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MAGDALENA NOWICKA (Humboldt-Universität  
zu Berlin)

Bourdieu's theory of practice in the study  
of cultural encounters and transnational  
transfers in migration

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MPI zur Erforschung multireligiöser und multiethnischer Gesellschaften  
MPI for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen  
Hermann-Föge-Weg 11, 37073 Göttingen, Germany  
Tel.: +49 (551) 4956 - 0  
Fax: +49 (551) 4956 - 170

[www.mmg.mpg.de](http://www.mmg.mpg.de)

[info@mmg.mpg.de](mailto:info@mmg.mpg.de)

## Abstract

This working paper provides the theoretical reflections and research objectives of the ongoing project *Transforming Migration: Transnational Transfer of Multicultural Habitus*. It develops the proposal of applying Bourdieu's theory of practice in studying intercultural skills of migrants and the mechanisms of their transfer to the space of origin of migrants. Conceptual merits and challenges of working with Bourdieu's intellectual heritage are discussed and illustrated with preliminary results from the project's first phase. The paper argues that Bourdieu's theory allows us to see the dispositions, attitudes, worldviews and practices that people display as processes rather than individual qualities, which need to be considered within a complex system of power relations between migrants, their host societies, and their transnationally spanning social networks.

**Keywords:** Pierre Bourdieu, Theory of Practice, Migrant Transnationalism, Cultural Encounters, Diversity.

## Author

MAGDALENA NOWICKA (Dr. Phil.) is professor of Migration and Transnationalism at the Institute of Social Sciences, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and a principal investigator of the ERC funded project TRANSFORMIG. She is member of the Berlin Institute for Integration and Migration Research (BIM). She holds degrees from the Universities of Warsaw, Krakow, and Munich. 2010-2013 she was research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen. Her latest book is *The Ashgate Research Companion on Cosmopolitanism* (Farnham 2011, with Maria Rovisco). Currently she is working on a book on *Conviviality* (with Tilmann Heil, DeGruyter Open, forthcoming 2016).



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## 1. Introduction

The last decade has witnessed a growing academic and policy concern with ‘living with difference’ (Hall 1993: 359), in terms of individuals’ capacities and the social conditions for it (ex. Amin 2002; 2012; Yeoh 2004; Binnie et al. 2006; Thrift 2008; Nava 2006). Several complex and interrelated processes, in particular globalization of material, imaginative and human forms of mobility, urbanization and diversification of urban populations (Vertovec 2011) are said to contribute to tensions between people of different social and cultural backgrounds. While that may not affect all places equally, the prevalence of social inequalities is one of reasons for violent conflicts, and the regular outbreak of such conflicts are reason enough to increase scientific efforts to understand when and why established residents and newcomers from other countries and cultures live peacefully together, and when and why not.

Conventional scholarship rooted in the Chicago School saw immigrant groups undertaking the norms, values, beliefs and behaviors of their ‘hosts’ (Gordon 1971; Berry 1980; Alba and Nee 2003). The most recent scholarship recognizes that adaptation processes are non-linear, and that they involve personal stress, ambivalences, rejections and contradictory outcomes (ex. Tabar et al. 2010), as migrants incorporate into a host society without losing their ties to the society and culture of origin (Glick Schiller et al. 2006). A second string of research, that often refers to the ‘contact hypothesis’ put forward by Gordon Allport in 1954 (overview in Hewstone 2009), is concerned with conditions for convivial encounters in urban spaces (Amin 2008; Simpson 2011; Koch and Latham 2011) and the transformative role that immigrants play in city life (Clayton 2009; Valentine 2008; Lobo 2010; Valentine and Waite 2012; Matejskova and Leitner 2011). This new ‘geography of encounters’ (Valentine 2008) seeks to explore the complex and intersecting ways in which power between different city populations operates.

The first puzzling problem identified by recent research, and yet insufficiently explained by it, is the “paradoxical gap between values [that people declare having vis à vis other people] and [their actual] practices [vis à vis other people]” (Valentine 2008: 325). Such a gap, is for example displayed, when people claim tolerance but still engage in violent actions against members of other groups, or when positive encounters in a neighborhood are accompanied by narrative strategies of racial or ethnic hierarchy building, exclusion or superiority and discrimination. The last case has been demonstrated in the case of the ‘new’, post-2004, Polish immigrants to UK who narratively construct their identities as superior to other national and

ethnic groups (Datta and Brickell 2009; Nowicka 2014a). At the same time, Poles in the UK integrate quickly and successfully into British society. The evidence thus proves contradictory: their social networks extend to outgroups (White and Ryan 2008) while they at the same time easily adopt the racial discourses present in UK (Nowicka 2014a).

