DOI: 10.48006/978-65-87289-25-0-10

At home and at the other side of the Atlantic. Polish anthropologist among Polish diaspora

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While working with Brazilians of Polish origin, I focused on the descendants of one of the first and the largest migration waves, which was aiming to colonise the southern part of Brazil and develop its agriculture. Thus, the question I asked was what it means to be Polish in Brazil right now and what can be still defined as Polish heritage, that is how some elements of Polish culture (e.g. language, culinary practices, religion or folklore) shape sense of belonging of third, fourth or even fifth generation of immigrants? I also focused on how the fact that I was a woman, a wife and mother influenced the way I conducted my research and its results. In this paper I reflect upon all those elements of my positionality or '*lugar de fala*' (place of speaking) and try to analyse how it affected ethnographic encounters, findings and my ways of interpretation of collected data.

Introduction

When I first came to southern Brazil for a pilot study in 2012, I did not speak Portuguese, but I was able to speak Polish with many people. I also observed the local landscape changed by migrants. However, I knew that in order to

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do ethnographic research and immerse myself in this community, I had to learn Portuguese, otherwise I would be just a "visitor from Poland" or a tourist. At that time though, I did not know, that tourists or other visitors from Poland came there so rarely that my presence would be anyway noticeable and commented on, and that we would be mutually perceiving one another as "observed" and "observers" (cf. George W. Stocking Jr., 1983) all the time.

I was working with people whose grand or great, or even great grandparents came from ethnically Polish lands at the end of 19th century. They arrived as a part of one of the biggest waves of migration from Europe, that was connected with the economical and political changes both in Europe and in the Americas in the second part of the 19th century. The period between the mid-80s and mid-90s of that century saw increasing overpopulation and pauperization of the villages as well as an agrarian crisis, connected with the import of cheap grain from the United States and Canada to the Western European markets. This resulted in a decrease in the prices of grain in Europe. Brazil, at the same time, saw a rise in demand for labourers on coffee plantations and in the continuously modernised agriculture in the southern part of the country. This, on the other hand, was a result of the abolishment of slavery. For this wave of immigration I use the term 'colonisation', following the Brazilian authors (Carmen Janaina Batista Machado, Renata Menasche, Giancarla Salamoni, 2005, p.116-117), who refer in such way to the wave of migration from Europe to the south of Brazil; and who call the European migrant farmers *colonos* (colonisers). The said wave, that occurred in years 1890-1891 is referred to as the 'Brazilian fever' in Polish literature. The Poles had been settled in the three southern states of Parana, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul. The most descendants of Poles, however, live in Parana. Curitiba is considered the capital of Brazilian Polish diaspora: it is here that the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland is placed, together with many associations, organisations, and publishing houses.

The Brazilian Polish diaspora is quite numerous, however, hard to estimate in precise numbers as the first immigrants of Polish origin arrived when Poland was not an independent country. They were, at that time, citizens of Austria, Germany, and Russia. It is estimated, nevertheless, that there are between 800 thousand and 2 million Brazilians of Polish origin living in Brazil (cf. Anna Dvorak, 2013). Despite the fact that this group is so numerous, it is still not well-known in Poland itself. The research on it remains insufficient, especially the one related to the descendants of Poles living in Brazilian villages. In addition, for many years (particularly during the World Wars period, and especially after the Second World War, when Poland was under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union) there had been no regular contact between Poland and Brazil. Also, nowadays, few Polish Brazilians have regular contact with people from Poland, mainly because many bonds between the descendants of Poles in Brazil and their countrymen had been severed. Recently, however, there has been a rise in the interest in studying in Poland, visiting Poland touristically, and applying for Polish passports.

The specificity of the Polish migration wave to Brazil can be seen in a number of aspects. Firstly, it regards whole families (for example, at the same time, the US was a destination mostly for young men looking for work in factories). In Brazil, the immigrants could and wanted to remain farmers. It is particularly relevant considering the fact that they still remembered the times when peasants did not work for themselves but as serfs for their 'lords'. The land reform that had granted them ownership of the land happened only in 1848 under the Prussian occupation and in 1864 in Russian Congress Poland. In Brazil, peasants were, as a rule, given ownership of the land, thus becoming 'lords' themselves. (Witold Kula; Marcin Kula; Nina Assorodobaj-Kula, 2012, p. 115).

Furthermore, Polish immigrants had no support from the country that they came from (as they were in fact citizens of Russia, Austria, or Prussia). Moreover, they were mostly illiterate. However, despite the unfavourable conditions such as the 1938 Getúlio Vargas Law that prohibited using ethnic

languages, many elements of Polish culture survived in a significant number of villages (Dvorak, 2013; Władysław Miodunka, 2003). It is important to stress that what survived was the Polish village local culture of the 19th century. It was also the culture of the specific social class.

