

Unpacking friendship: the impact of friendship practices on Polish migrants' senses of belonging in Cork City, Ireland

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Friendships do not just inherently exist, they must be performed and maintained over time. It is from this performance of friendship, that migrants come to experience both culture(s) and place(s) in the host-country, which can have profound effects upon how they negotiate belongingness across borders. Attention to migrants' friendship practices across borders and cultures helps to shed further light upon the highly-nuanced processes from which migrants' belonging(s) are (re)produced. Often, migrants' social relations across borders can lead to pluri-local notions of belonging, resulting in a feeling of not truly belonging to any locale. This phenomenon of being 'in-between' is especially relevant for ethno-culturally similar migrants, such as Poles in Ireland, who in comparison to visible minorities, do not experience racism as a prominent feature of everyday life. Drawing on twenty-three semi-structured interviews with Polish migrants in Cork City, Ireland, I analyze Poles' manifestations of both home-making and the politics of belonging in relation to their friendship practices. I show how friendship practices play a key role in where people negotiate their most emotionally significant home as being. However, this was not the case for engagements in the politics of belonging, as despite having been granted belonging through friendships with Irish people, through an exercise of their own agency, Poles often positioned themselves as neither included or excluded from an Irish national collective, but instead, in a middle ground of acceptance.

Keywords: friendship, home, politics of belonging, belonging, migrants

Introduction

The transformative powers of friendship can be seen to emerge from the voluntary nature of such relations. It is because we as individuals, through our own discretion, choose to enter a friendship with someone, that Cronin (2014) argues that friendship has become a key signifier of contemporary individuality. Justifying why Spencer and Pahl (2006) argue friendships represent our 'authentic identities', standing in contrast to the significantly more rigid constructs within institutionalised, almost-compulsory relationships of family (Allan, 2008). Building upon Spencer and Pahl's (2006) statement, studies of friendship practices are therefore important to understand how migrants (re)negotiate their position between multiple localities, nations, and cultures through the medium of friendship practices. Whilst geographers have provided extensive insight into the performative actions from which friendship emerges through literature on repetitive encounters (Amin, 2002; Valentine, 2013), the overarching concept of friendship that these convivial interactions are embedded within has received limited attention. Hence, although geographers have come to understand how friendships are both formed and maintained through performance,

geographers for the most part, they have failed to understand how these relations might bring about social or personal change. Geographers' failure to understand friendship emerges from the focus of scholarship on migrants' social relations predominantly taking place within contexts where migrants and those of a migrant background exist in a state of socio-spatial segregation, be they second-generation migrants in Europe (Ehrkamp, 2005; 2006), unskilled migrant labourers in Singapore (Ye, 2014) or white expatriates in the Middle East (Walsh, 2006; 2014). Subsequently, these examples of migrants' friendship practices have not been analysed as friendships as such, but more-so as social ties bound by ethnicity.

Whilst scholars in other social sciences have paid significant attention to the concept of friendship, human geographers have predominantly addressed friendship from an atheoretical perspective (Bunnell et al, 2012; Hall and Jayne, 2016). Whilst friendships have in recent years become a topic of discussion in geographical literature, the voluntary, fluid, affective and relative relationship that comprises the concept of friendship has received limited attention. Instead, we have the taken-for-granted version of friendship that does not explore what friendship feels like due to friendship being depicted as possessing a known ontological value. When human geographers have shown interest in individuals' voluntary social relations, studies have typically utilised a social network analysis approach (Conradson and Latham, 2005a; Gill and Bialski, 2011; Kohlbacher et al, 2015). A drawback of the social network approach to understanding friendship practices is that social network analysis pays little attention to the flows of affects and emotions that comprise friendship (Robertson, 2016). This drawback of social network analysis is particularly prevalent in migration research, primarily because migrants' social relations are often reduced to a heuristic value of intimacy resultant from involvement within an ethnic economy (Bunnell et al, 2012). Whilst literature on migrants' social networks has in recent years paid attention to '*the relationship between actors, their relative social location and their available and realisable resources*' (Ryan, 2011, 707), the overly simplistic use of ethnicity to differentiate between migrants' relationships using bridging and bonding ties, social network analysis remains insufficient for analysing friendship practices. Social network analysis overlooks the intersection of social forces, geographical context, and processes of transformation over time that emerge from the performance of dyadic friendship ties (Yea, 2010; Cronin, 2014; Kathiravelu, 2013).

Scholars argue that it is the voluntary, rather than the 'fixed' nature of friendship practices, from which their transgressive potential emerges. Kathiravelu (2013) states that it is through the ritualised performances that comprise a friendship that any potential for transformation and wider social change is realised. Friendship practices can therefore be seen to act in tandem with migrants' experiences of place and culture to reveal a '*process of self-researching, self-reflection, transition and transformation*' (Christou, 2011, 253). The spaces in which these friendships are embedded are not just a backdrop to migrants' fluctuating identities and self-orientations, but instead, they are constitutive of them (Robertson, 2016), and in turn, re-constituted by migrants' friendship practices (Yea, 2010).

