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Economic Crisis, Lived Experiences and Temporal Reasoning Among Polish Migrants in Iceland

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Abstract
The article focuses on the relationship between the lived experiences of economic crisis and its lingering effects on Polish migrants' understandings of the current matters in Iceland. It shows that even though the economic collapse in 2008 was experienced differently, it has also induced different emotions and became a significant point of reference for Polish migrant community in Iceland. Interestingly, long after Iceland's economic recovery, the crisis continues to inform migrants' ways of negotiating the present and unfolds the intricate relationship between past experiences and future orientations. Thus, by drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, the article introduces an affective approach to the consequences of the crisis and problematises migrants' temporal reasoning, which leads to the emerging states of alertness and anticipation of another crisis. In doing so, it shows the ways in which the past happenings affect the present matters and impinged migrants' understandings of the future.

Keywords Crisis · Temporalities · Affects · Polish migration · Iceland

Introduction

The economic crisis in 2008 certainly was a serious rupture in the neoliberal narrative about the unlimited growth and the promised bright future. For many, the financial meltdown of the global banking system was unexpected, yet for others, it simply unravelled the flaws of neoliberal capitalism. What began in the United States almost instantly moved across borders, producing a domino effect and impacting many parts of the globe almost simultaneously. This was a rather unprecedented development, unknown to any of the previous crises of capitalism (Martin, 2009). Further, the existing global economic dependencies and interconnectedness made it difficult to

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apply any of the analytical frameworks known from the past crises to comprehend the expecting outcomes (Martin, 2009).

In the aftermath of economic collapse, the most relevant issues for migration scholarship concerned changes in migration patterns, practices and trajectories, as well as the crisis impact on migrants' livelihood strategies and migration policies (Barbulescu 2009; Rogers et al., 2009; Tilly, 2011). The implementation of harsh austerity measures in different states has shaken up labour market participation, often making migrants even more precarious and at peril of losing jobs. As a result, they have experienced higher unemployment rates or lower wages than local populations. In many cases, the crisis has exposed migrants to even stronger than before labour market discrimination and exploitation (Wojtyńska & Skaptadóttir, 2019). Yet, the precarious situation also led to the emergence of novel inter-ethnic collaborations, social economies and civic engagements, which unravelled migrants' agency and potential to overcome crisis predicaments (Ahmed, 2019; Marchetti, 2017). At the same time, the economic collapse has revitalised and strengthened the role of nation-state with its power to control and regulate different flows of people, services and resources (Cerna 2016; Roos & Zaun, 2016; Tilly, 2011). The crash was particularly severe for individuals and families for whom migration was an opportunity for re-uniting with relatives or, simply, finding a better life and future (Lindley, 2014). However, it does not mean that the crisis has stopped or even hindered migration flows (Martin, 2009). The economic collapse affected not only the receiving countries but also the sending ones, thereby significantly impacting migrants' decision-making process. Often, the economic conditions and labour market participation in a home country have been worsened in the aftermath of 2008, thus making it difficult for migrants to return (Martin, 2009).

Over a decade later, the relationship between crisis and migration remains intricate and it continues to fuel public concerns and academic scholarship (Roos & Zaun, 2016; Wojtyńska & Skaptadóttir, 2019). It is particularly evident in Iceland, where the collapse has had a crucial impact on social understandings of economic and political developments. This article is an attempt to disentangle the interdependencies between Polish migrants' lived experiences of the collapse and the lingering effects of the crisis that continue to play an important role in migrants' everyday life. It thus explores emotional aspects of crisis and shows that even though the crisis has been experienced differently, it has also became strongly interweaved into migrants' understandings of the current matters. In doing so, the article problematises the practices of temporal reasoning (Jansen, 2014; Kleist & Jansen, 2016), which unravel how the past lived experiences seem to be *sensed* as re-emerging in the present and producing the states of alertness and anticipation towards the uncertain future.