The second issue dealt with in this research is the question of whether or not encounters with cultural difference can be 'meaningful' in the sense of transforming into more general and durable attitudes of tolerance towards diversity (Valentine 2008: 325), and if so, how this process occurs. The weakness of previous studies is to focus on the attitudes that people declare, although it is well recognized that there is no simple causality between declared attitudes and practices (Howarth 2006). Moreover, some research suggests that the way attitudes are declared in conversation (and also in a research interview) is driven by general rules of communication (Maas et al. 1989); the developing field of social cognition research draws our attention to how prejudice and stereotypes are implicit and inaccessible to people's conscious self-declarations (Gawronski and Payne 2010). To understand people's action choices, we must thus go beyond exploring their declarative attitudes.

The large ongoing project *Transforming Migration: Transnational Transfer of Multicultural Habitus* (TRANSFORMIG)<sup>1</sup> at the Humboldt University in Berlin addresses the issue of cultural encounters, their mechanisms and conditions and their durable meaning. It does so using the epistemological and conceptual framework developed by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu draws our attention to the dynamic transformations of social actor's values, orientations, beliefs and behaviors in relation to the field to which he or she becomes and is a part of. This is why TRANSFORMIG considers the process of migrants' adaptation to a new environment in terms of habitus and its transformations. The project exemplarily investigates how Polish migrants encounter ethnically, culturally and religiously different others in super-diverse urban settings in Germany and England. Moreover, the project is interested in the meaning of intercultural experiences beyond the single moment and place of encounter;

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1 The idea for TRANSFORMIG emerged during my research fellowship at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Göttingen. I am endlessly thankful to the colleagues and friends from the institute who inspired my thinking and for the great support of the whole team in preparing the proposal to the European Research Council. TRANSFORMIG is funded by the ERC Starting Grant No. 313369 awarded to Magdalena Nowicka. For more information visit [www.transformig.hu-berlin.de](http://www.transformig.hu-berlin.de)



therefore, it asks which mechanisms govern the transfer of migrants' newly acquired habitus to their friends and relatives in their place of origin.

This working paper provides the theoretical reflections and research objectives<sup>2</sup> of the TRANSFORMIG project. In particular, it develops the proposal of applying Bourdieu's theory of practice in studying intercultural skills and their transfer. I begin with a brief overview of the project's design and its main research questions. The discussion that follows focuses on the conceptual merits and challenges of working with Bourdieu's intellectual heritage when empirically researching how encounters with ethnic, religious and socio-cultural diversity affects both the people involved in such situations, as well as larger groups whose members are not directly exposed to super-diversity. To illustrate my argument I use several vignettes based on field notes and the preliminary analysis of the first tranches of the project's empirical material that was collected in the last months.

I argue that Bourdieu's theory allows us to see the dispositions, attitudes, world-views and practices that people display as processes rather than individual qualities. It also allows us to address the transformation of migrant dispositions within complex systems of power relations. However, Bourdieu's theory needs to be adapted to the demands of researching transnational migrants and social fields. I address several challenges related to the use of Bourdieu's theory of practice, and identify a number of open questions in his conceptualization of habitus relation to the study of transnational migration. In particular, Bourdieu did not reflect much on the mechanisms of the emergence of habitus amongst entire groups, or the inter-personal transmission of dispositions, despite the fact that he gave attention to the inter-generational transmission of habitus. He rejected symbolic interactionism and the study of 'manifest social relations' (Bourdieu 1977: 175) in order to give priority to the analysis of 'objective relations' in the fields. Only his late work focused more on how people interact with others, or enter into relationships with others to increase their capital (de Nooy 2003). The transfer we study occurs in 'manifest relationships'.

As the project is still in progress, I conclude the paper by sketching how future results will contribute to the literature and to reflections on the question of how to live-with-difference.

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2 Methodological challenges of implementing Bourdieu's conceptual and methodological toolset are discussed at length in Nowicka 2015. A detailed account of sampling design and the sample overview can be found at [www.transformig.hu-berlin.de](http://www.transformig.hu-berlin.de).

## 2. TRANSFORMIG's research questions

TRANSFORMIG replies to calls for understanding the meaning of cultural encounters and asks: how do migrants develop the competence to successfully operate within a new society and culture, and will these newly acquired intercultural skills and attitudes transfer between individuals and geographical locations? Can migration trigger a shift towards more tolerance and respect for ethnic and cultural diversity in the countries of origin? And how are these effects mediated by particular conditions? Accordingly, the objectives of TRANSFORMIG are to examine intercultural competences of migrants and their peer groups in the home country, to reveal the perceptions of diversity and their contexts, and to understand the conditions of acquisition and transfer of habitus. TRANSFORMIG exemplarily studies Polish migrants in England (London and Birmingham) and Germany (Berlin and Munich) who arrived in these countries after May 2004 as new citizens of the European Union.