Subsequently, relations between friends provide an indicator of how the socio-spatial properties of cities can either advance or hinder the expression of certain friendships; for example, between migrants and members of the host society (Kathiravelu, 2013). In an era where social change is leading people, and especially migrants towards increasingly

individualised lives or *'families of choice'*, friends, may replace the traditional family network in providing intimacy, sociality, and care (Bowlby, 2011, 609). Reflecting upon Conradson and Latham's (2005b) claim that more attention must be paid to how mobility re-works and re-imagines concepts such as friendship; I argue that migrants' friendship practices form an ideal unit of analysis from which to understand how migrants (re)negotiate their self-concepts. It is from this increasing importance of friendships to migrants, that they become significant in migration studies. This is critically so in the case of transnational migrants in the 21st century, for whom, meaningful social relations are not based upon a shared ethnicity or culture (Conradson and Latham, 2005a), but as research with Poles across Europe explains, the relationships that give meaning to people's lives in migration are the friendships they establish based upon interests (Gill, 2010).

Despite emerging evidence of friendship's transformative properties, scholars have yet to pay significant attention to how the *'interdependent geographies of care'* (Askins, 2015, 476) inherent to migrants' friendship practices (re)produce senses of belonging towards both territorialised and imagined locales (Staeheli and Nagel, 2006). Friendship holds critical insight for understanding how migrants (re)negotiate belongingness, as the two concepts share much in common. Akin to friendship, performances of belongingness are inherently relational; the interpersonal ontologies of emotions that comprise both concepts do not exist in fixed hierarchical terms of structure (Woodward and Lea, 2009). Instead, both friendship and belongingness must be continuously (re)affirmed through performance within a context of constant porosity and (be)coming (Fortier, 1999; Walsh, 2006; Bunnell et al, 2012). Therefore, I emphasise the need to understand how migrants' friendship practices may impact upon the constantly fluctuating notions of belonging that transnational migrants experience. Individual articulations of belongingness lie at an intersection of place, identity, and social relations within the wider interplay between mobility and emplacement (Gilmartin, 2008). It is often the case that migrants articulate pluri-local senses of belonging across borders, localities, and other constructs, because of social and symbolic ties to their country of origin, and newer sets of social relations within the host-society (Ehrkamp, 2005; Ralph, 2009; Waite and Cook, 2011; Wright, 2015). Migrants' pluri-local concepts of belonging have been documented as a state of *'in-betweenness'*, as often, migrants' connections to multiple locales consequentially leads to a feeling of being whole in neither (Ehrkamp, 2005; Walsh, 2006; Ní Laoire et al, 2010; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011; Gilmartin and Migge, 2015).

So, what does it mean to belong? To provide an accurate representation of migrants' negotiations of belongingness, it is necessary to avoid most scholars' error of focusing on solely on one aspect of belongingness, either the emotive sentiments individuals hold to place (Nowicka, 2006), or the concept of belongingness as membership of political communities (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Thus, in order not to misrepresent belongingness either as *'a socially de-contextualised individualism or an all-encompassing social(izing) discourse'* (Antonsich, 2010, 644), I shall investigate both facets of belongingness, to understand the interplay between them, as Visser (2017,1-2) argues *'the personal feeling 'I belong here' is unavoidably influenced by a complex set of power relations'*. Through analysing friendship practices, I seek to provide a more nuanced understanding of the construction and maintenance of both forms of belongingness. It is from this that I present the following research question:

How do Polish migrants' friendship practices impact manifestations of home-making and the politics of belonging?

This article depicts the results of a study interested in how Polish migrants' friendship practices impact upon their experiences and articulations of belongingness, within the context of Cork City, Ireland. Whilst both the socio-cultural similarities between Poland and Ireland and the wider political structure of the EU foster a culture in which Polish identities are accepted, Poles in Ireland are still migrants. Despite the role of European citizenship blurring the line between migrant and non-migrant (Gilmartin, 2013), all migrants, no matter their socio-economic or legal position must undergo the mundane labour of belonging (Walsh, 2014). This paper seeks to discuss the role friendship practices play in the manifestation of two very different, yet fundamentally related forms of belongingness an issue that remains very much overlooked in both policy and academic approaches to intra-EU migration.

Geographies of friendship

For a friendship to form, emotions that underlie practices of caring *about* and caring *for* someone must be present (Bowlby, 2011). However, these emotions do not merely exist separately from broader societal realms, but instead, our emotions can shape our subjective experiences of being-in-the-world (Davidson and Milligan, 2004). Thus, emotions present a highly valuable analytical tool to be used to link individual and private experiences to wider spheres of interest (Ho, 2009; Wood, 2013). Migrants' everyday navigations of their position in society involve the process of emplacement (Walsh, 2012) through their individual emotional discourses (Thien, 2005). To analyse how these processes of (re)negotiation unfold, I draw upon Dyck's (2005) claim that the performances of everyday life provide an opportunity to explore how one's emotive sentiments influence wider, public contexts. Considering the importance of everyday life, Bunnell et al (2012, 504) argue that quotidian performances of friendship act to '*nourish understanding of the complex geographies of human lives*'. Whilst friendships can be understood as relational according to the emotional bonds between individuals from which they emerge, *where* friendships are situated in space also holds significance. Drawing upon Cronin's (2014) claim that socio-spatial context can influence the form and meanings ascribed to friendships, I argue the need to apply this to transnational migrants' friendship practices. Subsequently, the dynamic, diverse, and spatially dispersed character of transnational migrants' friendship practices have the potential to redraw ethno-national boundaries, or alternatively, reinforce ethno-national divisions present in the trials of migration (Malyutina, 2016). Based upon the flexible, less spatially bounded nature of friendship, which allows for lives to be reshaped within mobility through the affects and emotions that constitute friendship relations (Malyutina, 2016).

