute of Technology, czy jakieś takie tam, ludzie mają masters. I to są wszystko ci nauczyciele.*

- *no tak , u mnie też na doktoracie , jest kilka osób pracujących, tzn wykładających na uczelni wyższej, a przecież doktorat dopiero robią teraz , po wielu latach pracy. I ten doktorat teraz już nawet nie za wiele zmieni w ich karierze, bo są po pięćdziesiątce, nie robi to jakiegoś turnu w ich życiu , tylko robią to też tak trochę dla siebie, czy ze względu na zarobki, trudno mi powiedzieć nawet.*

- *I tak samo jest właśnie z badaniami. Bardzo wiele osób , które robi badania, kończy roczny kurs w Trinity, który się nazywa Applied Social Research, który jak patrzyłam*

to jest na nieco wyższym poziomie, niż to czego my uczymy studentów na drugim roku tutaj, nie. Na pewno mają więcej ze statystyki, czy więcej jakiś tam komputerowych programów. Bo tutaj w ogóle nie ma, jest taki dodatkowy moduł, jeśli ktoś chce, jeśli są pieniądze itd. Ale nie wyobrażam sobie, że np. ktoś kto uczył się przez tam 2 miesiące interviewing, że jest przygotowany do budowania tych kwestionariuszy 'surveys' i do tych wywiadów pogłębionych itd. Myślę, że to przychodzi z praktyką, ale myślę, no tu jest tak, że mniej wymagają, no nie ma tak, nie ma, jest łatwiej. I też klucz w tym, żeby się dobrze sprzedać, nie.

- *Czyli, że ogólny wniosek, że chciałabyś tutaj jednak zostać i tutaj skończyć ten doktorat i tu pracować i tu przeprowadzać badania?*

- Wiesz co, nie wiem. To jest mi bez różnicy. Tak naprawdę zaczynam lubić Irlandię. Myślę, że najwyższy czas. Przestaje mi przeszkadzać ta pogoda, chociaż czasami ciężko. Myślę sobie tak, 'nie chciałabym zaczynać od nowa, gdzieś indziej'. Więc jak robię to już tutaj, to to skończę, ale co się później zdarzy? Tak naprawdę na rynku tutaj, żeby dostać pozycję wykładowcy, to żeby zostać wykładowcą gdzieś na uniwersytecie..doktorat to jest tylko takie...no taki, żeby odkreślić na liście wymagań, nie. A tak naprawdę to się liczy wszystkie artykuły, które piszesz, które publikujesz, nie. Stajesz się po prostu specjalistą w dziedzinie. Tu jest duży też nacisk na cały ten taki 'social networking'. Chodzi o to żeby bywać, żeby się pokazywać, żeby poznawać, nie. Myślę, że dużo jest po znajomości rzeczy, bardzo dużo. Bardzo często mi się zdarza, że ktoś podchodzi do mnie i pyta, słuchaj, czy nie chcesz zrobić tego i tego. I wcale nie jest tak, że ta praca jest ogłoszona gdzieś czy coś. Ja zawsze mówię 'pewnie że chcę'. Tak, jest bardziej chyba wszystko nieformalne. Nie wiem dokąd zmierza ten cały, ta nasza rozmowa..

- *Tak, trochę odjechałyśmy, ale to nie szkodzi. A mogę jeszcze na chwilę wrócić do czasu sprzed roku 2005, do Polski? Skąd tobie się w ogóle wzięła antropologia i pomysł na studia? Dlaczego chciałaś studiować, czy to było uwarunkowanie rodzinne, że wszyscy w rodzinie studiują, czy że wszyscy myśleli, że 'Suzanne' to będzie studiować, 'Suzanne' jest dobra w tym czy w tamtym. Czy miałaś już wcześniej takie zacięcie do tego typu rzeczy?*

- Nie wiem. Wydaje mi się, że od zawsze wiedziałam, że pójdę na studia. Tak samo mój brat. Także to było oczywiste. Musimy się dobrze uczyć, musimy iść na studia. Moja mama bardzo też naciskała, w sensie wielokrotnie nam powtarzała, że tylko edukacja jest tym co się liczy, bo edukacja jest, była tym co jej dało ...bo była z wielodzietnej rodziny. I jedyna, jedyna w swojej rodzinie ma maturę i wyżej. Skończyła też studia. I dzięki temu jest tym kim jest. Jej tam siostry pracują na zasadzie sprzątaczeki, zupełnie takie niewykwalifikowane prace. Natomiast ona zaszła bardzo wysoko w swojej karierze, więc tak nam zawsze powtarzała, że tylko edukacja. To jest jedyna droga, żeby robić to, co się chce robić.