In the following sections, I first contextualise the relationship between crisis, migration and emotions by highlighting the role of lived experiences and ruptures in otherwise taken for granted continuities. Next, I outline the context of Polish migrant community in Iceland and present the rationale for my ethnographic fieldwork. I then explain the neoliberal changes of Icelandic political economy and their role in the collapse of 2008. In this section, I focus on migrants' understandings of these changes, which also shed a light on the temporalities of crisis. Next, I move to parse Polish migrants' strategies of navigating through the uncertain times and show how the crisis-induced emotions have impacted their everyday life. This leads me to problematisations of the lingering effects of crisis and their alerting role in migrants' understandings of the

current matters in Iceland. I thus analyse the practices of temporal reasoning and show how they inform migrants' ways of anticipating another crisis in the near future. I conclude by summarising the interdependencies between migrants' lived experiences and emotional and temporal aspects of the crisis.

Crisis, Migration and Emotions

Ours is often characterised as the 'age of crisis' and the 'age of migration' (Castles et al., 2014; Lindley, 2014). This kind of framing stems from media discourses, which predominantly depict crisis and migration as emerging ruptures in otherwise existing continuities of social experiences, economic and political developments and identity processes (Lindley, 2014: 2–13). It is thus not surprising that crisis–migration nexus induces various public moods, responses and affective demands, which not only inform particular policies but also have a potential to weaponize political mobilisations and strategies (Ahmed, 2004; Hoggett & Thompson, 2012). Crisis and migration are commonly understood as external phenomena, which break the teleological orientations of everyday life matter (Bryant & Knight, 2019) and unravel a sense of socially experienced discontinuity. In doing so, crisis is then argued to be an 'aberrant' event happening 'beyond the realms of "normal" development and change' (Lindley, 2014: 1), whereas migration is often perceived as a process of 'uprooting' that violates the 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1992).

Crisis and migration are 'triggered' by different entangled factors of social, economic and political matter (Lindley, 2014). Yet, apart from being 'triggered', crisis and migration are also *lived* and *experienced* (Ahmed, 2004; Berezin, 2009; Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). They induce emotions and show their ways, in which the physical, the experiential and the embodied intersect with existing social relations, cultural knowledge and economic and political circumstances (Svašek, 2012a: 8). It is through emotions that people comprehend and give meanings to 'the changing world' as well as 'shape their subjectivities', whilst 'positioning themselves' in relations to other people, objects and circumstances (Svašek, 2012b: 3). However, the emotional 'Self' should not be perceived as 'a closed container of passions' or 'an entity that simply reacts to forces from outside', but rather as 'a mobile, multiple, relational being-in-the-world that is captured by his or her surroundings, engaging with past, present and future situations' (Svašek, 2012b: 3).

Emotions have been a subject to numerous studies, which show their pivotal role in crisis-driven situations and migration processes (Berezin, 2009; Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Brooks & Simpson, 2013; Lindley, 2014). It is often argued that emotions reside in 'discourses', 'practices' and 'embodied experiences', which analysis unravels the performative and habituated nature of emotions, their political functions and their cultural impact on subjectivities and social relations (Svašek, 2012a: 9–13). Therefore, emotional aspects of crisis and migration allow to trace the structure of feeling and lived experiences in their 'active' role in everyday life (Skoggard & Waterston, 2015: 112). It also shows that emotions are *affective* (Ahmed, 2004; Lutz, 2017; Richard & Rudnyckyj, 2009), because they impact not only individual ways of thinking and acting but also public understandings and collective actions (von Scheve & Salmela, 2014). Emotions are not only individually *felt* but also socially transmitted, what makes them

affective vehicles for communicating the current matters. Social worlds are thus affective and unfold the dynamics between 'thought' and 'experience' that goes beyond simple divisions of 'mind and body', 'private and public', 'structure and agency' and 'personal and political' (Skoggard & Waterston, 2015: 110–111).

Unpacking the crisis–migration nexus in the context of lived experiences and emotional engagements has a potential to problematise impacts, meanings and actions that emerge from disrupted continuities. Further, it takes into account the affective and lingering aspects of crisis and migration and shows that emotions might 'do things' and 'align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments' (Ahmed, 2004: 119). In doing so, emotions 'charge the atmosphere' (Stewart, 2011) and demonstrate that otherwise taken for granted 'something'—whether it is an economic collapse or even a mundane and routine habits—might start to 'feel like *some*thing' (Stewart, 2007: 2). To put it differently, social, cultural, economic and political environments are always affective and they themselves produce particular emotions, which linger and inform individual and collective understandings and actions. The lived experiences reveal that 'worlds and lives can get tweaked with so much impact that they become a permanent state of alarm' and that people 'alert to what seems to be happening or to have happened' (Stewart, 2011: 452). This correlation emerges as a significant one in the Polish migrant community in Iceland, whose past experiences of the crisis affectively impact their present understandings and future orientations.

