

POLISH MIGRANTS IN THE “NEW” EU: THE NOTION OF (POST)TRANSFORMATION

Milena Błahuta, University of Warsaw
Visegrad Fellow, Institute of Contemporary History of the
Czech Academy of Sciences

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Two decades after the 2000s EU enlargements, the migratory landscape in the “new” EU is becoming increasingly complex. Countries of the region are now gradually transforming into European immigration sub-centers, broadly attracting immigrants from outside of the EU. While recent research has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of mobility patterns in the region, migration studies largely remain anchored in the ‘East-West’ and ‘center-periphery’ paradigms.

The presentation, embedded in broader debates concerning processes of transformations of the migration landscape in CEE, will critically examine the relational nature of these frameworks by focusing on migrants who chose to migrate from Poland to other countries of the “new EU” – cross-wise dominant direction of migration flows. Informed by 75 semi-structured interviews with young Polish migrants in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, Milena Błahuta shows how the categories of “East” and “West” are understood now, 30 years after the “successful integration” of these countries with the Western Bloc. She will also discuss how the interviewees perceive and navigate their new environments through the lens of drawing parallels with the Polish “modernization” of the last 30 years. By analyzing their perceptions of familiarity and otherness, she will suggest the potential relevance of the category of “post-transformation” rather than ‘post-socialism’ when applied to the analysis of this mobility.

Finally, by showing how the studied migrations were informed by cross-generational memory, Milena Błahuta aims to open the discussion on whether we should analyze them as a completely new type of mobility and where we can look for potential points of their continuity.

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