

Geographies of migration, home and work: Polish families in Scotland

Marta Moskal
University of Edinburgh

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Transnational geographies of migration, home and work: family strategies and labour market participation within intra-European migration

The research addresses three areas:

1. social integration,
2. labour market participation
3. decision to stay and to return



Polish immigration to Scotland as a part of intra-European labour migration

- The arrival of around 50,000 Polish nationals in Scotland
- Scotland as a key and perhaps neglected receiving region: proactive and positive towards labour migration
- 'Biofocality' (Vetrovec 2004):
 1. Poland remains the source of cultural and social identification
 2. Scotland is a source of material support and economic opportunities



Polish immigration to Scotland socio-economic characteristics

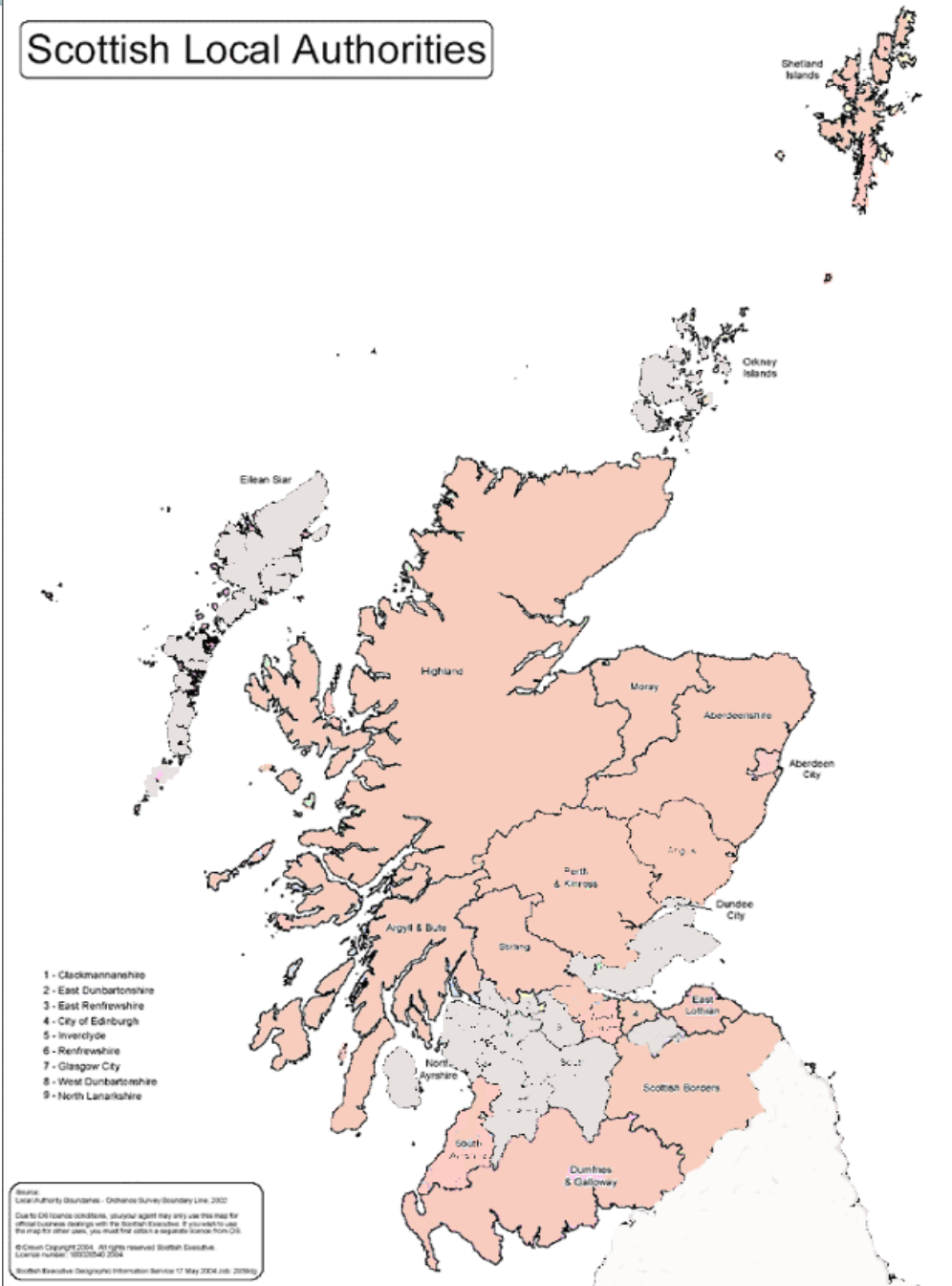
- Before 2004 - 'incomplete migration' - short term, transient and individual, family members 'back home'
- After 2004 - longer term migration, bringing family members for extended periods, embedded in the host society

Main home language in publicly funded schools in Scotland, in 2006, 2007 and 2008