Researching Polish Migrants in Iceland

Polish economic migration to Iceland goes back to the beginnings of 1990s with Polish women coming to work in the fishing factories scattered across the island (Wojtyńska, 2011). Throughout the 1990s, Polish migration flows are gradually increasing and new transnational networks began to slowly emerge. The first migrant employment agencies are then established in 2000s, aiming to facilitate the arrivals of foreign workers to Iceland, which undergoes economic changes and developments (Wojtyńska, 2011: 35). There is a growing workforce demand in Iceland between 2003 and 2008 (Mixa, 2009), which coincides with Poland's accession to the European Union and European Economic Area in 2004, and leads to Iceland's opening its labour market to the EU nationals in 2006. Today, Poles represent the largest migration group in Iceland and work in different labour sectors, including construction, tourism and leisure, care and public services. At the time of my fieldwork, the total number of foreign citizens in Iceland reached 30,275 (8.9% of Icelandic population) and 46.6% constituted of Polish nationals (Statistic Iceland, 2017).

There are numerous studies on Polish migrant community in Iceland, which analyse such aspects as integration processes (Skaptadóttir, 2011), gender relations and identities (Skaptadóttir & Wojtyńska, 2008a), labour market participation and civic engagement (Skaptadóttir & Wojtyńska, 2008b; Wojtyńska et al., 2011), as well as the economic crisis and its impact on migrants' livelihood (Skaptadóttir, 2015; Wojtyńska & Skaptadóttir, 2019; Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010). Capitalising on the existing research, this article looks at the Polish migrants community in relation to the affects and temporalities of economic crisis. It draws on 9 months ethnographic fieldwork

conducted in Iceland between 2016 and 2019. The research was chiefly based on participant observation in the capital region of Reykjavík, including the communes of Hafnarfjörður, Kópavogur *and Seltjarnarnes.* I have also travelled to other cities and towns, such as Keflavík, Borgarnes and Hveragerði, and visited villages in Westfjords and Eastfjords. In addition, the participant observation was supplemented with 30 ethnographic interviews with Polish migrants, which have been recorded, transcribed and anonymised. The interviews consisted of open-ended discussions about the impact of economic collapse on migrants' livelihoods, their lived experiences of the crisis as well as emotions induced by the times of uncertainty. I was also interested in migrants' ways of recollecting the past and their particular understandings of the current social, economic and political matters in Iceland.

Most of my research participants came to Iceland before the crisis from different regions of Poland and few of them have an Icelandic citizenship. They work in different labour sectors and services, including construction, hotels, restaurants, informational technology companies and Icelandic public institutions such as libraries, museums or various departments. Some of them are married with children (including mix marriages), others are in the relationships or single. Although my main aim was to collaborate with migrants, who lived in Iceland already during the crash, I found it also important to meet and talk with migrants, who arrived after the crisis. It enabled me to focus on differences in lived experiences and parse interdependencies between crisis, affects and temporalities.

Throughout my research, I have closely collaborated with my key interlocutors with whom I met frequently to discuss various emerging findings. I have also attended different events (protests, meetings, parties) and accompanied my research participants in their daily routines and weekend trips outside Reykjavík. Participant observation is always open-ended, since it includes following the matters appearing in the field and takes into account that the research themes are to a large extent a product of joining streams of representations, emerging from the discourses and practices of analysed communities. The role of an anthropologist is then to actively follow them across diverse social spaces and diverse social groups. Ethnographic approach allowed me to raise questions and reconfigure conceptual tools and problematisations in the course of investigative process. Although, the in-depth engagement with everyday life situations was my crucial approach, the field also included numerous macro scales, variables and forces (Marcus, 1995).

Before the Crash: Neoliberal Changes in Iceland

The economic crisis that hit Iceland in 2008 revealed the existing entanglements between global forces, local worlds and emplaced practices. Iceland was no longer an isolated island, somewhere in the North Atlantic. At the time of the crash, it was already a well-connected state, embedded in the global regimes of social, economic and political interdependencies (Durrenberger & Pálsson, 2015). Since 1980s, Iceland underwent a series of neoliberal reconfigurations, which not only transformed its economy and politics but also affectively produced new subjectivities (Richard & Rudnyckyj, 2009).

