

No. 5/2017  
ISSN: 2543-5213  
doi: 10.23809/2

***Peer groups and Migration. Dialoguing  
Theory and Empirical Research***

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***Peer groups and Migration.  
Dialoguing Theory and Empirical Research<sup>i</sup>***

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## ABSTRACT

### Peer groups and Migration. Dialoguing Theory and Empirical Research

The main aim of this working paper is to introduce the conceptual and methodological frameworks of the *Peer groups and migration* project, which is the flagship longitudinal, multisited undertaking of the Youth Research Center of the SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, lasting from 2016 to 2020. In this paper we discuss how a peer group is made up and how migration influences transition to adulthood with special focus on school-to-work transitions.

The paper is constructed around a macro-meso-micro model wherein the peer group with various cohorts: movers and stayers, school and non-school friends, age groups is at stake. Three selected local communities operate at the macro level, peer influences and family at meso level, and the individual trajectories and transitions of the participants at the micro level. The combination of the three levels helps to answer our research questions on the impact of a peer group on the life trajectories marked by migration and determines the interlacing roles played by family, local community and new media in these processes.

In order to grasp the complexity of the project we apply the methodology of *Qualitative Longitudinal Study* (QLS) developed and promoted by Neale (Neale and Flowerdew 2003; Neale forthcoming). We approach individuals in peer groups in three selected local communities in Poland and walk along side with them throughout the course of three waves (36 months). With this approach we aim at linking notions of migration/sedentarism, peer group, and locality, in order to highlight the advantages of the project's approach. We see it as means for developing a comparative and temporally-embedded understanding of youth experiences in the medium-sized towns, seeing them as a lens to the realities of the dynamic Polish post-1989-transformation and post-EU-accession society (post 2004).

**Keywords:** peer group, youth, migration, local community, trajectory, transition, Qualitative Longitudinal Study (QLS).

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**Citation:** Grabowska, I., Pustułka, P., Juchniewicz, N., Sarnowska, J., Buler, M. (2017). Peer groups and Migration. Dialoguing Theory and Empirical Research. *Youth Working Papers*, No. 5/2017. Warszawa: SWPS Uniwersytet Humanistycznospołeczny – Youth Research Center. ISSN: 2543-5213. Doi: 10.23809/2.

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## 1. Introduction

This Working Paper<sup>1</sup> provides the theoretical and methodological reflections, as well as research objectives of the ongoing *Peer groups and Migration* project<sup>2</sup>. It develops the idea of studying migration and sedentarism in small social units, notably peer groups, in their social milieus of local communities. The main argument of the paper is to showcase how a relational sociology (Donati and Archer, 2015) may serve as a guidance to understanding peer groups when both migration and immobility occur. More specifically, we aim at conceptually linking the three main notions – that are migration/mobility, peer group, and locality, in order to highlight the advantages of the project's approach. We see it as means for developing a comparative and temporally-embedded understanding of youth experiences in the medium-sized towns, seeing them as a lens to the realities of the Polish post-1989-transformation and 2004 post-EU-accession society.

The rationale of studying migration in peer groups is rooted in the method of Putnam's (2015) 'rear-view mirror', which means examining directly what has been happening to peer groups (PGs) since the late middle school and secondary school (i.e. since the age of 15 in the Polish context). The focus is clearly on the opportunities of peer group socialization (e.g. being in and out of a PG) as a function of specific local communities where the young people were raised. We believe these experiences to likely have powerful effects on how the now young-adults are faring in life at present. Whatever changes we can detect they might impact social mobility which entails being geographically mobile (internal/ international mobility), immobile (staying in the place of origin), or both (e.g. returning from abroad).

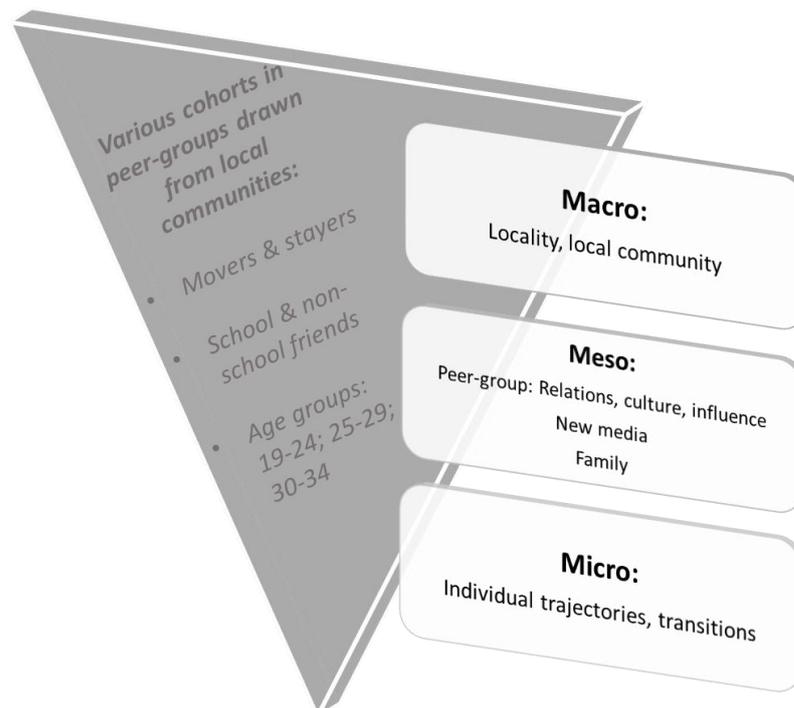
This Working Paper will be navigated by micro, meso and macro frames of reference and influence (see Figure 1.1.), ranging from individual in the sample, through to their collective influence (a peer group), through to wider influences of local community and their society they originate from (Neale forthcoming). The study covers various cohorts of youngsters: movers and stayers; age groups: 19-24, 25-29, 30-34 school and non-school friends. All this happens in changing times, when participants of our research were growing up, Poland - and the world - were changing in the background which we would like to capture through their individual, peer groups histories and stories of local experts.

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<sup>1</sup> This Working Paper is the output of the international conference *Researching Young Lives* which took place in Warsaw, at SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2016, The on-line report from this symposium is available at: <http://youth.swps.pl/2016/11/06/international-symposium-researching-young-lives-relacja/?lang=en> (3.03.2017).

<sup>2</sup> The *Peer groups and Migration* project (Full title: *Education-to-domestic and- foreign labour market transitions of youth: The role of locality, peer group and new media*) is funded by the Polish National Science Center under the Sonata Bis Project Contract No. 2015/18/E/HS6/00147. Project website: [http://youth.swps.pl/peers\\_migration/?lang=en](http://youth.swps.pl/peers_migration/?lang=en) (03.03.2017).

Figure 1.1. Conceptual model



Source: Own elaboration.

The ongoing project on *Peer groups and migration* conducted at the Youth Research Center of the SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities addresses the issues of: (1) Social mobility, through educational and labour market sequences, of movers and stayers in peer groups originating from selected local communities; (2) Paths to adulthood of both movers and stayers in peer groups, with special focus on school-to-work transitions to both domestic and foreign labour markets; (3) Role of migration and staying put in the life-long socialization; (4) Role of new media as a socialization agent when migration is at stake and a meso level influence, operating remotely, indirectly; (5) The impact and influence of a peer group in migratory decisions and unfolding trajectories.

In this project we are working with three age cohorts of movers and stayers, drawn from local communities of similar ages (19-24; 25-29; 30-34) and who we are following through the same historical time. In tracing the unfolding biographies of the samples through the life course, we are concerned with three overlapping trajectories – the education into work trajectory, the age trajectory from youth to adulthood, and the spatial trajectory through local or migratory processes. Our research will shed light on how these trajectories intersect in the lives of the participants. It is connected with a relatively precise choice of a biography and involves the process of fashioning one's identity and lifestyle (Neumark, 2007).

Therefore, the topic of this project is at the heart of the fundamental social science research, specifically as it pertains to the junction of youth studies and migration research. The issues addressed in the project shall be studied in-depth in the context of the situation of youngsters in the labour market, especially after the first decade of Poland's EU membership,

which increasingly becomes a new caesura for contemporary scholarship, to a degree replacing the earlier emphasis on the social meanings of the 1989 transformation.

## 2. Young movers and stayers in Poland in a snapshot

The Polish youngsters between 19 and 34 years of age are not a homogeneous group since they cover age cohorts born in both mid-1980s and mid-1990s. Both age cohorts experienced dynamic societal changes with regard to their educational curricula and the labour market situation and opportunities. Below we discuss selected aspects linked to their broad social trajectories.

### 2.1. Educational trajectory

The education landscape in Poland has undergone dramatic changes that some have even deemed a revolution upon the 1989 transition. Numerous educational reforms have followed and not only altered pedagogies, but had tremendous consequences on the linkages between schooling and employment (see e.g. Niezgoda, 1993; Banach, 1995), up to this day observable in the overall social structure of Poland (Grabowska-Lusińska, 2012). Notably, the improvement in the level of education in the given period of time since the transformation should be marked. Since 2005, the percentage of people holding a tertiary degree grew from 14 per cent up to 24 per cent across all age groups. There are more women than men who graduated from academic institutions – 28 per cent to 20 per cent, respectively.