TRANSFORMIG is rooted in the numerous studies on migration, in particular of Poles, to other European countries. Their results are often contradictory. For example, we know that Poles in the UK extend their social networks to include British citizens (Burrell 2009), but they also adopt the racial discourse present in the UK (Nowicka 2014a) and construct their identities as superior to other national and ethnic groups (Datta and Brickell 2009; Nowicka 2012). More broadly, there is a clash between migrants' cosmopolitan outlook (Glick Schiller and Irving 2014) and the prevalence of racism, anti-Semitism and prejudice in Europe (Zick et al. 2011). On the other hand, there is growing recognition of the importance of the transfer of ideas and norms, social support, innovation, knowledge, and models of behavior along transnational social networks (Krzyzowski 2013; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). Yet, despite the evidence on durable and vivid flows, provided by voluminous literature on migrant transnationalism (overview in Vertovec 2009), and studies on the social remittances of migrants in the USA (ex. Levitt 2001), we only have contradictory findings on how non-migrants are affected by these flows. For example, migrant remittances may actually service to reproduce traditional gender roles (King et al. 2006), but they may also liberate women from family ties (Taylor et al. 2006). If we want to know whether cultural encounters of migrants in the culturally heterogeneous settings of their residence are meaningful, we inevitably have to look at their places of origin as well and ask if, and how, their experiences change their non-migrant peers and their lifeworlds. TRANSFORMIG, therefore, collects data on migrants' social networks, which include non-migrants

in Poland. Interviews with selected peers in Poland provide information on how meanings assigned to encounters with diversity are negotiated in transnational social spaces.

Accordingly, our research demands a theoretical framework that fulfills multiple requirements. First, it needs to consider social actor's (past) dispositions, which impact on how they encounter other people abroad. At the same time, the theory needs to remedy some of the shortcomings of the classical enculturation approaches that considered migrants' competences as fix and given, and thus ready to reject, or be replaced, if needed (Berry 1997). Thus, and second, such a theory ought to understand dispositions, attitudes, worldviews, and practices that people display as being processes rather than individual qualities. Change – of individuals and groups – is for us of primary interest. We believe that large scale migration – and this is true for the Polish case – impacts whole societies, as it certainly does impact individuals and their families. Third, an appropriate theory will address how ideas and values transfer between people. Empirical studies on such transfers have so far failed in establishing their mechanisms and conditions. Fourth, a suitable theory will be attuned to the calls from new human geography to address power relations both between the members of majority and minority groups, as well as between different minorities. We suspect that particular structures of micro-level power relations are an important factor in enhancing or hindering both the acquisition and transfer of intercultural competence in migration.

For these reasons, Bourdieu's theory of practice offers an ideal theoretical framing for TRANSFORMIG's research goals. The notion of habitus allows us to address the dispositions that migrants 'bring with' them to a new country, as well as how they evolve with time in a new social setting. Bourdieu's notion of hysteresis (1977; 2000a; 1999) is particularly useful in this respect. We can best shed light on the dynamics of struggles for positions that involve strategies of discriminating others and feeling superior to other groups, through the notion of field. Further, Bourdieu (1977) forcefully argued that practices are neither a consequence of individual attitudes nor of their thinking or rational calculations; his theory thus allows to go beyond the research on declared attitudes and helps to understand intercultural encounters as social praxis that is embedded in complex structures of symbolic relations between social actors.

### 3. Migration, hysteresis and transformation of habitus

The recognition of the social nature of attitudes such as tolerances towards people of other ethnicity or religion goes back to the work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1919), who explored social attitudes and their process of re-organization amongst immigrants from rural Poland as they adjusted to urban life in America. Later, the concept of 'social representation' was coined in psychology to grasp how meanings are generated socially (Wagner 2012).<sup>3</sup> Social representations are deeply internalized and embodied by the social actors sharing the same social conditioning, and they are evident in social practices (Bradbury 1999). Bourdieu's (1977) proposal bears some similarities to this concept, as it stresses the deeply social nature of attitudes and practices. Bourdieu's conception of habitus points to how practices are a result of actors' positioning in complex structures of power and their ability to mobilise the social, cultural and economic resources they posit and to generate new forms of capital in order to sustain or improve their symbolic status.

Bourdieu defines habitus as a property of social actors. It is 'structured' by one's past and present circumstances (such as family upbringing and educational experiences), and helps to shape one's present and future practice. Habitus comprises a system of dispositions that generate perceptions, appreciations and practices (Bourdieu 1990: 53). Habitus is thus a result as well as a cause for an individual's way of being, acting and thinking. It accounts for the 'practical knowledge' of social actors in the sense that they 'know', through socialization, how to act, feel, talk, hold one's body, etc.

Practice, according to Bourdieu, results from relations between one's disposition (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital)<sup>4</sup>, within the current state of 'play' of that field (Bourdieu 1986: 101). Consequently, practice does not possess distinctive qualities such as its own structure that would not be an effect and cause of habi-

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3 The turn towards individualism and experimentalism in social psychology for decades shaped the research on attitudes understood as fixed, enduring internal dispositions of individuals and it finally led to the critical reaction to this stance in form of theories of 'social representations' (Howarth 2006).