It started with the fish industry and the implementation of privatised and individually transferable fishing quotas. This profit-oriented change was rationalised along the lines of neoliberal discourses of modernisation, 'total efficiency' and 'nature management' (Pálsson, 1996). Yet, the privatisation of fish industry was only the beginning of radical changes in Iceland (Pálsson, 1996). As soon as fish have 'evolved' from 'commons' to 'commodities', the 'new bankers' arrived with a brand-new neoliberal agenda of finance (Mixa, 2009, 2015). Between 1994 and 2003, Icelandic banking system has been radically transformed from being a state-regulated to privatised enterprise embedded in the global market economy (Alibar & Zoega, 2011). Following a laissez-faire policy, the Icelandic government has also implemented drastic neoliberal cuts in public spending, deregulated restrictions of capital flows in financial industry and lowered corporate and capital gains taxes (Mixa, 2009: 8–9). The privatisation and deregulation of Icelandic economy led to the emergence of new neoliberal subjectivities driven by individualism and the spirit of entrepreneurship. Free market became a template for social relations, whilst risk-taking and flexibility gradually started to dominate public and political discourses in Iceland (Alibar & Zoega, 2011; Mixa, 2015).

The neoliberal changes of Icelandic political economy led to the emergence of 'manic millennium', a term coined to describe Iceland's period of rapid economic growth and blind consumerism (Mixa, 2015). It led to new investments and construction developments, including a hydro power plant and aluminium smelter in the eastern part of Iceland. The 'manic millennium' attracted new migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, who found their economic opportunities at various construction sites, in fish industry and in restaurant or hotel services (Skaptadóttir, 2015: 176–178). Interestingly, the rapid economic growth, together with the increasing hyper-consumption, bewildered many Polish migrants in Iceland. This was, for example, the case of Robert, who came to Iceland in 2006 to work in construction. When I asked him about the times before the crash, Robert said:

> My Icelandic friend had a car dealership then and told me about the 19 years old boy, who came to the store and bought a BMW. And he paid for it with his golden credit card. At that time, whoever had a job, even if you just started it, you could go to the bank and ask for a credit card with the limit of 1,000,000 *króna*. And the bank was like, 'Ok, no problem'. So, you had this money and it didn't matter that you couldn't paid it off at the end of a month. The bank didn't require you to do that, so next month, you simply had another million to spend. This is how it was back then... I was paying with my blue debit card and Icelanders were all using golden credit cards.

Privatisation and deregulation of the financial system in Iceland made the hyper-consumption possible and alluring. For Robert, and many other Polish migrants, these kinds of habits were reckless and difficult to understand. Credit cards and luxury cars indeed were the embodiment of 'manic millennium' (Mixa, 2009). Throughout my fieldwork, I have encountered stories about cars, covered in dust and abandoned in the streets just because it was easier to buy (lease) a new one, then to be bothered with fixing it. Neoliberal 'free market mantra' has produced new lifestyles in Iceland driven by high levels of consumption, class distinction and a belief in everlasting 'harmony and stability' (Mixa, 2015: 43). It was a radically new social, cultural and economic

experience (Loftsdóttir, 2010, 2012), which has shaped Icelandic landscape and affected daily practices.

Some of the Polish migrants have followed these emerging Icelandic moods and also indulged themselves in hyper-consumption. As Piotr, who left his banking job in Poland and came to Iceland in 2006 to work in the booming construction sector, told me:

> It was a time of consumption and some Poles took part in it. They had credit cards, because banks were offering them to everybody, so you could buy a flat screen or whatever you wanted. But when the crisis came, they tried to sell everything in a hurry. A phone for 5,000 ISK, washing machine for 20,000 ISK instead of 100,000 ISK. When the crash came, my wife bought a new car, which was abandoned at the airport. It belonged to a Pole, who took it on a loan and just went back to Poland, when it all happened. The car was parked for 2 months at the airport, so the police took it and then it was sold. You know, this guy drove himself to the airport, left car keys inside, took a plane and disappeared... Many people took loans, bought things and then tried to sell everything half a price.