Nevertheless, according to the Polish Central Statistical Office<sup>3</sup>, the net enrolment rate within tertiary education had fallen a little in the last 10 years. In 2005 it was 38 per cent for people aged 19-24 and in the 2015 it is 37 per cent.

Table 2.1. Net enrolment rate for tertiary education among people aged 19-24 (1990-2015)

Year	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Net enrolment rate	9.8	17.2	30.6	38.0	38.8	39.7	40.6	40.9	40.8	40.6	40.2	38.6	37.8	37.3

Source: CSO and Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

The process was connected with the falling number of academic institutions – from 445 in 2005 to 415 in 2015. However, it should be underlined that when people born in 1981 were entering the market of the tertiary education, they could only choose from 310 schools (public and private).

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<sup>3</sup> Statistical Yearbook 2016; <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/rocznik-statystyczny-rzeczypospolitej-polskiej-2016,2,16.html>

This initial sudden increase was an outcome of several social processes. Firstly, an inception of the so-called Bologna Process. On the one hand, education at the tertiary level it gives youngsters more flexibility with proceeding from a bachelor to a master-level education (earlier only 5-year uniform Master programs were available). On the other hand, it made bachelor and master-level education equal since - on the formal side - both titles signify having higher education. Secondly, there is a boost in the landscape of private universities in Poland and a massive enrolment to the higher education institutions extends to the students without earlier family traditions of tertiary degrees. Kucel (2011) claims that pupils from lower social status nevertheless have different educational models, pointing that a class-dimension perseveres, especially for elite education (see also: Kołodziejska and Mianowska, 2008; Inglot-Brzęk, 2012). In other words, students originating from groups of higher social status are able to pursue more risky educational careers, related to a higher risk of not finishing education at a specific level. This situation can then lead to incompatibilities tied to under-qualification (Kucel, 2011). By the same logic, that those originating from lower status social groups, especially from the areas that are geographically peripheral and fail to provide local higher education access, are more likely to realize less risky educational careers (such as in social sciences and humanities) or choose less prestigious local higher education institutions due to economic constraints of residing in a major city. In turn, these decisions may lead to a situation of an incomplete upward social mobility. Notably, the standard positive correlation between education and labour market situation (which generally means lesser threat of unemployment for graduates), may be invalid in their case, as they become overqualified relative to what jobs are offered.

## **2.2. Employment trajectory**

The analysis of Labour Force Survey data for Poland (third quarter, 2016) showed that labour market activity of young age cohort of 20-24 was around 50 per cent and unemployment rate at nearly 17 per cent. The older youngsters were, the higher economic activity they performed and the lower unemployment rate they experienced (25-29 age group - 78 per cent rate of economic activity and nearly 8 per cent of unemployment; 30-34 age group- more than 81 per cent rate of labour market activity and 5 per cent of unemployment rate). Male were more economically active than women in all young age groups. School to work transition of women was around 25 years of age and for man a bit earlier. The highest rates of labour market activities for man were between 24 and 35 and for women 40-44 when their children grown up a bit. The age of economic activity for women was strongly connected with the reproduction patterns. Holding diploma from higher education institutions still prevented in 2016 in Poland from unemployment, meaning that highly educated youngsters experienced the lowest rates of unemployment.

A dedicated analysis conducted by the Polish Central Statistical Office (CSO) on the young people's (aged 15-34) labour market entry found that both vocational and tertiary education prevent Polish youngsters from unemployment. In relation to recent graduates (within a span of 12 months since graduation) nearly 30 per cent did not work. This might be connected to both continuation of education at the higher levels as well as purposive inactivity connected to family and children (CSO, 2015).

Every employment age group is also differentiated by gender, usually favouring young males in the dimension of the ease of entry, performance evaluation and gender pay gap (Kotowska, 2007). With reference to the gender variable, while the total rate of mismatched employment and qualifications stood at 40 per cent for the general population. According to the 2009 CSO analysis, young women more often took jobs mismatched with their formal education (55 per cent). Similarly, women were less likely than man to combine education with work (28 to 30, respectively).

POLPAN's data supports the general trend as there is a decreasing number of people studying and not working at the same time (in 2008 - 23 per cent and 18 per cent in 2013) in their longitudinal study (Kiersztyn, 2015). While researching careers of youngsters, POLPAN study showed that one third of young Poles have career sequences marked by uncertainty, which means starting with short-term episodic jobs, multiple career ruptures, breaks and continuation with short-term work. This sequence is also connected to the phenomenon of job hopping. Only one of five young Poles boasts a stable career.

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that one in three young respondents investigated by the CSO (2009) study commenced their employment during education. This appears to strongly affect their employment trajectories, as the majority - namely 86.5 per cent) - of people who failed to start working after graduation were those without prior work experience. This means that combining university education with work positively impacts career opportunities. According to CSO (2009), youngsters were searching and finding jobs most often *via* relatives and acquaintances. The geographic distance and potential commute constituted a stronger factor for women, who were likely burdened with caring responsibilities at home. The closer the work was, the better it was considered by women (15 per cent for female and 9.8 per cent for male).

The most recent graduates of various types of education in the collated 15-30 age group are employed at the rate of 62 per cent and an unemployment rate for this subpopulation stands at the level of 31 per cent. The highest rate of employment and the lowest rate of unemployment can be found among graduates of secondary schools (37 and 48 per cent respectively). Furthermore, while it is important to reiterate that Poles with university degree are less frequently unemployed, yet it is also predominantly young people who suffer the consequences of the new neoliberal labour market's demands. As many as 53 per cent of Polish youngsters work in precarious jobs with temporary contracts and low compensation (Jelonek and Szklarczyk, 2012). This number is even higher for the Eurostat data, which points to 70 per cent temporary contracts among young Poles (Pankow, 2014). Part time during youth is much less popular in Poland as compared to other European countries. Only one in five youngsters in the 15-24 age group worked part-time in Poland which means only the seventh position among other EU countries. A noteworthy peculiarity, however, is the high rate of self-employment among young Poles. The POLPAN study (longitudinal study of the Polish social structure) (Kiersztyn, 2015) confirms the growing trend of flexible forms of employment in the younger social strata (17 per cent in 2013 in the age group 21-25 as comparing to nearly 10 per cent in 2008). Since 2011, Polish higher education institutions are obligated to monitor the careers of their graduates. The Analytical Office of the Parliament (Dziewulak et al., 2014), found that only one in three educational institutions monitor the labour market performances of their graduates. As the monitoring of alumni careers of

Jagiellonian University in Cracow shows the earlier experience in the labour market, determines the further positive performance (Pankow, 2014). As the study on graduates from University of Warsaw highlights, one in two started working during studying (PEJK, 2014). As in the graduates' monitoring of SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities two thirds of graduates gain labour market experience during their studies, which impacted their career paths (Grabowska-Lusinska, 2013).

Regardless of an increasing degree acquisition and early job-on-boarding experiences, the rate of the so-called *NEETs* (not in employment, education or training) has been growing in Poland in recent years. In 2008, the number of NEETs was just below 14 per cent so an increase to nearly 18 per cent by 2013 is notable. According to Eurostat (Pankow, 2014) Poland locates in the middle of the NEETs ranking of the EU countries (the biggest numbers are in Southern belt of Europe). The biggest group of NEETs in Poland is in the older age group (25-29 - 22 per cent; while 18-24 - 15 per cent). This means that people either do not enter the labour market after graduation or they withdraw from it. In Poland more women than man, which may be connected with the patriarchal gender orders and their resulting female duties of caring, housekeeping and child-minding.

### **2.3. Migration trajectory**

In face of numerous and often overlapping factors, young people from Poland are highly mobile: as many as 65 per cent of all migrants are those aged 18 to 44. In the post-accession stream of international mobility from Poland, more than 8 per cent of migrants are in the age category of 15-19, nearly 30 per cent are aged 20-24, and more than 27 per cent are in an age cohort of 25-29. This means that some 62 per cent of all post-accession mobile people from Poland are below the age of 30 (Fihel and Kaczmarczyk, 2009; Fihel, 2011 based on LFS). This is not surprising as mobile people usually belong to the younger cohorts of the population, but in comparison to the pre-accession period, the number of Polish mobile youth below 30 increased by around 6 per cent. The biggest increase is in the age group of 24-29, where it reached more than 6 per cent, while in other cohorts the differences hover around 1.5 per cent. These figures also relate to the post-accession increase in international mobility among recent Polish university graduates, who often transited smoothly from education to the labour market abroad for their first job.

According to Census data (2011), the number of migrants in younger cohorts stood at 101 000 for the age group of 20 to 24, and as many as 243 000 (for those aged 25-29, and similarly many 30-34-year olds (232 000). The Polish migrant population structure stands out in global perspective, where the average age of a migrant is 39 years. A statistical Polish migrant in the main country of destination – the United Kingdom – was only 31-years-old. There is a convergence of age averages across most of the European influx countries of Poles. Among the 25-35-year-olds surveyed in Poland, as many as 35 per cent considered emigration, with the indicator only slightly lower for the holders of university diplomas (31 per cent).