Despite the lack of focus on friendship in human geography, research that has not explicitly focused on friendship practices has highlighted their importance in the lives of migrant populations (Bunnell and Kathiravelu, 2016). Gilmartin and Migge's (2016) study of migrant mothers in Ireland's articulations of belongingness highlighted the importance of friendships with other migrant mothers as key to fostering a sense of feeling "at home" in migration. Despite this, migrants' friendship practices within the host-country do not necessarily

enable a local sense of belonging; often, where migrants feel they belong depends on with whom they foster friendship. For example, studies reveal that migrants whose friendships are predominantly with co-ethnics leads to a re-assertion of belongingness to one's home country (Skaptadóttir and Wojtynska, 2008; Marcu, 2012; Walsh, 2014). Conversely, the exposure to a wide variety of cultures and identities within one's network of friendship practices presents the possibility for a cosmopolitan sense of belonging (Anthias, 2008; Datta; 2009; Kathiravelu, 2013). With regards to intra-EU migration, the formation and maintenance of friendships with other migrant groups has been seen to develop a Europeanised version of the cosmopolitan disposition (Kennedy, 2008; Dubucs et al, 2017). As argued by Kennedy (2007), migrants' social relations with 'others' have the potential to challenge national boundaries. This leads to the production of what Datta (2009) identifies as a cosmopolitan identity meant to combat forms of otherness, manifested through a wider political and cultural belonging attributed to European citizenship. Although friendship practices can shape migrants' self-concepts of belonging, Kathiravelu (2013) argues that scholars should be cautious not to overstate the transformative power friendships hold. Even when migrants can move with relative ease, for example, under Freedom of Movement within the EEA; migrants may be subject to what Yeoh (2005) argues to be an inequitable embeddedness within friendship and wider social networks, which, can potentially hinder the emergence of local or national senses of belongingness within the host-country.

Migrants' home-making practices

Belonging as an emotive sentiment emerges from individual experiences, in which connections between people, actions, and emotions within spatial frame(s) are forged (Gilmartin and Migge, 2015). Whilst there are no specific emotions that underline what it means to feel 'at home' (Waite and Cook, 2011), Antonsich (2010) states that home consists of a symbolic space in which an individual can feel a sense of familiarity, comfort, and emotional attachment. However, for migrants, the concept of 'home' is often inherently contradictory. Hence why Staeheli and Nagel (2006, 1599) assert that *'in leaving home, immigrants must make a new home, and they must negotiate the contradictions of both homes, even as they may feel they belong to neither'*. These complexities arise from what Yeoh et al (2003) describe as the intermingling of notions that "ground" social life, such as identity, community, and place, with those which "unmoor", such as mobility, that characterize transnational migration. For migrants, this often materialises through a pluri-local concept of feeling "at home", subsequently putting the idea of belonging to a sole, sedentary location into flux (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Instead, Ghorashi and Vieten (2012) argue that migrants' notions of home often emerge as a product of territorial and de-territorialised emotions linked to social relations in places that cut across national borders (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011).

Despite migrants' pluri-local attachment to place(s) being firmly grounded within their social relations, emotive attachments to place are by no means free from cognitive dissonance (Ralph, 2009; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Memories associated with social relations in one's original home, for instance can lead to a romanticised, nostalgic view that produces a convoluted relationship with places. Henceforth, "home" is not just produced from one's quotidian experiences of friendship in migration (Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Instead, the "yearned-

for” experiences of one’s original Home can be just as, if not more, important than present experiences of everyday life regarding migrants’ practices of emplacement (Gilmartin, 2008; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Migrants’ pluri-local frames of belonging emphasise how transnational migrants refuse to be placed in location. Instead, revealing a complex, fluid ontology embodied within their conflicting emotional attachments to both ‘here’ and ‘there’ (Krzyżanowski and Wodak, 2008), often revealing a case of belonging to nowhere (Gilmartin and Migge, 2015). Whilst migrants’ pluri-local manifestations of “home” have received increased attention in recent years (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Ralph, 2009; 2014; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011; Gilmartin and Migge, 2015), how the performance of friendships both in migration and in one’s home country may impact self-concepts of “home” has yet to be explored. Given the prominent role of friendship practices regarding migrants’ processes of identity formation, I argue the need to investigate friendships’ role in emplacement, and conversely, displacement.

The politics of belonging

Whilst migrants’ emotive sentiments to place remain important in understanding how they negotiate belongingness; these do not exist separately to wider everyday and structural expressions of inclusion and exclusion that determine belonging or non-belonging to wider geo-political collectives (Valentine et al, 2009; Yuval-Davis, 2006; 2011). Through the performance of specific dyadic relationships, individuals may determine whether they stand inside or outside the boundary line of the nation (Ho, 2009), or other communities of belonging, be it local, imagined, or supra-national (Walsh, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Kennedy, 2008). Subsequently, migrants’ performance of friendship ties holds significant insights regarding their engagements in the politics of belonging. Despite there being an understanding of who can claim membership to a certain community, belonging is not overly deterministic (Wright, 2015). Instead, Croucher (2004) claims that the politics of belonging is dependent on a constant negotiation between two sides: the side, which claims belonging and the side that has the power of ‘granting’ belonging, occurring either at an individual or collective scale (Skrbiš et al, 2007). Following Probyn (1996), this form of belonging can be understood as “longing to be”: incorporating a yearning for attachments which allow one to feel part of a wider collective through social bonds which capture *‘emotional bonds with others and to place’* (Askins, 2015, 474). Thus, for migrants, the interdependent nature of friendship relations are key elements towards individuals being recognised and understood as being members of a wider collective (Wood and Waite, 2011).