- *Ale to było takie w twoim przypadku entuzjastyczne podejście, że 'o idźcie dzieci na studia, fajnie jest, będziecie mieli potem fajne życie, będziecie robili to co chcecie robić, co lubicie robić'? Czy na zasadzie takiej, że edukacja to jest to, co pozwoli ci przetrwać, to co da ci chleb i musisz iść. Czy ty to traktowałaś bardziej jako obowiązek, czy bardziej tak wewnętrznie jako coś co Ty też chciałaś?*

- Wiesz co, nie wiem.

- *Bo jak tak ciebie teraz słucham, to tak sobie myślę, takie mam odczucie, że z jednej strony kierunek który wybrałaś jest ciekawy i ciebie interesował, a z drugiej strony takie masz poczucie że musisz to robić.*

- Wiesz co, nie wiem. Pfff...na pewno jest w tym trochę ambicji, że nie chcę tego rzucać. Po prostu czułam się , że znowu coś mi w życiu nie wyszło, nie.

- *Czemu znowu?*

- Pewnie dużo rzeczy mi nie wyszło, nie edukacyjnych, nie, ale na innych płaszczyznach. Nie wiem, ale zawsze lubiłam się uczyć, więc zawsze chciałam iść na studia, nie. Studiowałam też psychologię. Dostałam się w ogóle na wiele kierunków. Dostałam się też na kulturoznawstwo. Dostałam się też do Krakowa, i to było takie nie wiem. Trudno mi nawet powiedzieć, jakieś to było takie oczywiste.

- *Czyli nie do końca miałaś tak sprecyzowane, że akurat tą jedną rzecz konkretną, i dlatego zdawałaś na kilka kierunków i tutaj chyba podobnie zrobiłaś.*

- Nie wiedziałam co chcę robić zdając na studia w Polsce. I myślę że do dzisiaj nie wiem. I to jest tak że dobre stopnie miałam zawsze ze wszystkiego. Tak mniej więcej. I do dzisiaj bardzo interesuje mnie matematyka.

- *I trudniej podjąć decyzję.*

- Tak i zawsze , może też jestem taki słomiany ogień, nie, ale ja bym chciała, bardzo bym jeszcze kiedyś chciała studiować matematykę, albo fizykę. Jakieś takie zupełnie inne kierunki, inne tory myślenia. Albo języków się uczyć. No wszystko mi się chciało, po prostu lubię się uczyć.

-*Nawet bez matematyki, jeśli skończysz te studia , to możesz rozwijać się w teoriach badań ilościowych, które też mają związek z matematyką, z tworzeniem programów.*

- Natomiast tutaj nie wiedziałam, to znaczy wyobrażałam sobie, że dużo rzeczy działa tutaj tak jak w Polsce. Że jest doktorat i że jest potrzebny do tego żeby być badaczem. Dopiero z czasem się dowiaduję że tu wyglądają rzeczy inaczej, też z czasem się dowiaduję że tu jest wszystko bardziej elastyczne.

- *I że mogłaś z mniejszym stresem do tego podejść i że łatwiej by ci było. A dlaczego wybrałaś Irlandię to już mówiłaś, bo tu brat chyba był?*

- Tak , to było kilka , to miało być tylko na kilka miesięcy, na początku

- *A ile masz rodzeństwa?*

- Tylko brata.

- *Starszego czy młodszego?*

- Młodszy dwa lata

- *I brat tutaj nie studiował, tylko przyjechał pracować?*

- Tak, on przerwał socjologię w Polsce, pracował tutaj, zaliczał na odległość, że jeździł zaliczać, dwa razy w roku jeździł zaliczać. I później wrócił do Polski.