4 'Capital' belongs to Bourdieu's three main "thinking tools", together with 'habitus' and 'field'. TRANSFORMIG considers how social actors' dispositions and practices change accordingly to the shifting positions they take in the field(s), dependently on how valorisation of capital(s) is (re)negotiated in the field. In this article I cease to provide readers with a lengthy discussion on the term and how it is applied in migration scholarship; instead, I recommend further readings (Nowicka 2012; 2013; 2015).

tus' relation to the field. If so, cognitive, emotional and habitual aspects of practice need to be understood as analytical categories inherent to habitus acting in the field. Thus, in order to understand the practices of actors, it is crucial to understand their habituses and the nature of the fields they are active in. The challenge, though, is to account for the evolving 'logics and histories' of both habitus and a field (Bourdieu 1993: 46), and for their mutual influences. The field, as part of the ongoing contexts in which we live, structures the habitus; while at the same time the habitus is the basis for actors' understandings of their lives and the fields in which they act.

This immanently relational view on habitus is of key importance to TRANSFORMIG, which wants to understand how migrants might be affected through cultural encounters, and thus how their habitus transforms. Bourdieu often neglected to make change explicit in his analyses (Hardy 2012). Yet he writes: 'habitus, as a product of social conditionings, and thus of history (...) is endlessly transformed' (Bourdieu 1994: 7). According to Bourdieu, a change in the field necessitates change in habitus, as well as vice versa. Thereby, he distinguishes two possibilities: when change occurs gradually in following already anticipated pathways and when the field is under crisis and changes occur abruptly or even catastrophically with corresponding consequences for the participants in the field. In the first case, habitus and field are well matched and the change is homeostatic. Individuals then feel, in the field, like "fish in water". When a field changes abruptly, habitus might be lagging behind this change, it might misfit the field. Bourdieu uses the term 'hysteresis' for this situation which he borrowed from scientific experimentation context and which means a mismatch between two elements which were previously coordinated, and time-lag between a change in a property and changes in an agent on which it depends (Hardy 2012: 128). For him, the two elements that depend on one another are habitus and field (Bourdieu 1977: 78). If the field changes abruptly, for example due to some external intervention that offers new opportunities, the participants of the field might not be equipped with the attitudes and practices that are needed to recognize, grasp and occupy these new field positions.

Bourdieu (2000b; 1988) describes and analyses a number of examples of habitus-field misfits and transformations, mainly in respect to educational and professional fields. Yet, he also offers an account of the personal experiences of an Algerian family in Paris. The expectations and practices of the older generation that they acquired in rural Algeria are difficult to maintain in the new environment in Paris, and they do not possess the right capital to claim desirable field positions. Their struggles to find a sustainable way of living are misrecognized within the local field of their neighbor-

hood (Bourdieu 1999). The effects of hysteresis may diminish or vanish, providing enough time has passed. Within “definite boundaries”, habitus can be “practically transformed”, so Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1990: 116).

Several authors have noticed the usefulness of Bourdieu’s theory of practices, and in particular the notion of habitus, for the study of migrants’ incorporation. For example, Tabar and Noble (in press) are interested in embodied transformations of the migrant into an inhabitant of the country of settlement by acquisition of a new habitus.<sup>5</sup> They focus in particular on the moments of disorientation that reveal the mismatch between habitus and setting. While they take the perspective of a migrant, Wise (2010) considers the misfit of habitus of longstanding residents in a neighborhood that is increasingly diversified through immigration. She explores the sensuous and affective reactions, the ruptures and disjuncture of previously well-fitted habitus, and the discomfort experienced by residents in their encounters with newcomers. Bauder (2005) also considers a misfit between the habitus acquired in the country of origin and the field (the labor market, for example) of the country receiving migrants. He understands the mismatch of habitus and field in terms of not ‘knowing the rules of the game’.

Thereby the first question emerges as to whether migrants simply juggle “cleft habitus” and navigate the dissonance between the norms and practices acquired prior to and post migration, or whether their habitus transforms to the extent that it loses its past qualities. What is the nature of the corrections and adjustments of one’s habitus? Bauder (2005) tends to see the possibilities for such changes as being quite limited, as his respondents seek fields and situations in which their old habitus fits instead of having to undergo transformation. Also Wolanik Boström and Öhlander (2012) observe how Polish medical doctors in Sweden change some of their embodied dispositions but are unable to fully ‘master the game’ in the field of a Swedish hospital. On the contrary, Tabar and Noble (in press) show how habitus slowly becomes fitted to a new field.