The process, in which someone is deemed socially to belong or not belong, is predicated on the interplay between ‘sameness’ and difference’ (Valentine et al, 2009). Therefore, the reason behind one’s incorporation into a specific collective is based upon the fact that *‘s/he shares a certain criteria of ‘sameness’ with other members of the collectivity. Conversely, part of the reason a person may be excluded from belonging to a group results from in-group members categorising her/him as ‘different’* (Ralph, 2012, 448). Typically, studies highlight migrants’ perceptions and lived experiences of difference as the reason for their social exclusion from the dominant group (Gilmartin, 2008; Gilmartin and White, 2008; Neal and Walters, 2006). Nelson and Hiemstra (2008) argue individual migrants belonging or non-belonging to wider collectives to depend on their ability to meet that group’s normative expectations of behaviours, language, appearance, dress, or eating habits, for example.

However, whilst immutable facets such as national identity and ethnicity play a significant role in the politics of belonging, Nash (2008, 266) argues that '*local currencies of nation, race, ethnicity or native belonging are not absolutely overdetermining*'. Instead, individual identity and an intersection of the facets that construct it, such as host-country cultural capital (McGhee et al, 2015), play a more significant role. However, it is important that scholars not reject the role that ethnicity may play in the interplay within sameness and difference. Thus, whilst the whiteness of Poles may prove an advantage in navigating public and semi-public spaces, such as streets and cafés (Long et al, 2014), the lived reality of Polish whiteness is peripheral to that of Irish whiteness, due to Poles' position as immigrants (Fox et al, 2012). Therefore, whilst their whiteness may enable them to occupy Irish-majority spaces sans harassment, language barriers and other deficits in host-country cultural competencies are likely to play a more prominent role in locating sameness or difference. Subsequently, the interplay between sameness and difference is embedded within migrants' friendship practices (Ehrkamp, 2006). The socio-spatial concepts of sameness and difference are produced, experienced, and lived in everyday social interaction between individuals (Nagel, 2009). Immigrants develop ideas about their own categories of sameness or difference in neighbourhoods, workplaces, and quotidian urban spaces in which friendship(s) do or do not emerge. This paper seeks to shed further light onto how migrants' friendship practices influence their self-concepts of belongingness; both as the feeling of being "at home", and the politics of belonging. Insight into how friendship influences both facets of belonging will enable geographers to understand both the role friendship plays as a catalyst for belonging, alongside how articulations of home-making and the politics of belonging compare.

Researching Polish migration in Cork City, Ireland

The following account draws upon the analysis of in-depth qualitative interviews with twenty-three Poles resident in the Cork City metropolitan area, conducted between September 2016 and December 2016. The interviews lasted from twenty-six minutes to an hour. All respondents had been living in Ireland for at least a year. This decision was based upon my focus on the role of friendship practices upon Polish migrants' manifestations of home-making and the politics of belonging. Drawing upon literature highlighting the need for migrants to (be)come, rather than ontologically belong in place (Bell, 1999; Wright, 2015), it was assumed that migrants would have required a substantial amount of time to have formulated a rich narrative concerning belongingness. The decision to analyse belongingness through migrants' friendship practices only served to bolster this notion, due to the time and energy required of migrants to foster meaningful friendships in migration. This proved to be the case, as within my recruitment process(es) those who had been living in Ireland for under a year often felt unable to partake in my research due to them not feeling established in Ireland at that point.

To recruit participants, snowball sampling was utilised. This began primarily through my volunteer work with the Central European migrant NGO *Together-Razem Centre*. As a representative of *Together-Razem Centre*, my volunteer work positioned me as a trusted figure to potential interviewees. This enabled me to quickly develop a contract of trust and gain access to individuals from demographics I would struggle to reach otherwise,

particularly senior citizens and those with limited English competencies. However, my snowball sampling was not just confined to those within the NGO, as through the social and professional contacts of other volunteers, I was able to conduct interviews with people from a wide range of Polish institutions within Cork City, including the Polish Consulate School, the Catholic Church, a Central European film festival, and a local Polish restaurant. Subsequently, the various offshoots of my snowball sampling produced the following profile of interviewees: 13/23 were female, 16/23 possessed higher education, and 13/23 were in their late 20's-30's. Of those with higher education, 10/16 were de-skilled (working at a level beneath their education), and 8/23 required a translator either partially or for the entirety of the interview. My sample is clearly not illustrative of the wider Polish population in Ireland, due to the over-representation of those with tertiary education, whereas only 25% of Poles in Ireland possess a bachelor's degree or higher (Krings et al, 2013). However, this was not my aim. Rather than conducting a representative study, I instead sought to depict Polish migrants' experiences of friendship practices, and the influence that friendship has upon (re)negotiations of belongingness. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of participants.