According to POLPAN data (2013) young migrants start work earlier and their labour market trajectory is more fragmented due to higher number of jobs and unemployment spells

between the jobs. Young migrants more often work in firms with foreign capital and less often in public administration than non-migrants.

There are many different reasons for young people to go abroad to start their working life there (Grabowska, 2016a). Economic factors alone form an insufficient explanation. In the study by Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich (2007, p. 11), migration is described as a *rite of passage into adulthood*. Conradson and Latham (2005) describe the migration of youngsters as a period of time spent abroad, time for travelling and building one's career. More importantly, this time and experience is taken for granted. Young Polish people are willing to take low-skilled jobs in the receiving labour markets, usually below their formal qualifications, in order to enjoy a new lifestyle, a chance of living in a cosmopolitan environment, and the freedom to go on exotic holidays. They can afford the comforts even on the basic salaries received abroad (Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich, 2007; Trevena, 2013). Therefore, the whole idea of mobility has become a widely accepted lifestyle choice for young people from Poland (Botterill, 2011). Although these opportunities offer the freedom to work, study, travel and live abroad (Favell, 2008), they also bring about tensions and struggles (Ni Laoire, 2000). Clearly, when discussing reasons for the migration of youngsters, one must take into account a mix of both material and non-material factors that together influence the migration process.

When analysing return migration to Poland as based on LFS data (Anacka, 2010), it emerged that young mobile Poles below 30 stay abroad more often than they return home, compared to the mobile representatives of older age groups who return to Poland in bigger numbers. This may relate to the fact that youngsters can operate more flexibly in the receiving labour markets, as they 'have some English' (White, 2010), no dependants at home, and may re-start education in the receiving labour market.

Based on the Centre of Migration Research (CMR) ethno-survey data of 2007 (collected in four Polish counties), the analysis of labour market transitions of the internationally mobile Polish youth in the local labour markets, shows that when they are in Poland (transitions between labour market status before and after or between geographical mobility), those aged 20-24 usually remain inactive, which usually means that they return to education. Mobile youth aged 25 and older transit differently to the Polish labour market: 87 per cent continued being active after returning from migration; 50 per cent of those who were unemployed before mobility found employment after returning; and 38 per cent of those who remained unemployed after mobility became inactive. More than 70 per cent of those who were inactive before mobility retained this status, which, as said, can also signal a return to education (Grabowska, 2016a).

As the group aged 25-29 is the most dynamic in the labour market, the analysis of their career patterns also shows that they experience the biggest fragmentation of their career paths as compared to the career patterns of other age groups. This means that successive jobs are not related to one another in terms of content, and sometimes not even in terms of sector, resulting in a kind of 'occupational patchwork'. This applies to 57 per cent of migrants in this age group. It is also the age group that most often takes on jobs abroad below their formal qualifications. This often applies to recent graduates of Polish universities, whose human capital is not easily transferable to the foreign labour market (see e.g. Trevena, 2011). Therefore, their first job abroad is often of a routine, manual, low-skilled nature, although

customarily at home those in age group 25-29 and with third level education would be perceived as high skilled workforce. This situation results from several factors: (1) Young people search for jobs on the spot, rarely via recruitment agencies or the recruitment departments of the companies they apply to, because they need jobs as quickly as possible and the quickest available jobs are of a routinized and manual nature, often in the 3D-jobs area; (2) Migrants' command of the foreign language spoken in the host country does not cover the professional vocabulary of their actual occupations; (3) Young migrants are usually educated in disciplines for which there is no demand in a destination labour market, e.g. social sciences, humanities, law (Currie, 2007; Trevena, 2013; Grabowska, 2016a).

Nearly every third mobile person from Poland captured in the post-accession local CMR ethno-surveys of 2007 transited from education to a labour market abroad, so that his/her first job was not in the domestic but in a foreign labour market. These people often did not even search for jobs at home, instead taking on jobs abroad immediately after graduation or even during education, usually postponing graduation for some time for that reason. People with first job experience abroad can be characterised as follows: in the mobile age bracket (applies to nearly 90 per cent, compared to the 65 per cent of the general mobile population), childless and unmarried. This group also engaged in other forms of migration than seasonal, more than other mobile Polish migrants (56 per cent, compared to 40 per cent of the general population). They also display more singular rather than repetitive mobility (67 per cent, compared to 57 per cent for the entire mobile population surveyed), which relates to their young age and usually on-going education (see also: Huang et al., 2016). Migrants with first jobs abroad were three times more often found in the group of entrepreneurs and non-qualified labourers than migrants with the domestic first job. Once back in Poland, those who had first job abroad started their own business more commonly than those mobile people who transited from school to the domestic labour market. The last finding may be particularly explained by the 'socialisation' to the foreign market and the later difficulties to transit to the paid jobs in the Polish labour market. In fact, migrants with first job abroad experience somehow two transitions: school-to-foreign labour market and foreign-to-first domestic job which can be better understood in a quantitative analysis (Grabowska, 2016a).

As White (2010) showed in her study, especially for mobile youngsters coming from small Polish towns and villages, work abroad was not a 'gap year'. *"This is truly labour migration, not just a holiday abroad before embarking on a career in Poland"* (White, 2010, p. 566). In these cases, mobility and having one's first job abroad is a popular livelihood strategy, especially in places hit by both systemic transition and its consequential economic decline (White, 2010). It is often perceived as a life option or even a necessity; 'the situation forces them to go'. In many cases it is more a 'fate' rather than a 'choice' (Bauman, 2004, in: Botterill, 2011), which means a necessary 'individualisation through migration' connected to the rejection of familiar and local yet adverse conditions. Instead, Polish young people decide to face and tackle uncertainties on the nowadays volatile foreign labour markets in the era of post-modernity. Unlike youth in other European societies, Poles very rarely consider going to another Polish city for education and work; going to work abroad is often seen as the only option available (White, 2010; Grabowska, 2016a). White (2010) also argues that in some locations with rich migration history, young people feel 'socialised into migration' and their families expect them to engage in mobility (see also: Botterill, 2011). White (2011) suggests

that their livelihood strategies somehow may be realised in their localities, usually with the support of wider family networks.

More broadly, in her study of British youth, Jones (1999) showed that youth out-migration is the result of a combination of structural and motivational factors, and by staying or by moving they construct their specific labour market identities. This also implies that there is a group of Polish youngsters who do not move, stay in their localities, usually where they were born. Who are they? There is still very little knowledge about them. Based on the case study of British youth, Jones (1999) claims that immobile youngsters are more often ones who are able to deal with local social control, who are able to construct their identities in the place of their origin, for who sedentarism or 'mooring' is a part of their lifestyle, and who are dependants within wider family networks. Polish immobile youngsters as based on CMR ethno-surveys are less educated than mobile cohorts of the same age, more often in marriage relations with children.

King and co-authors (2016), in their most recent overview of international youth mobility and life transitions in Europe, surveyed various life transitions of internationally mobile youth from education to work, from unemployment to employment and more widely from youth to adulthood. They argue that spatial mobility interacts in various ways with social and economic mobility. In their work they categorized mobile youth into three categories: (1) students who study at the university or other higher education institution in other European country which is connected to credit or degree/diploma mobility; student mobility is highly differentiated by family income (2) graduates who work or search for work abroad-usually higher skilled; (3) non-graduates who work or seek for a job with rather lower skills. They argue that international mobility may be the mechanism through which youngsters transit between these categories. In their overview study they also highlight three processes: (1) reinforcing through migration key transitions, especially of those with higher skills; (2) globalization of higher education connected with availability of opportunities of studying abroad; (3) youth mobility cultures where "studying and living abroad is seen as a life stage rite de passage, and therefore more of an 'act of consumption' than economic strategy aimed at improving and individual's human capital and, thus, income and career prospects" (King at al., 2016, p. 19). King and co-author also bring argument that return migration may constitute "the ultimate transition to full adulthood- settling down, establishing home, starting a family etc." (ibid., p. 44).

Zooming back to the contextual experiences, Szewczyk (2015) contends that the migratory experience of Polish graduates is non-discursive and relates to common-sense actions, referred to by Giddens (1984) as 'practical unconsciousness'. Migration decisions made by Polish youngsters are, according to Szewczyk (2015), connected to the belonging to two other generational units encompassing different age cohorts: (1) '*Generation of Change*' and (2) '*European Generation of Opportunities and Migration*'. The first cohort, '*Generation of Change*', covers those born late 1970s to early 1980s, who grew up in Poland's transition period, migrated after Poland's accession to the EU, and saw their migration as an outcome and somehow achievement of these processes. The second cohort, '*European Generation of Opportunities and Migration*', encompasses those born in late 1990s and exposed to the opportunities of free movement as a matter of choice. For the former generation, Szewczyk (ibid., p. 158) argues that "*the changes forced them to become pioneers in establishing new*

*routes to adulthood and labour market, often associated with uncertainty*”, as they were neither introduced nor guided through these changes by their parents or school teachers. This generation is characterised more by ‘an individualist trial and error’ approach to life and the labour market (Grabowska, 2016a). What is more, with the central role of family values in Poland, young cohorts also see migration as possible means to embarking on establishing and supporting their own families, even if it means objective deskilling and possible career-stalling (Huang et al., 2016).