- *A jeszcze jestem ciekawa, bo pierwsze twoje doświadczenia z uniwersytetem były takie sobie. Zobaczmy, jak to się później ułoży. Chociaż z mojego punktu widzenia uważam że jest ci trudniej na zwykłym PhD niż mi, bo ja więcej miałam po drodze takich wskazówek. A to że nie do końca z nich skorzystałam, to już kwestia zdrowia czy dziecka po drodze.*

*Ale jakie były twoje doświadczenia na studiach w Polsce?*

- Pamiętam, że pierwsze, to że nigdy nie czułam się tak wolna intelektualnie. Nigdy nie sądziłam że...etnologia po prostu podważa wszystko, podważyla wszystko, co było dla mnie oczywiste. Nauczyła mnie patrzeć na rzeczy z innej zupełnie perspektywy. To się tutaj po tutejszemu nazywa chyba 'reflexivity' - zastanawiać się nad każdą rzeczą. A w szkole średniej tak właśnie nie było. W szkole średniej było że naucz się i tak masz powiedzieć, że tak właśnie było. Więc studia to było takie wielkie 'woooow'. Znaczący wszystko to było takie wielkie 'woooow'. Bo się przeprowadziłam do nowego miasta, zaczęłam nowe życie w nowym miejscu, z nowymi ludźmi. Na studiach dobrze mi szło. Nagle okazało się, że są jakieś szanse żeby tu nagle wyjechać na jakieś stypendium, pochłonęło mnie to życie. Zresztą nauka nigdy nie sprawiała mi żadnych trudności, więc to wszystko było bardzo przyjemne.

[very positive experience while studying in Poland, intellectual freedom, changing perspectives]

*I can remember, that first of all, I have never, ever before felt so intellectually free and liberated. I never thought that Ethnology is so liberating, it questions everything, and is disputed everything what seemed to obvious to me previously. It taught me to see things from different perspective, to think and wonder over every single matter. It is called reflexivity here, isn't it? The secondary school teaching was so different, you had to learn something by heart without questioning. So the college was like big Woow! I mean everything was woow. I moved to new town, I started anew in different place with new people. It was great, and I was doing well at the university, it absorbed me completely, this kind of life. Besides the learning was never a problem for me, so it was all very pleasurable.*

- *A zaliczanie przedmiotów?*

- Na Etnologii wszystkie egzaminy były ustne, to jest wielka przyjemność porozmawiać z osobą, która..

- *Która Cię w jakiś sposób inspiruje?*

- Tak, wiadomo, że były osoby, których nie lubiłam i wtedy to było bardzo dużo stresu

- *A to jaki to był uniwersytet?*

- UM w Poznaniu

- *I tam jest Etnologia?*



- Tak, i było 36 osób na roku jak zaczynałam, bardzo malutki kierunek. Jak kończyłam to chyba tylko 15 zostało. Znaczący był tam taki przedmiot, Mapa Etniczna Świata, który polegał na tym, że trzeba było wkuć mniej więcej 6 milionów słów w różnych językach, 6 milionów – może przesadzam, nie, ale wszystkie generalnie większość mniejszości etnicznych, które żyją na całym świecie, różnych plemion, jakimi językami się posługują, gdzie dokładnie mieszkają. I jak nie do końca np. wiedziałam, strzelałam teraz, gdzie jest rzeka Orinoko, a tu musiałam się nauczyć że na wschód od rzeki Orinoko do jakiegoś strumienia. Więc to było bardzo trudne, zwłaszcza że to było tylko pół roku, bardzo intensywny przedmiot. Na tym bardzo dużo osób odpadło i to jest jedyny przedmiot, który uważam że był zupełnie niepotrzebny. Oczywiście wierzenia religijne, najważniejsze rytuały itd., bo gdyby on może trwał rok i gdyby nam dawał takie pojęcie, żeby pokazać jak różnie ludzie żyją, w jak różne rzeczy wierzą, może miałoby to sens. Ale ponieważ my to mieliśmy wszystko zapamiętać. I tak nikt nie zapamiętał, w sensie, zapamiętaliśmy, zapomnieliśmy. To była wiedza encyklopedyczna do wkucia, natomiast wszystkie inne to mieliśmy egzaminy ustne, które były bardzo przyjemne.