We were sitting at his house and discussing the times before and after the crash. In 2008, Piotr lost his job in the construction, but soon enough found a new one as a mechanic assistant. Interestingly, Piotr did not recall the crisis situation as something traumatic. For him, and many other Polish migrants, it was rather a lesson, which as it turned out later, was a significant one.

Economic Crisis and the Lived Experiences of Polish Migrants

The promise of a bright future and unlimited economic growth, which dominated the 'manic millennium' in Iceland, has yet been broken in October 2008 with the unfolding global financial meltdown. Icelandic banking system collapsed and *króna* hit the hard bottom causing a great inflation and economic uncertainty (Alibar & Zoega, 2011). Icelanders took the streets blaming politicians and bankers for the crash and demanding economic and political changes (Bernburg, 2015). It was a time of anxiety, followed by social anger and outrage (Durrenberger & Pálsson, 2015). However, for many Polish migrants, the crisis was an ambiguous experience, often described in terms of 'Crisis? What crisis? In Poland we have crisis'. This idea stems from migrants' lived experiences of labour market in Poland and their struggles to make a living back home (Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010). Having experienced low wages and precarious working conditions in Poland, they had to learn how to adapt to the changing economic circumstances and become flexible in their labour participation (cf. Ahmed, 2019; De Moraes & Teixeira, 2020). Indeed, after the collapse, most of my interlocutors did not find it problematic to change their work places, for example, from hotels to kindergartens or from waitering to cleaning. To a certain degree, migrants' prior work experiences from Poland made them prepared to muddle through the new post-crisis labour reality. Furthermore, it also enabled them to relativize the experiences of the crisis and its impact on the everyday life, which often took a form of saying 'It wasn't a big deal... it simply meant that Icelanders can now afford only two instead of three or four cars'.

However, it does not mean that migrants did not experience the crisis at all. Many Poles and other migrant communities in Iceland felt 'disillusioned and cheated by the banks, politicians and the media' and had to struggle with economic turbulences that have followed the collapse of the banking system (Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010: 6). The crisis obviously had an impact on migrants' labour market participation, particularly among the newcomers, who were first to be made redundant in the aftermath of the crash. The unemployment impacted both, migrants and Icelanders, but the rates were almost doubled among foreign citizens (Wojtyńska & Skaptadóttir, 2019). Indeed, this situation has not changed, and even today, there are still discrepancies in the labour market participation, related to language preferences or even forms of prejudices, which often force migrants to seek for employment in informal sectors and being at risk of job insecurity and exploitation (Wojtyńska & Skaptadóttir, 2019).

The crisis particularly affected construction workers, who had to face a dilemma of staying or leaving (Skaptadóttir, 2015; Skaptadóttir & Wojtyńska, 2008a). For many of them, it was a difficult decision, since they have already settled in Iceland, having their families with them or being married to Icelanders (Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010: 4). For some Polish migrants, returning to Poland also meant experiencing economic 'conditions that made them leave their country in the first place' or struggling with 'unsatisfying wages' (Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010: 4). Thus, many Poles decided to stay in Iceland and muddle through the new post-crisis reality (Skaptadóttir, 2015), which often meant reduced work hours, lower salaries or even redundancy (Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010: 7–8). The crisis resulted also in 'cuts in the expenditures of different public institutions', including educational or cultural programs, which helped migrants to adapt to the Icelandic school system (Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010: 8). In the aftermath of the crash, Polish migrants 'felt uncertain about their future, even if not always for the same reason' (Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010: 8).

Indeed, the first weeks after the collapse brought an affective mixture of anger, anxiety and uncertainty in the Polish migrant community. It was difficult to understand what is happening, especially since the crisis came as a surprise. One of my key interlocutors, Agata, with whom I met on several occasions to discuss my research, described those times as 'heated days, full of nervousness and outrage'. She came to Iceland in 2006 and initially worked in one of the warehouses in Reykjavík. Soon enough, Agata became interested in Icelandic labour law and launched a blog, where she explained to other migrants their rights, applications for social benefits and tax obligations. After the collapse, Agata was invited to the meeting organised by the Polish embassy in Reykjavík and asked to give a presentation on unemployment benefits for migrants. In her account of that afternoon meeting, she has emphasised its very emotional aspect:

> Everyone was pissed off, calling the embassy and demanding to know what is going on. There was this pressure to know something, because one day you have work, make some good money, and then suddenly there's a crash and you can't transfer your money. People have been panicking, so the embassy organised this meeting and I remember that the whole room was packed, mostly with construction workers, because they lost their jobs. I remember that the atmosphere was very nervous and people were embittered and afraid. Some of them didn‘t even

> know that they can apply for unemployment benefits, they didn‘t know what to do.