### 3. Research questions and methodology

The *Peer groups and migration* project is navigated by of critical realism, and especially the notion of a relational subject (Donati and Archer, 2015). This navigation facilitates searching for answers with reference to what is a peer group, how it is made up, and why some peers undertake a migratory path and some peers pursue a sedentary strategy.

We assume that a peer group consists of relational subjects who are related to each other and have a kind of collective reflexivity (Donati and Archer, 2015). Peer group relations have certain distance, properties, associated power, and an inside being. All members of a peer group are enmeshed in relations with other peers, significant others and the non-social world. They are not self-sufficient entities but subjects-in-relations where partly these relations constitute their personhoods. We work here both at the micro and meso-levels and explore their intersections. It is worth saying that peer groups and friendship networks are relational fields and they are essentially fluid and dynamic, rather than static entities. A peer group is in a continual state of flux, growing or shrinking and with new peers joining and others leaving. The longitudinal methodology will uncover it and also the act of internal or international migration will trigger such processes in a spatial trajectory.

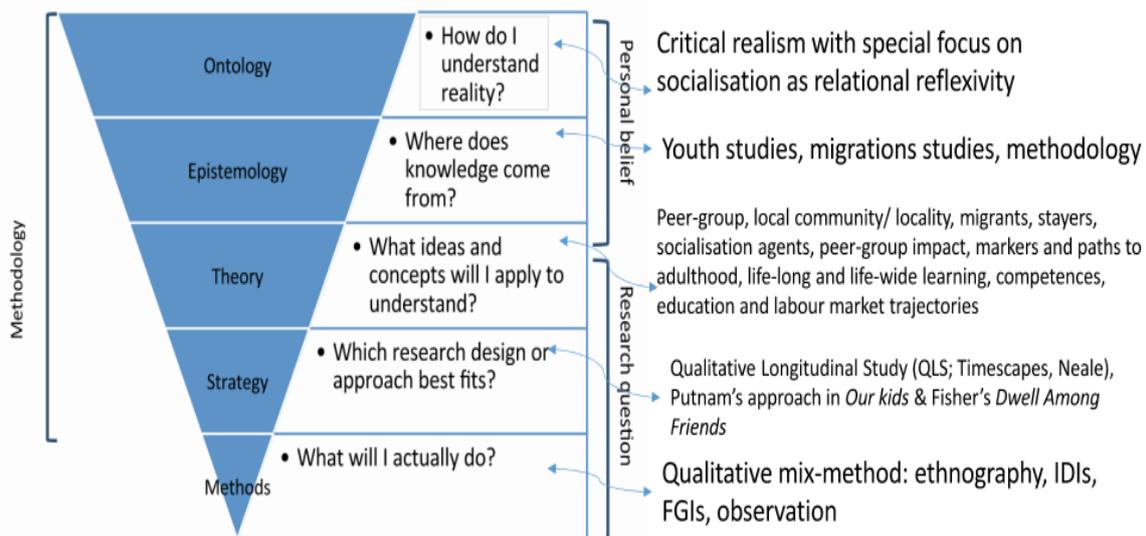
Our approach clearly relates to the relational sociology which is neither ‘connectivity’ (in networks) nor ‘transactions’ (exchanges between people) (ibid.). We agree with Donati that a peer group as a unit of a society does not ‘have’ relations but ‘is’ a relation. Society is a product of associative and dissociative relations that arise from structures and cultures, whilst human actions continuously alter them.

It is quite fruitful to conceptualize social relations within a peer group as reciprocal actions between Ego and Alter in a social context. The relations can be regarded both from a subjective side (of both Ego and Alter- as we do interview both *ego* migrants and *alter* others) or as an objective reality of their trajectories (Donati and Archer, 2015). Our egos can be still attached, semi-detached or separated from their post-secondary school peer groups.

According to Donati and Archer (2015), a social relationship intrinsically reflexive - it is always bent back to the subjects linked by relations. However reflexivity can be minimal, impeded, distorted, or fractured between the peers. It can also be communicative and autonomous. What emerges from interactions is usually followed by deliberation about some new course of action to be undertaken (e.g. migration/sedentarism). People consider themselves in relation to their social contexts (e.g. peer groups, families, local communities) and therefore they are part of a relational order of reality. We follow Donati and Archer (2015) in their argument that ‘the subject is social and that he/she is relational’ (ibid., p. 32). To

maintain this view of a relational subject means that s/he is a part of ‘we’, for instance a we as a relational peer group.

Figure 3.1. Methodology



Source: Own elaboration based on Van Kerkhoff in Layder (2013).

In search of these *whats*, *whys* and *hows* pertinent to peer groups and migration/sedentarism, we apply the *Qualitative Longitudinal Study* (QLS). The methodology of the QLS (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003; Krings at al., 2013) combines both ethnographic longitudinal study (coming back to the three selected localities) and sociological longitudinal studies (three waves of interviews with members of peer groups). Therefore, it will show both the process and the dynamics of the school-to-work transitions in transnational and trans-local contexts. Additionally, while researching the peer groups, we will get the unique opportunity to capture both movers and stayers in reference (and in relation) to each other.

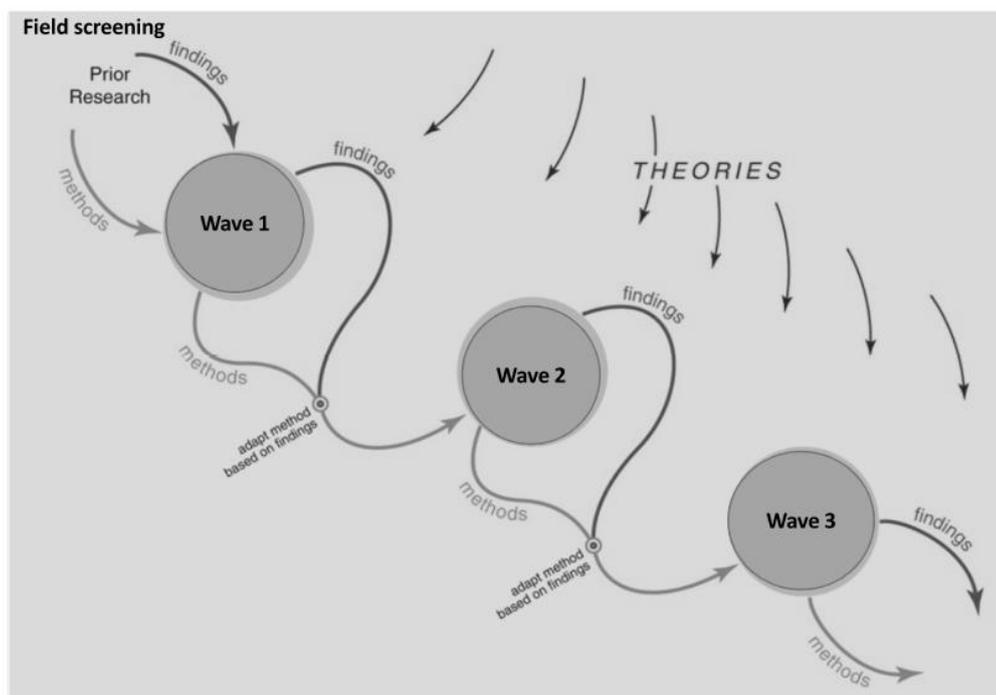
Qualitative Longitudinal Study can be defined as a qualitative inquiry conducted in a dynamic relation to time and space (Neale, 2012a)<sup>ii</sup>. Thus, it facilitates the process of “dwelling among” peer groups in the sense proposed in Fischer’s classic work (1982). The approach draws on ethnography, social anthropology, history and community and theatre studies (Neale, 2012a). Over the past decade or so, scholars promoted these methods as a distinctive way to understand the textured social world and “social change in the making” (Saldana, 2003; Thomson and Holland, 2003; Neale and Flowerdew, 2003), with a growing importance of migration in it (Krings at al., 2013; Grabowska at al., 2017).

We fully agree with Neale (2012b) and the *Timescapes* Qualitative Longitudinal Research Program<sup>iii</sup> which was our inspiration with the qualitative longitudinal part of the research, that any form of qualitative longitudinal research and especially its transnational multisided version can be regarded as a craft; “the methods used are diverse and can be applied creatively and flexibly to address particular research questions, and to engage with

varied sample populations” (Neale, 2012a, p. 3). We engaged in our research with movers and stayers from peer groups in researched communities and we “walked alongside” people and places as their migratory experiences and eventual impacts of migration unfolded (McLeod and Thomson, 2009).

We have designed the QLS on *Peer groups and migration* with the help of Adaptive Theory approach offered by Layder (1998). This is to constantly dialogue the ontological and epistemological approaches with the field research (Figure 3.2.). Therefore it is creative, not a prescriptive process that offers plethora of variations in conduct and innovations within the research process itself.

Figure 3.2. Dialogue of theory and empirical research in Adaptive Theory approach by Layder (1998)



Source: Own elaboration based on Layder (1998).