*- To akurat trafiłaś na bardzo ciekawy kierunek studiów*

*- A mogłybyśmy porównać jak się czułaś na uczelni w Polsce, a jak się czujesz tutaj. Czy widzisz jakieś różnice, jakieś zmiany. Mogą być lepsze mogą być gorsze, to jest Twoja tylko percepcja. Nie musisz mówić, jak system kształcenia wygląda, ani go porównywać, tylko jak to było z Twojej perspektywy.*

- Znaczący myślę przede wszystkim, że byłam dużo młodsza jak byłam w Polsce, a więc byłam bardziej wystraszona i niepewna. Ale to chyba wiąże się bardziej z tym, że byłam młodsza. Natomiast tutaj jestem jednocześnie studentem i uczę. Więc moja rola jest inna, mam dużo więcej kompetencji, dużo większe pole manewru, nie. W sensie moi nauczyciele, nie są tylko moimi nauczycielami, jakimś autorytetem, który muszę respektować, nie, ale są też moimi kolegami. Takimi profesjonalnymi. Więc chyba też w sensie moja pozycja się zmieniła, to jest inaczej.

*- A jeśli chodzi o Twoją osobowość, jak podchodzisz do spraw takich jak, nawet załatwienia jakiś spraw w urzędzie. Czy czujesz się bardziej pewna, czy znasz swoje prawa, czy bronis swojego stanowiska, czy tutaj coś się zmieniło, czy też zawsze taka byłaś i tu się niewiele zmieniło?*

- Myślę, że nigdy za bardzo się nie broniłam i nadal za bardzo się nie bronię, ja się boję autorytetów, ja się boję sytuacji oficjalnych. I to jest właśnie ciekawe, że nawet jak jestem tutaj i uczę, prowadzę jakieś tam zajęcia, to przyjmuje właśnie rolę taką profesjonalną. A potem muszę przejść się do banku i jakaś tam panienska z okienka krzywo na mnie spojrzy i znowu się czuję właśnie takim kimś kto mówi po angielsku z ciężkim akcentem wschodnio-europejskim i na kogo właśnie można huknąć, nie. Także nie, tu się za wiele nie zmieniło. A jeśli chodzi o takie doświadczenie uczenia się, to myślę że jak byłam młodsza to może miałam dużo więcej zapału do uczenia się. Bo wszystko odkrywałam po raz pierwszy. A teraz jest to takie mozolne popychanie tego doktoratu do przodu. No i dlatego też że nie mam żadnego tam dofinansowania, więc też taka zonglerka między pracą a doktoratem, więc też ten doktorat na który właściwie nie starcza czasu. Teraz ta nauka już nie jest taką przygodą, jest mniej radosna. Zresztą właśnie jak mówię, te lata studenckie w Polsce, to typowe takie lata studenckie, kiedy

ma się dużo znajomych, jakieś imprezy, wypadki. Teraz w ogóle prawie nie mam na to czasu.

[financial issues]

*And also the fact that I don't have any grant to finance my doctorate. So it is like juggling, between work and doctorate, and there is not enough time for study. So all this learning is not an adventure, it is much less joyful than previous time in Poland. All those students years in Poland, they were typical, stereotyped years of studying, where you have many friends, partying and outing. Now, I simply I don't have time for it.*

-Troszeczkę były takie sielankowe te lata w Polsce.

- Również pewnie dlatego, że mama mnie bardzo wspierała, finansowo. A tutaj jestem sama. Więc to na pewno wpływa na to. Tu jest też większa odpowiedzialność za siebie może.

-A jak się czujesz w kulturze irlandzkiej? Czy coś się zmieniło? Tęsknisz za Polską?

- Nie. W kulturze irlandzkiej...na początku bardzo jej nie lubiłam, dużo rzeczy mi przeszkadzało. Ale myślę że to była też refleksja nad polską mentalnością. Nad tym, że wszystko się krytykuje, taki etnocentryzm, też nie. Porównywanie, że nasze jest najlepsze, tylko dlatego że jest nasze. Potem się przyzwyczaiłam do kultury irlandzkiej. W tej chwili zaczynam ją lubić. Zaczynam bardzo doceniać to, że ludzie się uśmiechają na ulicy do siebie. I nawet jeżeli to 'how are you' wcale nie znaczy, nikogo nie obchodzi jak ja się mam, to i tak myślę, że jest to lepsze, niż jakieś spojrzenie spod byka, z którymi się można spotkać w Polsce.