For many migrants, the feelings of anxiety and uncertainty have been crucial experiences during the early days of the crisis. As Natalia, who came to Iceland in late 1990s and have been working different jobs—starting from cleaning, assisting in the kindergarten and finally becoming a translator—told me: ‘I was worried about my children, about food. I didn't know if I should go to the store and buy canned food and water supplies’. Natalia described the atmosphere of the crash as affectively charged, sudden and unexpected:

> My boss told me that banks are closed and people cannot withdraw their money. I felt great fear because of my children. Most of my Icelandic friends had some support, like family and friends, and I was just thinking how will I survive it. I didn't know what was happening... I didn't understand it. So, at the beginning, I was petrified... but after few days, everything was opened again. I could use my debit card, do shopping, so it was ok. I didn't lose my job, but at the beginning, there was fear and uncertainty.

It was a common affective scenario for many Polish migrants. The crash was sudden and has been followed by shock, anxiety and uncertainty. However, when the crisis-driven smoke cleared, it gradually became evident that not everything was lost. Those working in the construction often found a safety net and applied for unemployment benefits, thus waiting out the economic downturn (Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010: 4–5). Yet, other migrants decided to seek for new job opportunities in different labour sectors. It was, for example, the case of Basia, who came to Iceland just few months before the crash:

> I hate this story... I came to Iceland in May 2008 and for three months I've worked at the airport in Keflavík. Then, there was this whole series of strange circumstances and I was fired. Nobody explained it to me, but there were rumours already that the crisis is coming. Fortunately, I've found a job in a hotel in Reykjavík and I remember when the crash happened, everyone was frightened to death, reading all the news that the *króna* is low. But, it didn't hit us [Poles] so much, because most of us lived in rented flats, we didn't have any loans – or maybe some had loans back in Poland – so actually the biggest problem was that after the crash, you couldn't transfer your money.

Most of the newcomers, living in Iceland only for a short period of time, did not experience the crash as much as those who have already settled in, took a house mortgage or engaged in loan-induced hyper-consumption. However, they still had to face the sudden rise in prices and very low currency exchange rate. As Kasia told me in her account of the beginning of the crisis:

> I've worked at the restaurant then, next to the bank, so many bank employees were dining at this restaurant. When the crisis began, I remember nervousness and that people stopped going out and eat in the restaurants. During lunch time, it

> was almost empty, maybe two or three customers, so I had nothing to do. But I wasn't fired, I kept working there. I think the crisis didn't affect us [Poles] so much, we didn't have a lot of money or loans. *Króna* was a problem, because in 2007 1 EUR was like 80-90 ISK, but then suddenly 1 EUR was 180 ISK and even 200 ISK. So the prices went up, fuel was expensive. Obviously, people were unhappy... For Poles, the problem was with frozen savings and money transfers.

The Icelandic *króna* was indeed in a free fall after the collapse. The government reacted immediately by freezing all the financial remittances out of Iceland. For Polish migrants, it meant not only that their savings were melting down but also that they could no longer support their families back home (Wojtyńska & Zielińska, 2010).

Although, the feelings of fear, anxiety and uncertainty have been commonly experienced among Polish migrants, they were merely a result of the initial state of not-knowing what is happening. Indeed, for many Poles, the crisis was rather an indifferent event, as it was in case of Marcin, my key interlocutor, who has been living in Iceland since 2006:

> For me, this crisis was like a background noise... I didn't lose my job and I had some extra money, because I was also delivering pizza. The prices went up, but this was just the reality you had to face... and the economic reality always changes. So, if landlord raised your rent, you just had to pay more, and that's it. The crash happened, it was a sort of an event, but I haven't been in Iceland for long then and didn't follow this consumerist lifestyle as others.