2006		2007		2008	
<i>Number of languages</i>	137	<i>Number of languages</i>	138	<i>Number of languages</i>	147
<i>Number of pupils</i>		<i>Number of pupils</i>		<i>Number of pupils</i>	
English	673,874	English	664,497	English	653,731
Punjabi	4,672	Punjabi	4,682	Polish	4,677
Urdu	3,771	Urdu	4,002	Punjabi	4,622
Cantonese	1,509	Polish	3,347	Urdu	4,207
Polish	1,508	Cantonese	1,508	Cantonese	1,506
Arabic	1,131	Arabic	1,277	Arabic	1,403
French	649	French	740	French	788
Gaelic (Scottish)	656	Gaelic (Scottish)	638	Gaelic (Scottish)	681
Bengali	532	Bengali	531	Bengali	539
German	391	German	473	German	496
Spanish	383	Spanish	412	Spanish	461

Source: Pupils in Scotland 2006; 2007, 2008 published by The Scottish Government, 2007; 2008; 2009

Scottish Local Authorities



Scottish Local Authorities
with Polish as the most
common language
after English
among pupils in publicly
founded schools 2008





Polish immigration to Scotland - findings

- Growing diversity of Polish migratory strategies as the proportion of women and children migrants increases (family reunion)
- Two different family strategies:
 1. Settlement strategy - some people prefer to improve their standard of living by relocating the entire family to Scotland and be together even that involves higher living costs
 2. Trans-migrant strategy - an individual (frequently women) comes alone to earn money to send back to the family in Poland



Polish immigration to Scotland - Agata's story (31 years old, 2 children)

'When we were making decision about migration I said 'that one is coming who knows English' so I came because I knew English and my husband didn't. That was before the EU enlargement in January 2004, and I worked illegally in London in coffee shop. At the beginning I came for one year only but I decided to stay longer. My job in Poland was not satisfactory even I have a university degree and I was not able to save any money. After two year abroad I invited my children [2 and 6 years old at the moment of arrival] and my husband to join me and we moved together to Scotland because we was looking for some smaller place and safer for the children to live than London (...) I am not coming back to Poland because my children have started school here and I want them to finish the school in one place'.

Polish immigration to Scotland - Irena's story (40 years old, 2 children)

'My husband came to Scotland two years ago. After one and half years we decided that we needed to live together and that our two children needed a father. We could not live meeting only twice a year. I have been working in Poland for fifteen years. I had had a good job. So, from my point of view, the migration to Scotland signified a great risk.

It was difficult to make such a decision, because I was not a young person and I hadn't learnt English before. However my husband couldn't imagine returning to Poland, because he wouldn't be able to find a suitable job there. We were thinking about the children, we wanted better future for them, we wanted them to study. We took the risk to emigrate and I think we did this mostly for our children even though they didn't like the move because they left all their friends in Poland.

My husband prepared the ground for us before we arrived: he found out about the school for children, he rented the house. I don't work at the moment, I look after children. I can't see that there is the job for me with my qualification, I mean I could find a job if I would know the language but I need to learn English first. I can't imagine not working because I used to work for so many years. Probably, I will need to get a cleaners' job to start my professional career here, like the most of the Polish.'



Polish immigration to Scotland - Elzbieta's story (41 years old, 3 children)

'My husband has arrived here almost three years ago, because of the financial situation in the family. He spent two years abroad alone. We did not visit him, he was coming home sometimes, and we were in touch by phone and by Skype later. However, the children missed him more and more and the life between two houses was difficult. We wanted to be together, so I came last year in November with my youngest son [6 years old] for one week. My son liked it here very much, and when we came back home and we said that it was nice here and we decided to come and to settle in Scotland. Of course, it is a challenge for the children, different world and different people - but they like the new place. I said to them that it would be up to them to decide whether they like it here and want to stay or not'.



Polish immigration to Scotland - recommendations

- The support of working immigrant parents in accessing services is important since good provisions, especially in child care, may allow them to reunite their families. Government policy frequently has viewed the migrants as temporary workers and made little or no provision for their wider social, educational, familial and housing needs. They have been seen as workers rather than citizens with social rights and family responsibilities.
- Some Polish workers are unaware of their entitlements. They have thus had to rely primarily on informal networks and their own resources. This raises a number of policy issues linked with a need for greater information particularly relating to employment rights and welfare.
- Language issue: Migrants with little or limited English were particularly isolated. In Scotland, debate about the real costs of providing English as an additional language support is needed. Other funding reforms are necessary, including contingency funding to provide English language support for the unplanned arrival of new migrants in particular area.



Polish immigration to Scotland - recommendations

- Several participants had professional qualifications but were currently working below their skill level. They would benefit from the opportunity to retrain or upgrade their qualifications and enhance their language skills. There is a need for statutory support to build capacity within these organisations to enhance advice and information, signposting services, as well as cultural and leisure activities.
- European countries are affected by migration, whether as countries of origin or countries of destination. Most policies that deal with migration are national policies, yet migration is trans-national in its character and requires international governance, as well as trans-national cooperation.