

Anne White

University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies

Aneta Słowik (2016). *Polish Emigrants' Transnational Advice and Support Networks*. Wrocław: Scientific Publishing House of the University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław, pp. 177

This is an outstandingly well-researched book which consists of analysis of the author's own very original project findings embedded in an impressively thorough discussion of secondary literature.

Although many publications about post-2004 migrants comment on the discourse of mistrust in other Poles which seems to permeate Polish society abroad, they are not usually able to document the sources of that mistrust, or even be sure how 'real' it actually is. Stories about unreliable compatriots seem often to be based on stereotypes, and numerous authors have remarked on the contrast between discursive mistrust and really existing social support provided by Polish migrant networks.

In her book, Dr. Słowik takes a very close look at migrant networks and is able to identify actual experiences of deception and manipulation which indicate that mistrust is based on more than hearsay. In a striking metaphor, Dr. Słowik divides networks into 'clean' and 'sticky'. Like flies in a spider web, migrants can become ensnared in sticky networks. She also uses her concept of the 'floating' migrant (developed in her monograph *Three Waves of Polish Emigration*) to explain why migrants are vulnerable to ensnarement.

The networks which form the focus of this book are advice and support networks (sieci poradnicze). As far as I know, no one except Dr. Słowik has analysed advice-providing networks existing among Polish migrants in the UK, other than to describe formal organisations such as NGOs and trade unions. Hence this book represents an original contribution to the sub-field of migration studies which is concerned with post-2004 Polish migration. Scholars working in field have produced so many publications over the last five or six years that it can seem that nothing is left to research. However, the bulk of these publications are sociological or anthropological in approach; psychological aspects of migrants' experiences abroad

are neglected, and Dr. Słowik's book therefore provides a refreshingly different perspective.

The culmination of the work is Chapter Nine, which presents an original typology of advice and support networks. This constitutes a neat way of organising and presenting the research findings and is one of the most fascinating chapters in the book.

Despite its originality, however, the book is exceptionally well-grounded in existing literature. At every step (perhaps even slightly too much in the later chapters, when I sometimes felt I wanted to hear more about Dr. Słowik's own findings) the author refers to the relevant scholarship, not just about Poles but also about other migrant groups, as well as more general and theoretical research. The result is a very strong conceptual framework, where Dr Słowik can compare the findings of her own research project to the findings of other researchers, and build her arguments about numerous aspects of her topic with reference to the wider body of migration studies. In so doing, she makes a strong contribution to transnationalism studies.

The book is very well-written. The more abstract sections use appropriate terminology but (to me at least) this never seemed like unnecessary 'jargon'. I would suppose that any social scientist picking up this text would be able to read it without being disturbed by unfamiliar technical language. Dr. Słowik quotes extensively from her interview transcriptions and this provides vivid illustration for her arguments.

The book is definitely worthy of publication and will be of interest to a wide range of readers.