The research process of *Peer groups and migration* is a dynamic journey (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). We take predominantly a retrospective approach in order to understand the impact of peer groups on further educational and labour market trajectories. The study is also prospective because we track the same samples of peer groups in/ from the same local communities through time. We as researchers become “time travellers” (McLeod and Thomson, 2009). Our both ontological and epistemological insights offer us an open space for reflexivity, reconfigurations and constraints. Our *whats*, *hows* and *whys* of peer groups are framed in a dynamic way and relate to changes, continuities, and subjective causality over time (Neale, forthcoming). Thanks to the methodology of QLS we are able to make insights into the ‘back stories’ of both peer groups and their individuals and how they arrived at these points of their lives when we catch them.

Our road map is presented in a tabular form which guides our empirical journey (Table 3.1.). We plan three waves addressing all levels of our analysis: macro-meso-micro. We have started on the fall of 2016/2017 and will be returning to the sampled peer groups and their individuals after 10-12 months. Due to challenges in recruiting peer groups<sup>4</sup> the first wave needs to be longer (five months) than the next waves are planned to be. Normally we assume to conduct the wave within three months.

Table 3.1. Roadmap of Qualitative Longitudinal Study

Frame	Wave 1 Fall 2016/17	Wave 2 Fall 2017/18	Wave 3 Fall 2018/19
<b>Macro:</b> Local community	Ethnographic screening of local communities	Significant others from local community indicated by peers	Monitoring local trends and activities (institutions, projects, individuals- local actors)
<b>Meso:</b> Peer group, family, new media	Mapping peer groups of secondary school	Life-course and relations in secondary school peer groups  Socialization agents  Role of new media in peer group, migration	Life-course of a secondary school peer groups  Current peer groups (mapping for comparisons)
<b>Micro:</b> Trajectories and transitions	Education and employment trajectories (detailed sequences)  School-to-work transitions (first job; domestic and foreign labour market)	Trajectories' update  Big 5 markers of transitions to adulthood	Trajectories' update  Personal traits and social skills

Source: Own elaboration inspired by Neale (forthcoming).

Unit of our analysis is both peer group but predominately individuals in these peer groups. We approach individuals from selected three local communities in Poland till 1984 year of birth which at the end of our study will construct the groups of people between 19 and 34 years of age. This means that we encounter in our study a classical longitudinal cohorts defined as “aggregates of individuals who experience the same life event between the same time interval” (Ruspini, 2002, p. 9). The cohorts can be defined predominately through age but also through generation (connected to some structural event, e.g. reform of educational system, war, recession, EU enlargement) but also in relation to particular life circumstances: illness, spells of employment, unemployment, migration or policy intervention (Neale, forthcoming). All these factors are important for our longitudinal cohorts.

<sup>4</sup> Separate paper will be published on recruitment and sampling challenges.

Time complicates the process of sampling and we envisage the processes of phasing out of our samples and unexpected dropouts. To maintain our respondents in the sample between the waves we offer them Virtual Room of Job Development where they can seek for tailor-made labour market and career information handy packages. As a part of this rationale of dropping outs we oversampled peer groups and individuals in the first wave of our baseline group. Honing on our initial sampled peer groups we envisage also focusing our attention on selected peer groups which is in line with a broader ethnographic strategy known as 'funnel approach' (Agar, 1980, p. 13). Our aim, however, is to maintain the highest possible retention rate of the baseline sample as possible.

In order to deal with the data obtained in the QLS at all levels of the analysis: macro-meso-micro we will introduce a sequence analysis for social sciences (Cornwell, 2015). Peer groups and migration in a life-course is a sequential social phenomenon. Thanks to QLS we are going to reconstruct scripts of various (also hidden and non-obvious) sequences and detect their structures and patterns in terms of: educational and labour market careers of both movers and stayers- peer group members, life-course of a peer group (sequences as networks), transitions in life trajectories (to adulthood, with a special focus on the transition to the labour market). Sequences are sets of temporarily ordered things – states, events, activities, preferences, or other phenomena (Cornwell, 2015, p. 21). They can also reflect spatial orders (relating to migration) and interconnectedness between people. It can also include micro-sequential analysis of everyday life, both routine activities and daily interactions. Thanks to the sequential analysis of various structures, we would be able to see literally and metaphorically what is the social geography of a peer group. The lengths of the sequences depend on the age of respondents, their interconnectedness, density of events. In this line we will be able to get an understanding how sequences tie individuals to each other into relations and to wider social systems. The sequences analysis in both a peer group and within individuals will help us to research how these sequences intersect, what are their outcomes. With this sequential analysis within and across multiple subjects informally organised around peer groups we will be in line with both 'The Manifesto for Relational Sociology' (Emirbayer, 1997) and 'Relational Subject' (Donati and Archer, 2015). Emirbayer (1997) highlights that the clue of social life is this meso level which constructs the relational individual. In our case the peer group is a relational foci on the meso level where the processes in relations will be grasped.

To sum up, the methodology of *Peer group and migration* project is ontologically guided by relational subject approach (Donati and Archer, 2015), epistemologically it is guided by Layder, and methodologically is guided by Qualitative Longitudinal Study - QLS (Neale forthcoming) which will allow us to engage, where appropriate with temporal theory and the time-space plane, so we are using time as a conceptual as well as an empirical framework The undertaken combined approach gives us an opportunity to look at the role of migration in people's lives from different angles than practiced in social research before. It gives us the space to question the role of migration in transiting to adulthood in very direct, known populations of peer groups which are composed of both movers and stayers in the contexts of local communities.

## 4. MACRO: Local community

### 4.1. Local community in late modernity

Broadly speaking, local communities relate to the “patterns of social interaction in relatively geographically confined locations (...) especially in the face of change” (Marshall, 1994, p. 97). Belonging or forming a local community is usually construed upon the common historical, cultural and ethnical experiences, or, alternatively, stems from a shared language, religion, values and/or habits (Chaskin, 1997, p. 38). The interactions in the given local community form the particular DNA of a place, which in turn shapes its essence and members’ sense of belonging.

The term itself evolved greatly since the inception of Wirth’s conceptual shift towards “urbanism as a way of life”, which encompassed the new dimensions of community’s size, local variations and heterogeneity (1938). Conversely, Fischer’s “To Dwell among Friends” work (1982) argues that local community studies require the examination of networks, and the degree of connectivity across the urban-non-urban community spectrum. In that sense, Fisher’s arguments favoured localism as a way of life, especially as it was believed to be somewhat of a panacea for the growing dangers of city-living and means to a better quality of life. In Stacey’s seminal work (1962), locality has been conceptualized as sets of interlinked institutions, and the myth of community studies has been questioned.

Local community further serves as a lens for broader social processes. This idea is based on a conviction that smaller social units or groups in a more clearly organized and boundary-aware space of a specific locality, can be observed with much obtrusion, yet be a magnifying glass into a broader society, for which entanglements between macro-, micro- and meso-levels are that much harder to discern. As such, social phenomena are seen in a much more striking manner at the level of locality. Continuously, local community study is a ‘method of elucidating data illustrative of some wider generalization’ (Bell and Newby, 1971, p. 41; Stein, 1962). What is more, local community warrants ethnographic methods, especially longitudinal in nature. Studying both experts and youth in a comparable local communities over time establishes a way for acquiring a descriptive and evaluative sense of community (Plant, 1969). For Poland, this would signify the capacity to investigate the long-term effects of the 1989 transformation and the later EU accession of 2004, as those two pivotal events connect to the localized sense of place and generational shifts.

With the focus on migration, which is inadvertently linked to global-scale changes and processes, we further reflect on Robertson’s work on glocalization (1995), which introduced new paramount dimensions to the concept of locality. While initially used in the context of economics, in social sciences it evokes the idea of analysing global trends through the lens of locally-bounded initiatives and values. Robertson questioned the inherent dualism and contradiction of the globalization-locality continuum, instead arguing that an individual accustomed and attached to their locality may still follow the logic of the global systems (ibid.) In that sense, the new globalization may be formed in reference to the former local patterns, as might be the case with Polish out-migration, currently “global”, yet earlier established as the way of life in the “local”. Less optimistic are Bauman’s claims (2004), which point to the decreasing value and stigmatization of locality equated with sedentarism, which is

counterpointed to the global mobility and progress. Another – arguably more positive - postmodern take on local community in relation to globalization, sustainable development and civic society, has been offered by Fukuyama (1997). This approach is pivotal in its central emphasis on the fact that people have a tangible need of identification with small groups rather than grand, less-tangible and superficial macro-structures. A quest for familiarity and propinquity means that two processes – which can be applied to our project’s context - occur in parallel. Namely, on the macro-scale the global processes permeate in the similar shape and form into almost all local communities and biographies, while, on the micro-level, people desire differentiation and own identity, which they can draw from local communities – and peer groups – considered easier as far as belonging and contact are concerned.

Besides the broad background of globalisation, the impacts of key historical events and their resulting transformations – primarily the 1989 systemic change and the 2004 accession to the EU – strongly resonate in Polish local communities (White, 2011; Jelonek, Szklarczyk, 2012). This means that young people experience a mix of continuity and change, applicable to both the form of macrostructural features of labour market (i.e. communist relicts versus knowledge economy demands; Pankow, 2014) and local communities, and with reference to how these affect attitudes and characteristics of the meso agents (family, peers). It can be argued that medium-sized towns serve as perfect lenses for observing these entanglements. This is because smaller localities had their development strongly conditioned on former system’s structures, which then promptly collapsed once the 1990s arrived. By the same logic, their responses to transformation and EU accession were arguably more rapid, posing economic demands on the inhabitants and instilling or strengthening the migration cultures. However, not all changes – especially in the mentality of the small town populations – occurred at the same pace. In that sense, the backgrounds are differently and dynamically shaped by historical processes and alter the biographies in a plethora of ways as Poland as the whole, and its local towns as separate entities, undergo sequent social change.