Today, however, things look different for Marcin. He is no longer a 'distant' or 'indifferent' observer, but rather an 'engaged participant' in the Icelandic social, economic and political matters. The crisis itself became a significant mark on the temporal map of Iceland, and what once was 'sudden' and 'unexpected', today is often sensed, talked and speculated about.

Indeed, the crash was a significant rupture in otherwise taken for granted experiences of everyday life in Iceland. However, apart from problems with labour market participation and currency devaluation, there is also another and rather unintended consequence of the collapse among Polish migrants in Iceland. It concerns a new kind of affective alertness, which highlights an interesting relationship between the past experiences, present circumstances and the looming future. The emotions, which have 'surfaced' (Ahmed, 2004: 117) before and after the crash, affected the ways of seeing and sensing the present. As a result, the current matters and doings in Iceland alert migrants' experiences and produce anticipatory moods, which point to the process of temporal reasoning (Kleist & Jansen, 2016: 8–10). The everyday life occurrences, social practices and economic processes are thus perceived as reminders of not only 'what has happened' but also 'what is about to happen'.

Temporal Reasoning: Alertness and Anticipation

Migrants' lived experiences of the past continue to inform their present social, economic and political understandings, becoming a significant template for future

orientations. Despite Iceland's fast recovery and currently booming economy, the present situation brings back the experiences from the past and induces anticipatory *moods*, which take a form of common narratives: 'The crisis is coming', 'They're doing it again' or 'It's not the question of "if," but "when"'. Thus, there is a sense of alertness in Iceland, which links experiences of different temporalities and affects the reasoning. For example, as Basia told me:

> Now, we're waiting for another crisis, because everyone remembers how it was back then. Comfortable living, plenty of job opportunities, insane currency exchange rates... Before the crash, everything was under construction and today people see the same situation... it's the same scenario as it was before 2008, it was exactly the same...

In experiencing the current situation in Iceland, Basia is using the notions of 'the same scenario', what indicates that the past happenings have been embroiled in the social imaginaries and now inform the future looming into the present. Today, Iceland once again seems to be rapidly growing with numerous construction cranes scattered across the city and affecting the social atmosphere. As Natalia told me:

> There are similar situations, just take a look and you can see all the similarities. We don't know if there will be a crisis or not, but there are similar circumstances. For example, all these construction cranes... they say that it's a symbol of economic development, but they are everywhere... there's huge problem with housing now, so they're building new houses, but they are all overpriced...

During our discussion, Natalia kept using construction cranes as a rather ambiguous symptom for crisis future. On the one hand, she linked construction cranes with the fast economic recovery, but on the other, they also reminded her the times before the crash. Indeed, construction cranes in Iceland are not merely a building equipment but also affective markers, which alert local inhabitants and evoke the connection between the past experiences, the present circumstances and the future gaze. They are often perceived as 'new national birds' or Icelandic forest, which finally grew on the otherwise treeless island. Thus, the emerging and 'migrating' cranes are the 'usual suspect' provoking the feeling that something will happen soon. They bring back the memories of the 'manic millennium' and engender the affective mixture of humour, anxiety and uncertainty towards the near future.

Yet, there are also other symptoms, which cause alertness and launch the anticipatory moods in Iceland. There are new luxury cars gradually appearing in the streets of Reykjavík, just as it was in the eve of 2008. At that time, Range Rover, Land Cruiser and Hummer were symbols of Icelandic affluence and social status. Today, they have been ironically rebranded as 'Game Over', 'Grand Looser' and 'Bummer' and are rather the reminders of the uncertain and turbulent times. There are anxieties related to housing prices, tourism decline and political turbulences, which also induce the state of anticipation. The present is thus experienced through the lenses of the past, which almost immediately is projected on the future. As it was in Kasia's account of the current situation in Iceland:

> In some sense we're going back to the point, where it all started. Somehow, Iceland keeps going around in a circle. This economic boom now and that people regaining some sense of stability again... There is this wind of crisis... people are saying that we're better now, we've overcome difficulties, so we can do what we want.

For many Polish migrants in Iceland, the history seems to be repeating itself. The past habits and matters are imagined as re-emerging in the present and producing an affective state of alertness and anticipation. The possibility of another crisis is discussed among migrants along the lines of temporal reasoning in which the past, present and future seem to be directly interrelated (Kleist & Jansen, 2016; Knight & Stewart, 2016).