[first impression of Irish and their culture]

*The Irish culture. I didn't like it so much at the beginning. There was many things disturbing me. But it is exactly the reflection on Polishness, where you are critiquing everything, its very substantial ethnocentrism. It is about comparing everything, except that what is ours is the best obviously, just because it's ours. Later, I got used to Irish culture. I am starting to like it very much. I am beginning to appreciate that people are smiling on the street to each other. And even if this How are you means nothing, it is still better than 'look out of the bull', which you can experience in Poland.*

Ale Polska ma taki obraz sielankowy dla mnie w głowie, w sensie, że jak myślę o Polsce, to myślę o Puszczy Białowieskiej, o Tatrach, takie jakieś krajobrazy wakacyjne bardzo skojarzenia.

Ale za każdym razem jak tam wracam i widzę dużo takiej biedy, przynajmniej tam gdzie ja jestem, skąd pochodzę, to tak...ludzie są biedni, się nie uśmiechają, ekspedientki w sklepach nie powiedzą ci dzień dobry. Znaczą czekam zawsze właściwie z utęsknieniem żeby wrócić tutaj. Nie wiem czy chciałabym tu mieszkać na stałe ale wiem że nie wrócę do Polski.

[mythological fairyland, sentimental way of memorising Poland]

*Poland, I have an idyllic image of Poland, I mean, when I think of Poland, I can see Białowieża Forest, Tatry mountains, kind of the Summer images and connotations. However, every time, when I am back there I can also see a lot of poverty, at least at the place, where I am from. People are poor, they do not smile, they won't tell you Good morning even. I am looking so much forward to*

*going back here. I don't know if I would like to live, to stay here for good, but I do know I will not get back to Poland!(Suzanne)*

- *A co się zmieniło? Na początku jak przyjechałaś do Irlandii to miałaś takie plany że może wrócisz do Polski, a później po jakimś czasie to się zmieniło, że właśnie jeżeli już to w inną stronę a nie do Polski*

-Znaczy ja od początku nie planowałam tu właściwie zostać. Ja tylko przyjechałam tu na parę miesięcy żeby zarobić pieniądze w krótkim okresie czasu i wyjechać w podróż dookoła świata czy gdzieś. To nie wyszło, okazało się , że wcale nie było tak łatwo. Potem jak zaczęłam tu studiować to pomyślałam sobie że może wrócę do Polski, do Poznania, bo bardzo lubiłam Ponań, lubiłam tą uczelnię. Ale teraz też jak moje życie osobiste się zmienia i mój partner jest Irlandczykiem, więc właściwie nie widzę tego , nie sądzę żeby on pojechał do Polski. Nie wiem właściwie co on by tam miał robić. Więc jakby też moje doświadczenia osobiste motywują moje wybory zawodowe.

-*Ale też gdybyś miała propozycje pracy w innym anglojęzycznym kraju to myślisz, że podjęłabyś ją? Zastanawiałabyś się długo nad tym?*

- Tak jak mówię, ta moja osobista, intymna relacja jest dla mnie bardzo ważna, więc na pewno gdyby on mógł no to tak, ale...

- *Czyli nie czujesz się tutaj tak mocno zakorzeniona, związana z tym krajem, tylko poprzez to że tu masz partnera, to ta relacja osobista intymna jest tu decydująca?*

- Tak

- *A jakie miałaś wyobrażenia o Irlandii zanim tutaj przejechałaś? Czy było jakieś wyobrażenie, a jeżeli tak to jakie ono było? Czy dużo wiedziałaś o tym kraju?*