#### 4.2. Three sites of the QLS

For our Qualitative Longitudinal Study, we have selected three communities – Mielec, Słupsk and Puławy – which are situated in three different regions of Poland (in Podkarpackie, Pomeranian and Lublin provinces, respectively). The localities are medium-sized towns, ranging between 50 000 and 90 000 of inhabitants. We have selected these localities based on both their common and distinct features. Among common factors, we point out: (1) administrative classification of the localities as *powiat* towns (county/district capitals); (2) concurrently high average age of the towns’ residents, standing at 40 years for Mielec and around 42 for both Słupsk and Puławy; (3) all three towns have the so-called *Special Economic Zones*, which constitute important actors and facets of local labour markets and jobs availability for the youth; (4) all towns boast extensive networks of secondary education, including different types of schools offering vocational, technical and A-level diplomas; (5) all communities experience both internal migration to larger Polish cities and international migration, mostly after Poland’s accession to the EU in May 2004.

Among the differences, we highlight the following: (1) population size and numerous detailed socio-demographic indicators; (2) degrees of historical continuity of the populations; (3) migratory patterns; (4) geographical location and the historical ascription of each town to a different sub-region during the period of the Polish partitions (1795-1918), which still impacts local communities in Poland (Grabowska et al., 2017). We will now briefly characterize each locality.

### ***Mielec, Podkarpackie Province***

Dating back to 13<sup>th</sup> century, the identity of the urban community was then shaped by being in the Austrian partition (*Galicja*) and later being enveloped by the policies of the Central Industrial Region, created to foster Polish industrialization in the interwar period. The State Aviation Works, founded in 1936, has governed the town's history, character and development throughout the next decades.

The end of communism in 1989 brought on a restructuring of state military aircraft industry, which crucially altered the city's course. Throughout the 1990s, the city looked for alternative paths, as the main industrial employer scaled down, and then almost folded, ultimately being bought by foreign investors. The unemployment skyrocketed, as the inhabitants were also faced with the challenges of privatization, and the rolling-back of the previous provisions secured by a strong industrial aviation monoculture. However, the establishment of the Special Economic Zone – first one ever in the entire Poland – in 1995 – helped avert the crisis and, eventually, transformed the city's demand for workers.

At present, Mielec is a medium-sized town with a population of ca. 60 000 inhabitants. While Mielec is located in a traditionally religious and conservative part of Poland, the town itself is seen as rather moderate. The values are nevertheless apparent with the highest birth rates (positive 19) of all three communities studied, paired with the highest marriage rate (6.0) and low rate of divorce. In general, even though experts and newcomers (in-migrants) praise it as a good place to live, the local residents exhibit a tendency of underrating it. The population is the lowest-educated among the three research towns. In terms of labour market structure Mielec still has the highest rates of percentage employment in industry and construction - 41 per cent (as compared to 29 in agriculture and 12 in services and finance). The registered unemployment rate oscillates around 9 per cent.

Mielec is an example of a locality with an established yet arguably weakening migration culture (Kandel and Massey, 2002; White, 2011). It is the only locality with a positive net international migration (34) but a negative internal migration rate (-282) - the highest among researched towns.

### ***Słupsk, Pomerania Province***

Słupsk is presently the largest of the studied localities, with the population standing at 90 000. Still, the town is clearly experiencing a depopulation, as evidenced by the 6.7 per cent decrease regarding the population change between 2002 and 2015. This locality displays the most complex character due to its lack of historical continuity of its population. The process linked with Słupsk being formerly part of Prussia and the later multiple displacement actions

and resettlement policies after the WW2, means that the city still reflects the considerable and rather recent influx of Warsaw's residents – particularly elites - into its fold.

The shifting urban identity resonates in the educational structure and ambitions of the Słupsk's residents as the city is the best-educated among the three towns. Furthermore, it gets well with perceived higher degrees of openness and progressive values, which can be seen, for example, in the particularly high rate of divorce (2.2). In terms of labour market structure, Słupsk has the lowest employment in agriculture (less than 1 per cent) as compared to industry and construction- 30 per cent and services and finance 27.5 per cent. In other words, the labour market is most in line with modern knowledge economy as far as the three research sites are concerned. The registered unemployment rate oscillates around 7 per cent.

While affected by migration in the past, the current population witnesses stark consequences of the 1998 Polish administrative reform, which halted the city's earlier prominent development. Specifically, Słupsk ceased to be a regional capital, and, thus, missed out on the sequent opportunities brought on by the EU enlargement initiatives and funding. As noted, the city's population has been shrinking at a high rate. Słupsk has both a negative net internal migration (-272) and a negative international migration (-272) rate. The town can also be seen as an example of migration culture with some connotations and linkages to the earlier processes of the post-war migration. People perceive Słupsk as a good place to live for families with children, though, for the young people, educational and high career aspirations are seen as contradictory to staying in town.

### ***Puławy, Lublin Province***

The final research site of Puławy is located in the Lubelskie Province, on the border with the Masovian region. While the town developed as a cultural centre historically, its Golden Age ended with its incorporation to the most repressive Russian partition in 1809. Earlier a popular place chosen by Polish aristocratic families (Lubomirski and Czartoryski) as the cradle of culture, the post war history deviated from this heritage and followed the standard industrial path of community life being built around the *Azoty* chemical plant. To this date, the factory plays a crucial role for the urban identity and the town's development, as well as shapes its culture, and - to an extent – the educational landscape.

Nearly 50 000 inhabitants currently live in Puławy, which has negative migration rates – both in terms of internal (-258) and international (-39) population outflows. In terms of the labour market structure Puławy is the most agricultural region among three localities with 37 per cent of employment in this sector (as compared with industry and construction at 25 per cent and service and finance 13 per cent). The registered unemployment rates oscillates around 12 per cent and is the highest among three researched localities. Conversely, Puławy's residents can expect the highest salary, which stands at a 96% of the national average – an advantage of over 10 percentile points over Mielec and Słupsk.

Puławy's residents see the town as a well-oiled yet rather closed system, with not many changes and a rather static exchange of workers and elites alike. The city is clearly aging and the current birth rate is the lowest among the three localities as just 0.87 (as compared to similarly low yet higher 1.17 in Mielec and 1.11 in Słupsk).

To sum up, the context of local communities was brought into the project to zoom in the context of peer groups where they are or were embedded. The local communities were hand-picked by various characteristics. The common key characteristics related to: (1) high outflow of young people from a local community; (2) co-existing international and internal migratory processes; (3) different types of secondary schools which were to be in place in a local community; (4) clear labour market opportunities, e.g. leading local employer such as special economic zone or other economic cluster. The differentiating features of local communities related mostly to: (1) migration culture, meaning migration as a regular, common feature of social reality of a local community or as more accidental events; (2) various distances to the urban center (metropolis).

According to the project's conceptual framework three selected local communities operate at the macro level, peer influences and family at meso level, and the individual biographies of the participants at the micro level

## 5. MESO: Peer group, family and new media

### 5.1. Peer group: culture, pressure, relations

In defining a peer group, researchers have noted the challenges stemming from a variety of uses that the term elicited – ranging from an interaction with one's best friend, to a cohort-wide ties and links that an individual exhibits (Brown, 1990; Rubin et al., 1998; Ryan, 2000). Following Ryan's clarification, the peer group is used here to discern "an individual's small, relatively intimate group of peers who interact on a regular basis" (Ryan, 2000, p. 102). It can also be connected to the common understanding of a *clique*; (ibid.). Further, per Astin (1993, p. 400), a peer group is a "collection of individuals with whom the individual identifies and affiliates and from whom the individual seeks acceptance or approval".

Peer group is a zone of informality. It is a space to express the style and conduct of micro-interactions, as well as the potential of creating peers' own microcosm and micro-culture. There are no physical structures or clearly recognized hierarchies in the peer group but it still requires a somewhat sociological infrastructure to exist. There is a social group which creates a basic unit for peer group (Willis, 1977). The importance of the group is very clear to its members. "The essence of being 'one of the lads' lies within the group" (ibid., p. 23). A single individual cannot form a distinctive culture by himself/herself, cannot generate fun, atmosphere and social identity. It needs the others to relate with and between. It means being within the social group (ibid.).

There is a consensus that researching peer groups should rely on how individuals self-nominate friends that belong to their group (Ryan, 2000). Typically, the technique elicits a list of closest friends, though the arbitrary number of members in a given peer group can vary significantly (Berndt and Keefe, 1995). Building on previous research (e.g. Urberg et al., 1997), Ryan argued that peer groups or cliques range from having 2 to 12 members, with an average of 5 or 6. Further, she added (Ryan, 2000, p. 109) that "adolescents may belong to multiple peer groups. Affiliation with more than one peer group could be part of the experimentation with different roles and the search for identity".