The ‘Polish case’ studied by TRANSFORMIG is particularly instructive because of the diametrically differential contexts between which the transnational migrants ‘switch’: Britain and Germany are characterized by a level and kind of multicultural complexity (Vertovec 2007) that is unknown to immigrants from Poland, which

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5 It is worth stressing at this point the main conceptual difference of Bourdieu’s framework to theories of assimilation, acculturation and integration: the last assume integration INTO a group, a society, a culture. Bourdieu instead considers a dynamic and intertwined change of migrant habitus and the field in which she or he begins to ‘play’.



is recognized as one of the most ethnically homogenous countries in the world (Triandafyllidou 2011). Indeed, it seems that anti-Semitic and racist outlooks are a part of Polish habitus: some survey research in Poland demonstrates that Poles feel they should protect their culture from the influences of other cultures, and they believe that some cultures are superior and some races more gifted than others. Two thirds of Poles opt for separation between immigrants and their hosts, and are against cultural mixing (Zick et al. 2011). These attitudes are grounded in the understanding of multiculturalism that is based on the historical memory of the Noble's democracy and the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania in 16th and 17th century, rather than the contemporary context, and they go hand in hand with the marginalization of ethnic and cultural minorities' presence in public space and the social sphere (Triandafyllidou 2011: 116). Scholars investigating the conditions mediating contact between different groups and its effectiveness emphasize the importance of knowing about differences; being aware of group differences rather than factual information per se influences attitudes towards other groups (Wolsko et al. 2000). If so, the homogeneity of the Polish society might work to hinder positive outcomes of contacts between Polish migrants and the members of different groups in Germany and Great Britain.

My own previous study among Poles in Midlands and London shows that Polish migrants tend to code difference into national categories, which are more familiar to them than the ethnic, racial or religious categorizations common in the UK (Nowicka 2014a). In Bourdieu's terminology, their categories of perception originate in their past experience. Their narratives about diversity in their place of residence in England include references to the supposed national origin of people (or commodities) and are mixed with general acknowledgements of diversity ('cultural mix', 'colorful blend', 'diversity', 'mixture', 'variety'), as observed in people's dress and skin color. At the same time, Poles seem to miss an appropriate vocabulary to describe ethnicity and use the neologism 'ciapaty' to describe people who are 'neither white nor black'. The meaning they assign to the encounters with diversity in England is thus the consequence of their habitus, which has been shaped by their 'Polish past'.

TRANSFORMIG collects narratives that will enable us to look at post-migration hysteresis and its exact mechanisms. For example, our research participants often recount situations in which they did not or still do not feel at ease. Commonly, Poles in England recall how they were stressed by neighbors asking them 'how are you?'

and passing by without awaiting the detailed and honest answer.<sup>6</sup> As Bourdieu's own research suggests, the misfit of habitus may be durable and lead to weak labor market positions of migrants (Nowicka 2013). On the contrary, the interviews we collect are full of examples of how migrants gradually adapt practices of their hosts and change their attitudes and value orientations.

Thereby, the challenge for us is to identify the exact mechanisms of such transformations of habitus (or the lack thereof). It seems that initial reactions to hysteresis could be shock and anger, critique or rejection of the new situation (Jo 2013: 21). These initial reactions might be followed by failure to achieve a desired position in the society and a final change of practice, which might be facilitated by contact with respective institutions or individuals who act as "cultural mentors" (Jo 2013: 31). In TRANSFORMIG, we observe that life partners belonging to a different culture or ethnic group, are often such very successful cultural mentors for Polish migrants. But also, the initial reaction might be one of novelty and positive engagement with the new situation, and it might be followed by discomfort or insecurity, a negative judgment of the new condition, and a sense of out-of-placeness, which can then be replaced by reorientation and re-shaping of habitus, which in turn enables a more active participation in the new field and a mastering of the daily life more akin to the others in the field (Tabar and Noble, in press).

To research change, according to Bourdieu, means to understand individual dispositions as being mobilized in the field of power relations in which the individuals struggle for positions. This understanding enables us to go beyond the research on the declarative attitudes of migrants. But Bourdieu was also critical of reducing social scientific analysis to describing the activity and life views of the research participants (Calhoun 2003: 281). Accordingly, we attempt to capture individual attitudes and practices as displayed in narrations and combine the lessons learnt with ethnographic investigations of the urban contexts in which our research respondents are embedded (Nowicka 2015). TRANSFORMIG studies Polish migrants in four cities: London, Birmingham, Berlin and Munich. Each country and city provides migrants with different opportunities for intercultural encounters. The fact, for example, that the Poles we interviewed in Birmingham reside in terraced houses, whereas in Berlin they mostly reside in blocks of flats, impacts on how our research participants nar-

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6 All references to the data collected in TRANSFORMIG have an illustrative and indicative character. At the time of writing this paper, we have not completed fully the coding of data material and the following data analysis. However, our research experience allows us to see some trends in the data which illustrate well the theoretical points that I make here.



rate on ethnic relations in neighborhoods, and what kinds of cultural capital they need to master the situations of encounters. Polish ethnic infrastructures, their density, quality and availability, are another aspect that we consider. In this respect, we add to Bourdieu's understanding of the relevance of material space for social fields of power.