Cork is the second largest city in the Republic of Ireland, and hosts a significant Polish population. According to the last census, there are 6,822 Poles in Cork City and the surrounding suburbs, out of 208,669 residents overall (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2011). However, census data concerning the number of Poles in Ireland should be treated with scepticism, due to previous census data having been taken within a period of economic downturn. Since the onset of the new millennium, Cork City, like many other towns, cities and villages in Ireland has witnessed a rapid transformation from ethno-cultural homogeneity to an emerging site of visible multiculturalism, as seen by the presence of migrant grocery stores, restaurants, and religious organisations present within Cork's city centre (Mac Éinrí and White, 2008; Coakley, 2010). Mac Éinrí and White (2008) state that migrants in Ireland do not cluster in specific ethnic enclaves, as seen in traditional receiving countries of migration in Europe, North America, and Australasia. Instead, migrants to urban areas in Ireland remain dispersed. Taking this into account within the short time frame I had to conduct research (four months), it was more practical for me to conduct my fieldwork within Cork City than Dublin due to the city's wide degree of socio-economic diversity amongst migrants and non-migrants, within a relatively compact area (Kenna, 2011). The Republic of Ireland, like many other former emigration zones on the economic peripheries of 'Western' Europe, such as Greece, have in the past two decades, become host to significant migrant populations (Mac Éinrí and White, 2008), and as of current, have received scant attention from scholars. Knowing this, I chose the Irish national context as the site of my master thesis research to contribute to knowledge of how migrants experience everyday life within these emerging European zones of in-migration. Furthermore, research conducted in emerging countries of in-migration such as Ireland, provides a comparative context from which more nuanced discourse surrounding ethnic segregation and "multiculturalism in crisis" within traditional recipient countries of migrants such as the UK or Belgium may emerge.

Home-making through comparative practices

Participants' friendship practices within Cork City had a key role to play within their home-making practices. Many participants positioned Poland as their most emotionally significant home, as opposed to Ireland, predominantly because of their most meaningful friendships being based still in Poland. Whereas Ireland was depicted as a secondary home of less emotional significance, based upon practices of everyday life *in situ*, or the higher standard of living that working in Ireland could provide. Tomasz (40's, social worker, twelve years in Ireland) articulates his feeling of being primarily "at home" in Poland, rather than in Ireland based on his relationships being stronger than those he has in Ireland, resulting in him understanding Poland to be his "real" home:

From conversations I had with others, our friendships, the real friendships we left in Poland ... From my own experience, the bonds we have here are not that strong as the bonds we created in Poland when we used to live for years, so they are kind of temporary bonds in this country, as they still feel like they might be here on temporary basis... Well I do, I have a sense of belonging here, and my whole kind of living centre is here in Ireland, so from the habitual residence conditions I am here in this country. But in my heart, and my emotions, I am still with Poland, Poland is my home, so in that kind of sense.

Tomasz draws upon the notion of feeling "at home" in Poland, rather than in Ireland, based on the significance of his friendships in Poland, compared to the friendships he possesses in Ireland, which he deems to be of lesser emotional value. However, despite conceptualising Poland as being more emotionally significant to him than Ireland, nonetheless he articulates feeling at home in Ireland. His home-making practices in Ireland differ however, in that they emerge from his quotidian experiences of life being located within Ireland. Tomasz positions Ireland clearly as being of secondary importance compared to Poland as his "primary" home. The above extract highlights the way migrants are said to have complex relations with home due to their emotions being '*tied to a globalised and transnational social fabric rather than one bounded by the nation state form*' (Anthias, 2006, 25). However, despite migrants' complex, multi-scalar attachment to place being well documented (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Staeheli and Nagel, 2006; Waite and Cook, 2011), migrants' expression of having primary and secondary homes, highlighting where they feel a stronger sense of belongingness to, has been ignored by geographers and other social scientists. Emilia's (33, office manager, nine years in Ireland) practices of home-making function on a similar interplay between friendship practices with Poles, and the material experiences of life in Ireland. Her divergence from Tomasz' can be ascribed to her locating home within the Polish diaspora, rather than Poland itself:

I do feel great here, but you have this feeling that something is missing. It's not about culture or anything, it's a feeling in itself. I do like the easy lifestyle here, compared to what you earn, you can have a nice life, travel, that's what I like about Ireland. There's just that feeling of not being really at home here, I feel I have a much greater connection with other Poles, but not Poland. I like my Polish friends because we share the same cultural codes, so it's just easier. But Poland? I feel less and less because it's becoming so religious, which is not for me.

Emilia's discourse of pluri-local homes differs to that of Tomasz, despite sharing a very material attachment to Ireland, and a more emotional attachment to Polishness based on friendship practices. However, how that concept of a Polish sense of feeling 'at home' manifests differs. Emilia instead, feels at home within diaspora, rather than articulating a longing for Poland itself, based on friendships from an earlier stage of life. What Blunt (2007, 689) describes as the '*material and imaginative connections between people*' and in Emilia's case, a de-territorialised identity, as she separates her attachment to other Poles from Poland itself. Whilst the social and cultural aspects of Polishness remain important to her in shaping her diasporic home-making practices, she separates her friendship practices with members of the Polish diaspora, commonly referred to as *Polonia*, in Cork City from Poland itself. Following Blunt and Dowling (2006), she highlights the relationship between home (*Polonia* and Ireland) and homeland (Poland) through rejecting Poland due to the country's social and political rejection of secular values. Thus, through maintaining a secular representation of Polish identity through engaging in friendship practices with other Poles in Ireland, she can make home in both *Polonia* and Ireland. Drawing upon Jazeel's (2005; 2006) work, her practices of home-making can be expressed as an intertwining of cultural representations and attitudes from both the home and host country that emerge within the framework of diasporic space.