From the aforementioned sociality of the peer group, a concept of peer-culture can be derived as important. By peer-culture, we mean a stable set of activities or routines, artefacts, values and concerns that people produce and share with their peers (Corsaro and Eder, 1990). Research on the peer-culture has focused on adolescent peer values, interests and identities (Coleman, 1961; Simons and Blyth, 1987) but also on the interactive processes within the peer culture. It is argued that peer group produces its own unique culture which neither simply imitate nor simply appropriate an adult world.

Peer groups usually form around something the individuals seek to manifest. It might be connected to an opposition to school and adult rules and authorities, mutual hobbies, interests, clubs/artistic groups, ways of spending free time. The sharing and transmission of a peer-culture occur through interactions. The conversations in a peer group depend on an age group, social class and ethnic identities (Corsaro and Eder, 1990). Studies on peer play and culture in the neighbourhood and local communities are numerous (e.g. Heath, 1983; Goodwin, 1989) but they relate predominately to pre-school and primary school settings or evoke the differentiation around social class (Willis, 1977 on working class youth).

The links between members of a peer group are based on relations which are usually embedded in friendships and direct, personal contact. Relations provide youngsters with means to engage in interactions, which in turn provide the basis for their culture. Through them, “youth develop their own interpretations of significant meanings while they produce humorous and other playful routines which become central to their micro-cultures” (Corsaro and Eder, 1990, p. 207, following: Everhart, 1983; Willis, 1977; Fine, 1987; Wulff, 1988). During adolescence, friendship relations are valued for a number of reasons, including intimacy, understanding, acceptance, self-disclosure and mutual advice. What is crucial here, a peer group through relations and friendships offers a space for developing a greater self-knowledge through a process of mutual reflexivity. Youngsters in peer groups tend to discuss more often their problems, feelings, fears, discontent with their best friends rather than with parents (Youniss and Smollar, 1985). Therefore, the peer group creates the space for socialization as an active process of engagement with the world that works through relational reflexivity (Archer, 2015). Human relations constructed in their peer groups have their emergent effects. It might be hypothesized here that peer group is a first relational enterprise (ibid., p. 126) where youngsters can exercise their reflexivity through and through.

What does it mean ‘to be in relation in a peer group’. Following Archer (2015) ‘being in relation’ is an ontological expression which has analytical meanings. For us it is about: (1) certain distance in a peer group between its members (some people are closer to an ego, some are more distant); (2) relations in peer groups possess their own properties and causal powers which mean specific orientation, activities but also powers to include and exclude; (3) the peer group has its own reality of being and those who are inside the relation create internal structures of the social relation and its dynamic. These social relations are connectors between structure and agency (ibid.).

There are also arguments in the literature that there are important differences of friendship relations by social class. Some ethnographic studies found that students from middle-class backgrounds, especially those who were members of some elite groups, base their relations and friendship more on activities, often switching their friendships when

interests change. Working-class youngsters, on the other hand, base their peer groups on more loyalty and stability (Eckert, 1988). The older adolescents are, the more selective they are in terms of choices, preferences, plans and achievement (Epstein, 1983). There is also a gender selection of peer groups, which is why some are exclusive to males or females. In terms of peer group pressure, the studies confirm that if children are rejected and excluded by early peer group, they continue to be disliked and excluded in adolescent time (Coie et al., 1988). The peer concerns are also part of peer culture and pressure. They relate mostly to attempts to deal with confusions, fears, conflicts in daily life or to rejection adult rules and authority. The main concerns of peers from middle-class relate to school activities and the dynamics of obtaining peer status, the concerns of working-class peers represent a kind of rejection of academic activities and social values of elites.

To sum up, peer cultures or micro-cultures or subcultures are something informal and created as discrete social spaces. They are made through relations (often friendships) and through shared significant events which can manifest the meaning of peer cultures, recurrent or unique experience in certain localities and behaviours of certain individuals (Corsado and Eder, 1990). Localities might play important roles in constructing peer cultures due to shared meanings, sense of belonging/non-belonging, attachment/non-attachment to places, parents' houses. Therefore it is crucial here to look at not only individuals but at peer groups as dynamic social structures and cultures which are constructed by collective processes of negotiations, interpretations, apprehensions but also reproduction/ imitation and invention. From the perspective of this project, migration as a both anticipated and physical experience might play a role in constructing peer cultures and impacting peer relations and peer pressures.

For many decades scholars have raised the importance and impact of peer groups and their cultures on the lives of young people, especially referencing the high-school period of adolescence and young adulthood (e.g. Coleman, 1961; Bynner, 2005; Lansu, Cillessen, 2012; Milner, 2013). In the studies, peer groups can be observed as having both negative and positive effects ranging from the peer-increased incidence of substance abuse (e.g. White et al., 2006) to greater motivation for continuing education, academic aspirations and success (e.g. Coleman, 1961). The scholars of socialization process have even warranted a claim that peer groups may matter more than traditional socialization agents, namely parents (Harris, 1995). Conversely, studying peers has received some critique as too focused on the "fuzzy" concept of peer group, rather than its underlying components of relationships, friendships and ties (McCabe, 2016).

In her study on the different meanings of friendships and their resulting peer group formations and structures, McCabe (2016) delineated three types of friend group networks. Though this research might not directly reflect the role of peer groups through teenage years studied in the *Peer groups and migration* project, the typology remains helpful for understanding how peer groups operate in the accounts of their individual respondents. McCabe's typology was based on the central-dot of a primary respondents and built peer group around an individual. The types of PG outlines include three types: (1) tight knitters; (2) compartmentalizers; (3) samplers.

*Tight-knitters* are people with densely woven friendship group. The relationships in this type of friendship can be metaphorically depicted as a ball of a yarn because everyone is

entangled with everyone else. All people in a group know the remaining members of the circle and friends share emotional propinquity and limited distances.

*Compartmentalizers* are people with clear two separate friend groups who form distinctive clusters but rarely have friends crossing from one group to another. In metaphoric terms, this friendship type can be portrayed as a bow-tie, wherein friends from one “side” of the bow rarely cross to the “other side” occupied by friends from another group. This could be best illustrated by the cases of people who have one peer group connected with school and a second one linked to hobby or organizational membership. Only few people can be found in the central tie of the bow.

*Samplers* are people who form multiple small friendships – commonly dyads or three-member peer groups that are disconnected and come from different environments (e.g. school, neighbourhood, hobby group, church). A core contact’s friends from distinct groups are only acquaintances for each other, if they even know one another at all. An apt metaphor for such friendship structure is a daisy flower.

Less is known, however, about studying peer groups as a direct comparative population and an environment that links individual on a retrospective plain. This novel approach taken in the *Peer Groups and Migration* project allows for research that gauges the external effects of social structures across the early adolescence and young-to-mid-adulthood stages of one’s life-course where migration eventually takes place.

## 5.2. New media, peer groups and migration

Media (such as television, magazines for youth, music and the Internet) play an essential role in socialization. This is because they fulfil the needs for entertainment, identity formation, high sensation, coping, and identification with youth culture (Arnett, 1995b, p. 521). Nowadays new media are highly diverse and the realm of social media climbed to be of the top importance for youth extensively interconnected through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and applications linked to smartphones and iPhone-technology (Sawyer, 2011). Social media make it possible for youth to construct the attachment and feeling of belonging to a peer group. Further, they can be used as a paramount method for identifying “significant others” of the young people, since they usually take advantage of the social media tools to contact people they already know and consider affine. However, in the context of our research, it is interesting to identify which factors become and persist as important for creating and maintaining peer groups in the time before the inception of social media on the grand-scale. Against this historical development process background, we can observe how the current rich spectrum of social media came to be and diagnose which media were “social” for youth in the past versus nowadays.

It is noteworthy that Sawyer (2011) sees social media as crucial for intercultural adaptation, making it germane for the context of migration. Young migrants learn to recognize and understand different cultures not only by physical presence in the foreign country and community, but also by information, pictures, comments and other content that they are able to share or receive by various media. As Kim (2001) states, a transition from one culture to another is enhanced by the experience of the other people who undertake the same path

towards migration, and by the access to these experiences through social media. By new media, migrants are able to socialize themselves into the new cultural, political and social context when they are abroad, yet they can also benefit from them as facilitators of social re-integration once they are back home after a longer absence (Matsumoto et al., 2006).

According to Dekker and Engbersen (2014), international migrants rely on new media for coping with different challenges during the whole process of migration. As cheap or free forms of communications became the global “social glue” of transnationalism (Vertovec, 2004), mobile individuals are able to obtain support from their family, friends and peer groups by discussing all their troubles in real time by communicators, Skype or simply by mobile phones (SMS, MMS, phone conversations; Pustulka, 2015). Using mobile media, such as mobile phones, tablets and especially smartphones (or iPhones), which together amount to what researchers called *polymedia* of the digital age (Madianou, Miller, 2013), has rapidly changed the effectiveness of different applications important for planning, undertaking, and completing the process of migration. Beginning with applications for transport, to communication by geolocation, to looking for a job or a street and what is happening in a local community, the range of tools lets young migrants manage the challenges and deal with the physical distance. New media, especially social media, are one of the major facilitators of a migration decision. The presence of a peer group in social media, as well as having virtual connections to other migrants from the same local community, can function as a meaningful aspect with reference to the feelings of safety and support (Vertovec, 2004; Metykova, 2010). They can serve as push and pull factors for those who want to leave home and migrate to either another city, or abroad.