Next to the materialities of places, and particular configurations of ethnic diversity, the local discourses on living-with-difference, such as cosmopolitanism, or multiculturalism, play a role as part of the doxa (pre-reflexive, intuitive knowledge, shared opinions and perceptions) in the migration field: we observe that the perceptions of ethnic relations in public spaces differ between the countries. In England, the Poles we interviewed seem to observe class difference, which they do not understand and rather choose to narratively code into race; they describe the question of order in public space in terms of dirt. The racialized narrative is of Black or mixed neighborhoods inhabited primarily by the Pakistani and Indian majority, as dirty. In Germany, on the other hand, the tranquility and quietness of urban places seems to be the major category by which ethnic relations are described. Accordingly, Poles report on complex patterns of who – Germans, Turks, Arabs, Poles – are 'properly behaving' or not, for example in (dis)respecting house rules. In both cases, Poles mobilize a set of stereotypes (Indian as dirty, Germans as setting and respecting rules) that are a part of their 'Polish habitus'. In each place, though, different dispositions are mobilized, which enables us to analyze the workings of each social field by scrutinizing the similarities and differences across the cases. In turn, we can say that racial attitudes are not a quality of a Polish person per se; instead, racial attitudes emerge in their particular form as a result of habitus working in the field (Nowicka 2014b). However, the meaning that Poles assign, for example, to different practices, or smells, in public spaces, depend also on their class origin and aspiration. Accordingly, those with higher cultural capital perceive of Indian foods in terms of enriching the cultural landscape; those with little cultural capital tend to value Indian foods in terms of more possibilities of consumption. Here Bourdieu's theory of practice brings us clear advantages and a very sophisticated and complex toolset to understand the complexity of intercultural encounters in urban spaces.

TRANSFORMIG is designed as a qualitative longitudinal study (Krings et al. 2009; Moriarty et al. 2013) that includes three waves of semi-structured narrative interviews with Polish migrants in Germany and England, as well as narrative interviews with their families and friends in Poland, focus group interviews and ethnographic case studies in all three countries. The longitudinal design is particularly

appropriate for examining changes in values and attitudes over time; it draws attention to the transformations of context in which values emerge and change. Finally, there are obvious parallels between the longitudinal research and Bourdieu's epistemological and conceptual framework (McLeod 2003). We expect that repeated interviews will provide us with rich material on the conditions, stages and mechanisms of transformations of migrant habitus.

#### 4. Gaps in Bourdieu's theory in relation to transnational migration

Notwithstanding the merits and obvious benefits of applying Bourdieu's theory of practice to the study of migrants, TRANSFORMIG also faces a number of challenges related to certain gaps in Bourdieu's work. I focus here on two major challenges: adaptation of Bourdieu's framework to the study of transnational migration, and – closely linked to it – the problem of how to research transnational transfers between migrants and their non-migrant peers back home.

Bourdieu has been criticized, as have been many other classical sociologists, for the 'methodological nationalism' underlying his research (Beck and Grande 2007; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Painter 2000). Moreover, when defining the notion of capital, Bourdieu had the French academic system in mind, and authors using the concept have needed to adapt his definition to different, albeit national, cultural contexts (Lamont and Lareau 1988). Recently, some authors have used selected elements of Bourdieu's theory in a global or transnational context (Lingard et al. 2005; Kelly and Lusia 2006; Erel 2010). It is possible when we consider that the concept of field as defined by Bourdieu is primarily metaphorical and social, and not geographical. Research shows that Polish migrants are engaged in fields that cross nation-state borders. In consequence, we ought to investigate social fields that can be 'here' or 'there', and see them as intertwined through the figure of the migrant. It means that one of our tasks is to scrutinize how cultural capital is circulated across national borders between fields and to analyze how geographical locations are crucial to the possibilities of appreciation and validation of capital (Nowicka 2013).

In the context of TRANSFORMIG, the challenge is twofold: first, we need to adequately capture the transnational dimension of dispositions and practices; second, we need to consider transnational fields as sites for the transmission of capital. Our

previous research has proved that transnational orientations impact Polish migrants' career and educational decisions. For example, Polish migrants in the UK successfully evade the discrepancy between the economic gain and the loss of status by switching between the British and Polish reference systems, where earnings and social positions count differently (Eade and Grapich 2007; Nowicka 2012). If we consider knowledge of other ethnicities or races as being constituted within networked systems, we see that the self-understanding of Polish migrants as 'better racists' emerges through their orientation towards their Polish friends in Poland (Nowicka 2014a). Also, Poles tend to 'explain' their experiences with ethnic and religious diversity to their peers in Poland by using knowledge frames that are familiar to their Polish friends: exemplarily, Black people are compared to Gypsies in their loudness, as Gypsies' situation in Poland is much discussed in Polish media, and the negative stereotypes towards this group in Poland are strong (Kwadrans 2004). More general phenomena encountered by Poles, such as the residential segregation of Black immigrants in the UK, is also explained by Polish research participants transnationally through the comparison to the situation of the newcomers from Poland without sufficient knowledge of English, who first immerse in ethnic networks in the UK, as they previously did in Chicago (Nowicka 2014a).