The dynamic relationship between the past, the present and the future is obviously an inseparable experience of social world (Hirsch & Stewart, 2005). However, the past and the future are both selective, contingent and dependent on socially transmitted meanings, practices and processes (Hirsch & Stewart, 2005: 269). Although they cannot be directly experienced, the 'versions of the past and future (of persons, collectives or things) assume present form in relation to events, political needs, available cultural forms and emotional dispositions' (Hirsch & Stewart, 2005: 262). The present is thus permeated with temporal reasoning, which does not concern the 'objective' knowing of 'what will happen', but rather unravels the ongoing rationalisations of currently lived experiences, social relations, practices and processes. Temporal reasoning is simply about 'making sense' of the present matters by drawing on the lived experiences from the past and the imaginaries of the future (Kleist & Jansen, 2016: 8–10).

In Iceland, temporal reasoning unravels itself in the relation between alertness and anticipation, which includes 'actively orienting oneself temporally' and triggers various emotional reactions, such as not only anxiety and fear but also excitement and hope (Adams et al., 2009: 247). These, however, are not merely individual feelings but also public moods, which originate from the current social, economic and political circumstances (Ahmed, 2004). They have a 'rippling effect' and 'move sideways and backwards', invoking 'associations between signs, figures, and objects' (Ahmed, 2004: 120). In other words, alertness and anticipation are lived and felt individually, but at the same time, they impact socially constructed public moods and various ways of thinking and acting upon the future.

Conclusions

The financial meltdown in Iceland has revealed the existing social, economic and political entanglements of global matters and their role in shaping the local world. From neoliberal reconfiguration of the Icelandic political economy, through 'manic millennium' and the emergence of new subjectivities, to the collapse itself, Iceland was an emotional vertigo. For Polish migrants, the crisis came as a surprise and initially led to the growing social anxiety and uncertainty. Indeed, some migrants lost their jobs and had to decide to either return to Poland or stay in Iceland and muddle through the new crisis reality. For others, the economic collapse was not particularly severe and they did not find it difficult to adapt to the following post-crisis situation. However, apart from

problems with savings, money transfers, unemployment and labour market participation, there is also another consequence of the crash, which concerns its affective and temporal dimensions. In Iceland, the crisis has produced lingering meanings, actions and temporal orientations, which continue to inform migrants' understandings of the everyday life matters. The present triggers migrants' lived experiences of the past and induces a state of alertness and anticipation of another crisis.

Despite Iceland's fast recovery, the uncertain future seems to be looming large in the present. Throughout my fieldwork, I have encountered crisis-driven narratives, which show the contingent forms of thinking, sensing and acting upon the past, present and the possible future. They all stem from the Polish migrants' lived experiences of the collapse and point to emotions, which have 'surfaced' in the times before and after the crash. From the initial bewilderment, caused by the 'manic millennium', to the rippling feelings of fear, anxiety and uncertainty of the crisis, they have been embroiled into migrants' ways of seeing and sensing the present. The crisis, even though it had different impact on migrants' livelihood, made its affective mark on ways of understanding the current entanglements. Therefore, Polish migrants in Iceland become alert of the re-emerging symptoms of the past crisis and use their lived experiences to anticipate the future.

The scope of ethnographic findings is obviously limited and it is rather difficult to make more general claims. However, ethnographic attention to details, intersubjectivities, social understandings and actions has also a potential to nuance and complement more quantitative approaches to the crisis and its aftermath. As I have shown, apart from economic consequences, the financial collapse in Iceland has also engendered affective and temporal reactions, which continue to linger today. As a result, Polish migrants are often engaged in ways of temporal reasoning, which affectively positions them towards both, the past (lived experiences, memories) and the future (speculations, predictions). To be sure, temporal reasoning is not about predicting 'what' will happen. It rather concerns the act of balancing between the temporalities of the past, present and future (Knight & Stewart, 2016: 13). Therefore, temporal reasoning points to the ways of 'how', 'when' and 'why' people do anticipate that 'something' will happen. Unpacking the relationship between migrants' lived experiences of the crisis past and their understandings of the present and orientation towards the future helps to illuminate existing migratory imaginaries, cultural meanings and social practices, including those formations which are still in a state of becoming. The attentiveness to migrants' active meaning making in motion offers insights into the lived affective and temporal ways of being in the world.

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