### **5.3. Family and migration**

Parents, peers, local community and media as well as work and school are sources of socialization for young people (Arnett, 1995a). Socialization by peers is often in a conflict to parental socialization. Discussing socialization in emerging adulthood, Arnett (2006) claims that young people achieve the goal of learning how to take various roles and resolve conflicts as well as ways of viewing relationships. People can be socialized in two ways: broad and narrow (Arnett, 1995a). Broad socialization helps to develop independence, nonconformity, individualization, self-expression. People socialized in a broad way decide about their shape of career, marriage, children, leaving parental home independently. Migration is their own strategy as a way of school-to-work transition. People socialized in a narrow way are prepared to take roles expected by their social environment. Most sources are in between broad and narrow socialization. Note that media are understood by Arnett as self-socialization source (Arnett, 1995a, 1995b).

The approach to family itself in the project considers what Adams listed as three most powerful theory-driving and change-eliciting social forces since 1970: demographic transition, technology, and globalisation (2010: 501-503). The key notion of the ‘democratic family’ points to individualization as the erosion of values on the one hand, and the growth of individual agency on the other, coinciding with social and geographical mobility in the twenty-first century (Giddens, 1992, 2007; Beck, 1992, 1994; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Still, Crow and Maclean (2004) have argued that increasing globalization and transnational living

do not mean the end of family communities (see also Finch and Mason, 1997). The project thus treats families as socialization agents crucial for the school-to-work transitions, and, particularly, the migration pathways. Here we focus on the broadly conceived family capital and social class in a Bourdieusian sense (Oliver, 2010; Goulbourne et al., 2010), which emerge as continuously valid indicators for how young people fare during their youth and early adulthood (Bassani, 2007; Jamieson, 2000; Holdsworth, Morgan, 2005; Dumais, 2002). Two models can generally be observed as young people reproduce the employment and education trajectories as well as labour habitus of their parents on the one hand (Black and Devereux, 2003; Crompton, 2006), or become “trail-blazers” of forging new ways, on the other (Jones, 1995, 1999; Gabriel, 2007). Notably, social reproduction and family change are inadvertently linked with migration (Bjeren, 1997; Chambers, 2012; Baldassar and Merla, 2012; Morgan, 2011).

Regarding spatial mobility, we take advantage of the classic migration theories at the meso-level, notably the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM; Stark and Bloom, 1985; Faist, 2004: 41-42). Meso-level theory can help avoid both the reductionist view of an unconstrained individual agency, and the pitfalls of universalism of the macro-structural view (Faist, 2010). It is inferred that a family-encompassing approach is vital for identifying how an individual entangled in a kinship structure may be either predestined to sedentarism or nominated to become a migrant (Bjeren, 1997; Bailey and Boyle, 2004). In the newer incarnation, recent claims offered by transnational paradigm reflect on the importance of the maintenance and negotiation of the so called *familyhood* in a beyond-border context (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Baldassar and Merla, 2012). Therefore, kin members, particularly the affine ones of a nuclear family of origin (parents and siblings) shape specific attitudes held towards migration (e.g. traditions of parental mobility, normalization, family migration culture; see e.g. Finch and Mason, 2003; Chambers, 2012). Further, family members are seen as collectively responsible for the overall situation of a household (e.g. economic standing necessitating additional income sources, ability to support different forms of mobility like educational migration; e.g. Kandel and Massey, 2002; Reynolds, 2010; Rumbaut, 2005). These are ultimately pivotal for younger generation’s decisions (Goulbourne et al., 2010; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002) and personal well-being drawn from propinquity through relationships, as family ties may become diffuse yet do not weaken (Morgan, 2011; Pahl and Spencer, 2004). On this point, the discussions of the family impact are linked with new media and transnational virtual intimacies (Wilding, 2006).

Both these aspects of family influence on foreign and domestic labour market transitions are especially evident in the Polish context, wherein family remains one of the most important values, often studied as affected by both internal and international migration, as well as demographic challenges and shifts (Slany, 2010; Slany et al., 2016; White, 2011).

## 6. MICRO: Dynamic life-course trajectories, transitions and migration

It is vital to understand youngsters’ individual ability to actively develop their own biographical transitions into adulthood within the context of the external conditions connected to their first job in their own localities or abroad, and to investigate what model of school-to-work

transitions they develop. Within this specific context of opportunities and constraints, individuals make decisions and eventually plan their lives, designing their own biographies (Erel, 2015; Grabowska, 2016a; Sarnowska, 2016).

The transition from school to work, especially abroad, is a tentative period in the life of young people (Korpi et al, 2003). The school-to-work (also abroad) transition is not a one-off event. Brzinsky-Fay (2007, p. 2), following Sackmann and Wingens (2003, p. 102), distinguishes six typical sequences of school-to-work transitions which may involve a first job abroad. The first type is described as 'rupture', and it denotes only a single change, e.g. the transition from school to work. The second type, termed 'interruption', indicates the continuation of a status after an interlude, e.g. school-work-school. The third type – termed 'change' – consists of three different statuses: school, work, non-employment. The fourth 'bridge' type means that apprenticeship leads from education to employment. In the 'return' type, apprenticeship leads back to education. The 'fusion' type describes the combined state (further education) following completion of the two stages of school and work (Grabowska, 2016a; Sarnowska, 2016).

There are primary - or obvious -, and secondary - or non-obvious - *push* and *pull* factors for young Poles to go abroad and make their trajectories there. On the push side there are lack of opportunities in local labour markets along with financial constraints that inhibit youngsters' transition to adulthood and moving away from the parental home (Krzaklewska, 2014; Huang et al., 2016). Migration naturally offers opportunities for this independent start (Szewczyk, 2014; Grabowska, 2016a; Sarnowska, 2016). Following Jones, these hidden push factors also includes the desire to escape from local social control, especially connected to the youngsters' performative identities. Factors on the pull side are: the freedom to travel and work, curiosity about the world, the chance to develop language skills and other educational opportunities (enrolment into further education at English-speaking higher education institutions). But there is also a quest for 'normalcy' (Galasinska, 2010), meaning independence, stability and work-life balance. The young migrants also seek anonymity and new space to re-fashion their identity (Grabowska, 2016a). Further, Sarnowska (2016) argued that young migrants simultaneously experience a so called 'double transition': both from school-to-work and from adolescent-to-adulthood. This transition is like the *big bang*, greatly influencing the life courses of young people who decided to migrate, whatever the reasons. Migration enforces these transitions and might be treated as a 'big sixth'<sup>5</sup> marker of adulthood.

In our study, on the micro level, we will pay special attention to the educational and labour market sequences (Grabowska, 2016b) of individuals in a peer group, including spells of both employment and unemployment. Migration will be scrutinized in this analysis not as an event, an occurrence in life (Grabowska, 2016b), but as the detailed sequence what exactly a person did abroad, when and how. Therefore, migration will be included as an integral part of a wider educational and labour market history. The special attention will be given to life course transitions to adulthood, with special focus on school to domestic and foreign labour market passages in the context of peer groups and their local communities.

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<sup>5</sup> Big five transition markers comprise: educational attainment, work status, independent living, romantic partnership, and parenthood (Settersen, 2007).

With the sequential life course perspective (Heinz et al., 2009) we will be able to look at life trajectories of young movers in relation to young stayers and take into account the interdependency of aging, human agency, structural constraints, historical time, place, linked lives and the biographical timing of events and life course transitions (Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe, 2003).

## **7. Concluding remarks: Cross-fertilization of migration, peer group and local community**

To sum up, the decision to migrate or to stay put seems to play a major role in life-course transitions of Polish youth, setting these two groups on different life course paths. It is undeniably connected, however, to the patterns of youth mobility (students, graduates/higher skilled, non-graduates/lower skilled) and geographical destinations. Conversely, little is known about comparing these transitions between youth populations that are moving versus staying. The latter especially holds for the thus far evident absence of including directly comparative youth populations, such as the school-times peer groups. In order to fulfil this knowledge gap, the *Peer groups and migration* project offers the methodology to study migrants and stayers within peer groups, their life and employment trajectories, their contextual characteristics (i.e. those linked to local communities in particular), the impact of school and education, family, as well as increasingly important new media on their transitions. This methodology is framed as a Qualitative Longitudinal Study (Neale, forthcoming).

It is assumed here that migration is something that happens not just to individuals but also to collectivities. It is an involving processes that operates not only within individuals but also between them, influencing the relational social field of both peer group and local community.

It is believed that this longitudinal research will open new possibilities of cross-fertilization between migration and other substantive areas of social science inquiry such as local community, peer group, family and new media.

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<sup>i</sup> We would like to acknowledge our special thanks to Professor Anne White, Professor Bren Neale and Professor Godfried Engbersen for their valuable comments to the project.

ii Lazarsfeld (1993) was the pioneer and promoter of longitudinal studies in social research.

iii <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/> (accessed 25.11.2015).