In contrast to those whose friendship practices caused them to feel more at home within Poland, there were those whose social relations caused them to feel more at home in Ireland. However, those who felt more "at home" within Ireland primarily based this on an inability to relate to Poland on such a deep emotional level. This was predominantly dependent on the time they had spent away from living in Poland, and the economic, social, and emotional investments they had made towards living in Ireland. For some such as Patryk (retired, 60's, eleven years in Ireland) they had predominantly abandoned their emotional attachment to Poland:

In Poland, for example, older people, on Saturday, stayed at home, and watched TV serial, every Saturday my wife and I go to the pub, the same pub, for nine years, there is live music, dance, and Irish friends, only problem in pub is when Ireland play Poland, and I want Poland to win (laughs)! ... I don't come back to Poland; I have two daughters in Poland. I don't know because, I am happy here, I think that I don't be happy in Poland, because there is life very boring, very sad.

What this quote emphasises is the importance of comparison throughout migrants' home-making processes. In this case, Patryk explains that he feels more at home in Ireland compared to Poland through comparing the opportunities for socialising and making friends for senior citizens in both countries. The fact that senior citizens have the option to socialise in a convivial environment allows him to feel 'happy' in Ireland, contrasting the restrictive, house-bound nature of seniors' leisure time in Poland as being 'sad' and 'boring'. Despite Patryk's emotional preferences towards Ireland being made clear, he does not entirely abandon his emotive attachments towards Poland. As seen by his comical gesture regarding international football matches, it implies that in a similar fashion to Emilia, Patryk holds a sentimental, de-territorialised attachment to the *idea* of Polishness, rather than to Poland as a physical entity. Furthermore, those who articulated a nostalgic longing for Poland based around banal material differences to Ireland revealed that home-making was not solely

associated with friendship as Lucja (34, de-skilled academic, ten years in Ireland) explains: *I think there are small things, like funny simple things, the fact that you come home and you don't take off your shoes, but in Poland you take off your shoes and it makes you feel much warmer and cosier, it's one thing that makes me physically less home here.*

Like many other participants, Patryk articulates Ireland as home resulting from the freedoms and material value that life in Ireland can provide in comparison to Poland. However, his negotiation of home in Ireland emerges as an intertwining of Irish living standards, and the performance of friendship practices that the various amenities available to seniors make possible.

Patryk's example of home-making being situated in the pub reflects a wider practice of the relational interplay between emotions and pubs. Participants revealed that engagement within pub spaces played a significant role in their ability to develop friendships with Irish people. The formation and performance of friendships within pubs held significance to participants, as it allowed them to form friendships with individuals they would otherwise not be able to, due to language barriers. Here Malwina (late 30's, de-skilled banker, ten years) expresses how the effects of alcohol and institutional norms concerning conversation in pubs nullified language barriers to friendship formation with Irish people that existed in more 'serious' environments:

I like very much living in my town and Ireland, I find it hard to meeting the new people, but if you more drink, you don't have barrier to make friends here... For us, when going to pub in town, you drink a bit more, and you feel better talking, because first – alcohol, and the second is you and everyone else is getting funny, so is just having good time with friends, not serious talking when you have the bad English. So, I not feel bad there about bad English, if I was in more serious place, like office party, maybe it would be problem. For me, pub gives secure feeling as I can make friends with Irish people without feeling silly about my English.

For individuals such as Malwina, the opportunity to make friends with Irish people on a level playing field helps one to make home in migration. Even though she feels self-conscious about the level of her English skills, the social norms of pub conversation covering simplistic, light-hearted topics allows her to challenge any restrictions to socialisation she may face elsewhere. Subsequently, the unwritten rules of pub behaviour that govern the behaviour of clientele (Piekut and Valentine, 2017) positions the pub as a space of linguistic refuge for those who possess limited English competencies. Consequently, Malwina expresses that because the pub allows her to make friends with Irish people, it imbues her with a sense of security. However, this was not the case for those interviewed who possessed English competencies approaching fluency, as for them, pub spaces did not play such a critical role in the process of home-making. Adam (40's, engineer, ten years in Ireland) explains this through the simplistic nature of pub interaction being enjoyable, yet emotionally trivial: *When I watch the match, it's just with my colleagues in the pub, and we're just watching the match, chatting about it, and having a nice time, it's nothing serious like.*

Between (yet above!) the borders of inclusion and exclusion

Despite the politics of belonging being depicted as a two-way process, in which one's membership of a wider collective is determined by what Ralph and Staeheli (2011) define as a "dominant other" granting inclusion to he/she who seeks it, this was not the case from my findings. Whilst individuals often expressed acceptance within Polish or Irish national collectives, due to friendships, this did not necessarily correspond with them positioning themselves as an integral part of that national 'us'. Participants' discursive act of positioning themselves as external to national collectives often emerged as a middle-ground between inclusion and exclusion. Despite many participants often facing barriers to forming friendships with Irish people, experiences of racism remained highly irregular for all 23 participants. Those who had experienced racism, it was discussed as a singular event in the past, rather than an everyday reality of their life in Ireland as Basia (30's, post office overseer, ten years in Ireland): *'once or twice, someone expressed their disgust about the fact I'm a Polish person taking Irish jobs from Irish people, but it wasn't personal, and I didn't take it as such. It was just someone having a bad day, and because I was Polish, they used that as a reason.'* Subsequently, as members of the host-society did not clearly position those interviewed as external to an Irish national 'us' through acts of racism, they were able to negotiate belongingness through their own agencies. Lucja's experiences can attest to this phenomenon through feeling 'accepted' within Irish society, yet not feeling included as a member of an Irish national 'us', due to challenges she faces in relating to Irish people her own age, that emerge from different experiences of youth:

"I don't feel part of a Polish community, that's for sure, but Irish? I feel accepted, and I feel comfortable, but I wouldn't say that I'm part of it ... it's mainly a language barrier, not fully knowing... not because I can't communicate, but because of not sharing the same experiences of childhood, of your teenage years, it's something that for me, and with Irish people my age was completely, completely different."

Despite Lucja being involved in a romantic relationship with an Irishman and having other Irish friends, she does not feel that she is included within the wider collective of Irish society, due to her experiences of cultural difference. Lucja's differing experiences of youth and youth culture in comparison to her Irish peers, and often their inability to understand the political and economic circumstances of Poland in the 1990's resulted in Lucja self-ascribing herself as being 'different'. Her experiences differ from a wider narrative within literature on the interplay between sameness and difference, wherein migrants' difference is often depicted as part of a wider framework of discrimination. As represented by the focus on visible minorities' experience of difference as exclusion based upon inalienable differences such as race or religion (van Liempt, 2011; Waite, 2012). This emphasises the wider agency that Lucja and other migrants who feel 'accepted' because of their ability to foster friendships with Irish people and live without discrimination have over what it means to belong to a collective 'us'. So, despite Lucja having sought and being granted inclusion into a wider Irish collective, she decides to discursively position herself as in-between a state of inclusion and exclusion from Irish society. Kamil's (36, PhD student, six years in Ireland) experiences expand further on the emerging narrative of 'acceptance without inclusion' through his description of separating belongingness to individual Irish friends from belonging to the nation:

"I do have a sense of belonging in Ireland, but I can't say I feel a connection to the people around me; it's the sense of belonging of an immigrant. I do belong to people like Richard, Tim, Edmund, Peter, and twenty-thirty other people, I do have sense of belonging I meet through other friends of mine. On the other hand, I would have no problem leaving, I don't truly belong to one place, I used to live in Scotland and I loved it in Scotland, I had no problem leaving Scotland, it was before I lived in Ireland I lived in Scotland."

Whilst Kamil can be seen to draw a sense of belonging from his friendship practices from his university life, he makes it evident that these relationships do not constitute a sense of inclusion within the boundaries of an Irish national 'us'. He depicts this through describing his sense of belonging as that of an immigrants', in that he belongs *in* Ireland through the meaningful friendships he has with Irish people, rather than having a meaningful connection to Irish society. Kamil reveals that a wider narrative of mobility within his life positions him as not feeling included within any wider national collective. This perspective was collectively held by all six individuals who were either currently in or had completed tertiary education, and held no ties binding them down to Ireland, such as a spouse or children as further explained by Rafał (21, college student, eleven years in Ireland):

"I don't think I can ever be part of one community as I was brought up in more than one, so I can neither belong here nor there... When I finish college, if I find a job in Ireland I'll stay in Ireland, if I don't, I'll just move. I don't feel the need to take someone with me, I'd still be in touch with people I know of course, and I'd just meet new people and make my home there."

What Rafał expresses is that from his experience of not having a constant, long-term place of residence in Poland or Ireland, enables him to feel inherently detached from both national communities. This detachment from both communities can be seen in his openness to emigrating from Ireland, depending on his career path. He also mentions that friendships and other social relations that he has in Cork would not prevent him from emigrating, suggesting that other factors involved can impact how one engages in the politics of belonging, such as one's previous life experiences. Rafał ascribes his experiences of transnational and internal migration in his youth as his reason for not truly belonging to a certain locale: *maybe it's because I've moved from an early age from Poland and then a lot around Ireland, but I feel I'm kind of part of the community, but I don't feel that I'm strongly part of Cork, Ireland or Poland.* On a similar note to other participants' discussion of non-belonging to national collectives, Rafał's expressions of non-belonging to Ireland or Poland did not manifest as a feeling of exclusion. Instead, his embrace of mobility provided him with a sense of empowerment, enabling him to theoretically make home anywhere. In contrast to people such as Tomasz whose strong emotional ties to Poland impeded his ability to make home in Ireland.

Similarly, ten participants also negotiated non-belonging to nation-states through claiming a supra-national belonging to Europe. Consequently, living outside of Poland for often more than ten years' participants expressed sentiments of being separate to a wider Polish collective. However, participants saw themselves as never being able to self-identify with Ireland, as exemplified by Monika (40's, charity manager, twelve years in Ireland): *"you just can't say you are completely in this culture if you didn't grow up there, in my view"*. Hence, a

sense of belonging to Europe was claimed to (re)negotiate the feeling of exclusion one may feel from one's non-belonging to Ireland or Poland. Wiktoria highlights the feeling of belonging to a de-territorialised notion of Europe because of her multi-ethnic friendship practices:

Most of my friends are not Irish, but not Polish as well, so, I feel like part of Europe here at work, when I'm invited of birthday parties, I'm feeling like part of Europe. When I go to [The] Bodega I feeling good, in that place I feeling like part of Europe, it's not that I feel like I am Polish, Irish, in that place, but more European, because I can have good time with friends from all nationality, Polish, Philippines, Nigerian, doesn't matter. I prefer that place, when it's a lot of very young Irish people, I'm feeling not so good there.