For TRANSFORMIG such transnational frames of reference, the establishing of comparisons and the negotiation of shared meanings across transnational fields is of key interest. The project scrutinizes patterns of communication within transnationally spanning social networks of migrants (Krzyzowski and Nowicka 2014). This interests us for two reasons: first, we see the transnational rooting of migrant dispositions, which impacts how they encounter diversity in Germany and England; second, we are interested in the meaning of these encounters in the sense of how they impact on the spread of tolerance towards diversity to the space of origin of migrants.

Yet, in this respect we see the major challenges of Bourdieu's theory, relating to the position of interactions and 'manifest relations' (de Nooy 2003). Bourdieu was primarily interested the logic of fields of power, and in objective relations between the positions in the fields. For the theory of fields, the mechanisms of intergenerational transfers of habitus, and in particular in the role of family and the educational system as agents of cultural reproduction are of key importance. Bourdieu assumes that reproduction proceeds through perception, appreciation and action. Accordingly, information that is contrary to existing schemata is more likely to be perceived. By appreciation, social actors evaluate practices in terms of liking and disliking, tending to take over the first category. By mimesis, Bourdieu terms an unconscious imitation

of action (Bourdieu 1977). These three mechanisms enable the adaptation of habitus to new conditions in the field, or to a new field. Mimesis might play a crucial role for the transfer of habitus between people and fields when it involves an 'encoding of the underlying meaning of practice' (Sieweke 2014).

Social actors know, according to Bourdieu, how to 'play the game' because of their socialization. They might not know it if they enter a field that is new to them (hysteresis) but to some extent they learn a new practice, and their habitus changes. Can this habitus be 'passed on'? Scholars interested in the timing and success of cultural transfer argue for the need to conceptually supplement Bourdieu's framework, and reach as far as cognitive science and neuroscience to do so (Sieweke 2014). Some hints on possible mechanisms involved in the transfer (but also transmutation) of habitus from one culture to another are provided by studies on the literary diffusion of concepts, ideas, myths and stories. They point towards processes of simplification, elaboration and loss of certain qualities and characteristics of transferred objects and ideas while they become adapted to local conditions (ex. Bartlett 1932; Duveen 2007; Saito 1996). From the study of cultural transfers within ethnic minority groups, we know that social actors might not be transferring their cultural capital equally intense over time, and new models are required in order to understand the conditions for such changes (Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2013). Finally, a more detailed model of transfer needs to dedicate closer attention to the 'recipient' of transfer, in particular when he or she is involved in many fields, and this involvement may influence the readiness and possibilities to change one's own habitus.

The processes of transfer are neither straightforward nor are they automatic or self-evident (Devine 2004). Transfer is a product of social interactions, and these take place in and through reference to the field; therefore, we need to consider the relations of power and field's doxa to understand them. Social actors may not always be able or willing to transfer, their interests may be unequally distributed over time, they might encompass different potential recipients, and they depend on the individual perceptions of the field in which actors are embedded; these aspects are subject to empirical examination (Jæger and Breen 2013; Breckner 1999).

Migrants' transnationalism seems to increase their self-reflexive capabilities, which impacts on both how their habitus is transformed in the course of exposure to diversity, as well as how they transfer their attitudes through their social networks. However, Bourdieu considers the ongoing and steady transformations of habitus to be largely unreflexive. Yet, when the "best fit" between habitus and field is desirable, for example when immigrants seek better positions and opportunities to improve