- Nie pamiętam, czy coś myślałam o Irlandii. Wydaje mi się że nie wiedziałam nic. Może miałam takie skojarzenie ogólne- zielona wyspa, która jak przyjechałam to się okazała w ogóle nie zielona. Jakies takie wrzosa i nie wiem, kolor błota wszędzie. Wyobrażałam sobie Dublin jako drugi Wiedeń i bardzo się zdziwiłam. Może miałam dużo oczekiwań ekonomicznych, dlatego że wszystkie osoby, które były w Polsce, które przyjeżdżały z wyjazdu do Londynu, to tak bardzo się pokazywały , się kołysały. I miały taki nastrój 'Aach stary, ile ja tam zarobiłem'. Nikt nie mówił że pracował na zmywaku 70 godzin tygodniowo, nie wspominał. Tylko rysowali takie perspektywy, że przyjeżdżasz i te pieniądze prawie że leżą na ulicy. Więc takie też miałam oczekiwanie , że tu jest naprawdę łatwo. Że bez wysiłku tu zdobędę fortunę i sobie gdzieś pojadę.

[very general, distorted image of Ireland before coming to this country]

*Ireland? I knew almost nothing. Very general image- the green island- the perception after coming here appeared to be so different. It appeared that the land is not so green, I would say that the prevailing colour was the colour of mud and heather. I pictured Dublin as another Vienna and I was very surprised after arrival. Maybe my economic expectations were high. It was because all the persons coming from the excursions to London or Ireland, who were back, they were kind of, you know, they showed themselves, they swayed and they were in such a mood, 'Ah well, I have earned so much there!'. No one mentioned they have worked 70 hours per week at the kitchen sink. No one even mentioned it,*

*they were drawing such perspectives, that you are coming there and the money are almost lying on the streets. So it was my expectation as well, I thought it is so easy there, that I can earn fortune and go wherever I want .*

- *A jak to się stało że ty w ogóle zaczęłaś tu studiować?*

- Skończyłam studia tak we wrześniu albo październiku. Czyli później tak, obroniłam egzamin magisterski i zawsze chciałam iść na doktorat, jakiś zrobić doktorat. A nabór w Polsce jest w czerwcu, więc miałam tych kilka miesięcy i pomyślałam, że przyjadę do Irlandii, zarobię pieniądze, pojeżdżę gdzieś i wrócę na egzamin doktorancki do Polski.

-[motivation for coming to Ireland]

*So, I finished my studies, graduated in October, and I always wanted to pursue a doctorate. So, I found myself free from exams and assessments in July and I had a couple of months. I decided then to come here and make a lot of money (smiling ironically), it was because I had my brother here...so I wanted to travel for a couple of months and get back home, to Poland and apply for a PhD.*

Ale właśnie w międzyczasie poznałam kogoś i stwierdziłam że chciałabym dać temu szansę i nie chciałabym się stąd ruszać. I również dlatego że moja koleżanka tu studiowała i ja też sobie wyobrażałam ten system edukacyjny jako niedostępny. Tylko wiedziałam tyle, że tu się płaci.

Trudno nam jest doceniać gdzie my już jesteśmy. I uważam że ja osobiście miałam bardzo dużo szczęścia, że tu w ogóle jestem i gdyby nie przyjaciółka, to ja nie zaczęłabym tych studiów. Nawet bym o tym nie wiedziała, nawet bym o tym nie pomyślała, pewnie do dzisiaj byłabym tam gdzieś na zmywaku, nie. Więc myślę że wiele osób jest już w wieku takim dojrzałym i nadal właściwie donikąd idzie. Jakiś może brak szczęścia.

[-feeling privileged for possibility of studying in Ireland and possibilities it opens for her]

*It is hard to appreciate where we are at already. Personally, I believe that I am very lucky to be here. I would not start those studies if my friends did not help me. I would not even know about it, I would not even think about it and I would probably be still working at the washing sink('na zmywaku'), right? So this is what I think, there are many people at a certain age, middle age who are going actually nowhere. No luck, maybe .*

- *Dziś chyba nie masz za dużo czasu, więc chyba zakończymy na tym Bo jeszcze chciałam ciebie o mnóstwo rzeczy zapytać, o to w jaki sposób ciebie te studia zmieniły, co ci dały, jak zmieniły jeśli w ogóle twoja percepcję, sposób postrzegania rzeczywistości i Irlandii i rynku pracy i siebie samej itd.*