The fragment above hence depicts the nature of European identity as a method of coping with a sense of non-belonging to Irish society, as seen by Wiktoria's preference towards more multi-ethnic environments. Wiktoria's performances of friendship within these various multi-ethnic environments enable her to feel a sense of belongingness within a de-territorialised notion of Europe. It is from this extract that a European sense of belonging can be understood as a middle ground between inclusion and exclusion. As feeling European allows one to see oneself as belonging within the host country, within the supranational framework of the EU. Thus, legitimising one's position in the host society, despite seeing oneself as external to the national collective of Ireland.

Conclusion: Friendship practices as powerful, yet limited

Friendship can be identified as playing a key role in drawing out the nuances that explain migrants' pluri-local home-making practices. Poles' depictions of pluri-local home-making emerged as more intricate than literature has previously illustrated (Blunt and Downing, 2006; Staeheli and Nagel, 2006; Ralph, 2009), as their pluri-local notions of home did not simply manifest as feeling at attached to multiple locales or imaginaries. Instead, migrants' multifocal approach to home materialized through a long, drawn-out process of comparison, from which migrants often positioned one home as their 'primary' home, according to where holds the most emotional significance for them. Despite feeling at home in both Poland/*Polonia* and Ireland, those interviewed often held a highly-conflicted notion of home. This was primarily due to holding a sense of longing for Poland or *Polonia*, often because of their inability to foster friendships with the same emotional connection that they either had in Poland or with other Poles. However, friendship is not the sole factor behind migrants' home-making practices, as seen by Polish migrants often placing home in Ireland through materialistic factors entirely separate from their social relations. Space was seen to play a critical role within the interplay between friendship practices and home-making. As experienced by Malwina and Patryk, who depicted the social norms and consumptive practices of pubs as a catalyst for friendship formation and feeling at home in Ireland. Consequently, scholars need to conduct further research into how different spatial contexts either facilitate or conversely, hinder friendships, which influence how individual migrants negotiate home-making.

Who your friends are may evidently position where you are, but, as participants' articulations of the politics of belonging suggests, friendship practices do not constitute *who*

we are. Poles revealed an experience of migration where discrimination was extremely uncommon, explaining that despite both seeking, and having been granted belonging to Irish social circles through admission into Irish social circles, they did not feel belonging to an Irish collective 'us'. Subsequently, these experiences disrupt the binary between inclusion and exclusion, which is presented as a core mechanism within the politics of belonging. In disrupting this binary through their diverse friendship practices with other Poles, Irish people, and members of other ethno-cultural groups, Poles emerged as independent agents with control over their own belongingness. Subsequently, Polish migrants' engagements in the politics of belonging became their own discursive actions, rather than either Irish people or other Poles forcibly denying them inclusion into national collectives. Whilst friendship practices appear invaluable for home-making, their limitations regarding how Poles' decisions to not identify with national collectives suggests that researchers interested in first generation intra-EU migrants' belonging(s) should not overstate the potential of friendship. Instead, whilst the transformative potential of friendship is evident from my example of intra-EU migrants' processes of home-making, scholars should remain skeptical of what friendship can achieve regarding intra-EU migrants' political belonging.

Ever since Antonsich (2010) conceptualised belongingness as a multi-faceted phenomenon, scholars' understandings of how migrants' approach belongingness has grown immensely. Scholars have become increasingly aware that the emotive sentiments people hold towards place are not separate from the wider structural forces that act to include or exclude migrants (Jackson, 2014; Visser, 2017). Polish migrants' narratives of home-making and the politics of belonging confirm this. Through the wider social and political context of Ireland and the EU, Poles could feel accepted, yet not included as an integral part of the social fabric of Ireland. However, this state of acceptance permitted the social and material conditions that allowed them to feel at home in Ireland. Consequently, as scholars become increasingly knowledgeable regarding how migrants approach belongingness, I call upon more scholars to present belongingness as a dynamic interplay between belonging *in* a place and belonging *to* a place, where friendship plays a highly significant role, yet is not considered a determinant of belonging. To deliver research that presents an unabridged picture of what it means for migrants to belong, or conversely, not belong.

Despite many of those interviewed having expressed meaningful platonic or romantic relationships with Irish people, they still did not conceptualise themselves as being an integral part of an imagined Irish national collective. This suggests a need to critique, challenge, and overcome state-driven approaches of what it means for migrants to belong to a "society". Therefore, I advocate a shift from collectivist notions of belonging as loyalty to the state (Waite, 2012) towards a friendship-focused approach which pays attention to the lived experiences of both migrants and non-migrants. The focus on friendship from this perspective holds the benefit of understanding how individual migrants embed themselves into multiple social contexts through paying attention to their everyday interactions within space. Through emphasising the importance of space to friendship formation, this allows for a further understanding of how the specific characteristics of space enable people to belong. Furthermore, a space-based approach to migrants' belonging pays attention to the increasingly heterogeneous patterns of migrant settlement, allowing for a better understanding of how migrants' interaction with non-migrants in space either promotes or

hinders feelings of belonging in both urban and rural contexts characterised by high rates of migrants.

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