their social status abroad, habitus transformation might be a consciously regulated process that results in the matching of altered habitus with the new field structures (Hardy 2012: 143; Bourdieu 1994: 116). Migration scholarship acknowledges such conscious adoptions of new cultural elements by people who switch between multiple socio-cultural contexts (Plüss 2009; Ho and Bauder 2012; Butcher 2011). It is also known that migrants negotiate the social positions they take on in their new place of residence, and they mobilize, enact and validate their cultural capital through various mechanisms (Erel 2010; Nowicka 2013). For Bourdieu (1994: 11), consciousness and reflexivity are both cause and symptom of the failure of immediate adaptation to the situation because one is unsure how to behave and what to do. On the other hand, habitus might seem unconscious to the actors if they lack opportunities for alternative practices (Adams 2006). As Kelly and Lusia (2006) show, migrants might incorporate those norms and values of the host society that largely fit their aspirations; these then become a framework in which they re-evaluate their own social, cultural and economic capital, without being aware of how their habitus enables these judgments and practices. In this sense, we might need to distinguish between actors being or becoming aware of their habitus understood as the norms and values people have, and reflecting on how their habitus (a set of dispositions) enacts particular practices. In other words, actors might be self-reflexive and declare how their outlooks evolved in the new socio-cultural context, for example when the field imposes on them to declare their own identity in ethnic terms (Tabar and Noble, in press). Still, they can be unable to consciously grasp how their practices reproduce particular power-structures, for example racism or discrimination (Weiss 2001) or gender inequalities (Adkins 2003). In this sense, reflexivity might not be socially and personally transformative; this is in particular the case when social actors do not possess sufficient power and resources (Adam 2006; Mitchell and Green 2002).

While we ought to be careful not to overestimate the role of self-reflexivity, we need to explore its twofold meaning: first, reflexivity might enable faster adaptation to new conditions (thereby as Bourdieu notices, the effect of reflexivity might also be reversed). Second, reflexivity might enable social actors who move across fields to transfer newly established dispositions to others. Migrants make a particularly appealing case for the study of transformation of habitus and transfer of newly acquired dispositions across fields: migrants often experience multiple forms of exclusion and domination, or they are prompted by national politics of identity, to develop an ethnic understanding of the self (Tabar and Noble, in press) which requires a high degree of self-reflexivity (Erel 2009). Gültekin (2003: 214) argues that

in particular migrants who maintain close links to home society demonstrate great self-reflexivity that relies on their double orientation (also Nowicka 2012; 2014) to the values and outlooks of the country of origin and of immigration. A vast number of studies documents the multiple ways migrants communicate on regular basis with their families and friends in the country of origin (Vertovec 2004). The exchange over different means of distant communication helps migrants to establish a sense of shared space and time with their relatives and friends back home (Wilding 2006). Yet, while we have now quite a complete picture of use of ICTs by migrants, and we know how transnational migrants maintain intimacy across distance, we still know little about the exact content of communication between migrants and their families and friends back home. The existing scholarship lets us suspect a great variety of content being distributed through different tools, across different situations, times and spaces. People report from their daily live in their new places, thereby sharing their excitements of the moment as well as ideas, thoughts, beliefs, opinions and emotional needs.

TRANSFORMIG carefully considers reflexivity both as a quality of individual habitus and as a research method (Bourdieu 1994). Both could be increased through forms of sociological enquiry that support verbalizing the otherwise hardly conscious. Bourdieu used photography in his own fieldwork, and TRANSFORMIG follows Sweetman's (2009) suggestion to apply images to foster the process of revealing habitus and illuminating practices. Visual material, for example photographs taken upon our request by migrants, is used to generate narrations during, semi-structured interviews, individual narrative and group interviews, and it is an integral part of ethnographic research.

## 5. Foresights

After the first year of data collection, TRANSFORMIG is much aware of the challenges that it faces in the stage of data analysis and the interpretation of results within Bourdieu's theory of practice. We envision two main questions: first, as discussed, we need to specify how habitus transforms in fields that are transnational. Thereby, we need to address how to adequately analyze the complexity of such transnational fields, and how national discourses intersect with the transnational span of social fields. We also need to decide whether migrants simply juggle "cleft habitus"



and navigate the dissonance between the norms and practices acquired prior to and post-migration or whether their habitus transforms to the extent that it loses its past qualities. What is the nature of the corrections and adjustments of one's habitus? Further, we need to explore the mechanisms of such transformations (or the lack thereof), and consider their temporal sequence. Second, we need to explain the transfer of habitus within social networks. We consider inputs from other research, reaching as far as cognitive science and neuroscience, or studies into the literary diffusion of concepts, ideas, myths and stories, insofar as they are fruitful for the conceptual expansion of Bourdieu's model of transmission of habitus, and yet we are aware of the challenge of remaining faithful to the intellectual heritage of Pierre Bourdieu.

Nevertheless, we believe TRANSFORMIG will further the development of a number of theories and approaches, including contact theory, international migration theory, cosmopolitanism debate and general social theory, including theories of social change. Contact theory will benefit significantly from a transnational perspective and in addressing the issue of the transfer of attitudes along social networks spanning across different locations, as well as from a comparative approach. The project will contribute to the theory and methodology of studies on international migration, in particular, by investigating areas such as 1) culture and attitudes, and 2) sending countries and their transformation, which both are still largely unexplored. By combining these two aspects, TRANSFORMIG will address persistent questions about the relationship between migration and socio-cultural transformation. Finally, TRANSFORMIG will add to the understanding of how social transformation of whole societies depends upon the spread and transformation of values through social networks, and thus complement the research and theory on structural and institutional changes in Europe.

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