The lack of support from their home countries, together with poverty and illiteracy were causes of the low status of Poles in relation to other European immigrants, for example Italians or Germans. This, in turn, led to the creation of the negative stereotype of the Polish peasant and expressions such as *polaco burro*, *polaco sem bandeira* (Donkey-Pole, The Pole without a flag) (Krzysztof Smolana, 1979, p. 69–80; see also: Miodunka, 2003, p. 47–53). The term *polaco* (Pole, Polish) is still widely regarded as derogatory, therefore, officially, in the Brazilian Portuguese language the term *polonês* is used instead. Since then many notable Polish citizens have worked hard to make this stereotype forgotten, however, at the same time, the rural and agricultural heritage of the Polish diaspora in Brazil, in general, is becoming entirely forgotten or remains unmentioned. I would thus, in my research, like to give the voice to those descendants of the peasants, who still live in villages and work on the farms.

'Polish' village in Brazil

I conducted my ethnographic research in the state of Parana, mainly in the village Rio Claro do Sul or former 'Colonia Rio Claro'[155]. It is a large village (*distrito*) with a few hamlets (*colonias*), inhabited mostly by the descendants of Poles and, to a smaller extent, Ukrainians[156]. It belongs administratively to the town of Mallet, 200 km from the state capital, Curitiba. Altogether I spent approximately ten months on the fieldwork,

[155] [information about the project under which the author carried out the research]

[156] I realise that by the end of the 19th century, the term 'Ukrainiec' [a Ukrainian] was not longer used, however, it is an emic description of the inhabitants of Rio Claro and its surrounding areas.

talking to people, participating in festivities and masses, walking around the fields with their proud owners and observing their daily work.

The village was colonised in 1891 by Polish immigrants arriving from the villages of Congress Poland. At that time, 1400 families were brought over, and 1700 plots were created, each of them 25 hectares in size (Joel Júnior Larocca; Píer Luigi Larocca; Clarice de Almeida Lima, 2008, p. 48 and 46). Later, in 1896, Poles and Ukrainians (Ruthenians) arrived from Eastern Galicia. The sources state that it was the largest Polish colony in the Parana State on the break of the 19th and 20th centuries (Mario Deina, 1990, p. 36). The immigrants arrived at what was then, in fact[157], a forest ('There was nothing but forests here', my interlocutors stated), which had to be grubbed up in order to build roads and houses. After that, the church and the school were founded. In 1896, the inhabitants of Rio Claro built a large wooden church of Our Lady of the Rosary called the 'Częstochowa in Parana' (nowadays not existing); and schools (classes 1 to 4) in the colonies. In Rio Claro, there was also a sporting society called 'Junak', libraries, and a church; it was also the home and workplace of nuns, who taught religion. In the nearby Mallet, between years 1911 and 1937, there was also a Polish high school under the name of Mikołaj Kopernik (Wachowicz 2002: 54).

The immigrants who arrived at the end of the 19th century to Parana state were mostly illiterate peasants. In a few homes, however, there are some documents that have survived from these times, e. g. prayer books, photographs, or holy paintings. Most of the citizens also do not know where their ancestors had come from; they only know that they had arrived from Poland[158] – such is also the information on the marriage, death, and birth certificates that have survived. Very few stories have also survived about

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[157] Mario Deina notes, that 'a few families' had lived here before (Deina 1990: 23).

[158] In Witold Kula's, Marcin Kula's, and Nina Assorodobraj's *Emigrant Letters*, the term 'Poland' refers to the Kingdom of Poland (2012: 47). However, the historic documentation sources show that some of the Polish settlers arrived from the Austrian occupation, and many of them also state that their ancestors arrived from Poland; some of them use the term 'Austria'.

the journey from Poland or the life there before the emigration. One of the recurring themes is the death on a ship, and the necessity to throw the body out into the water, without the possibility of the customary burial in the ground. Another recurring story is the one about the need to grub up the forest and the fear of the unknown wild animals that inhabited it, as well as the tales of frosty winters back in Poland.

The Poles, and later also Ukrainians received ca. 25 hectares (10 *alqueires*) of land each from the Brazilian government, which they had to work off, for example by building roads. They also received grain and food provisions for the first months of their stay in Brazil (Kula; Kula; Assorodobaj-Kula, 2012). Subsequently, many owners bought more land and expanded their farmsteads. Nowadays, a significant part of Rio Claro inhabitants lives off agriculture. Some of them work in a paper factory in Mallet, a few others in schools, shops or the hospital.

Nowadays, there is a dirt road to Rio Claro do Sul, to get there from Mallet it takes almost an hour by car, even though it is less than 30 kilometers. The nearest hamlet is 'Colonia Uma' (First Colony), which starts a few kilometers from the town. The houses in Rio Claro are low, single-story, mostly wooden, and colored – usually blue or green. Steep, sloping roofs are a legacy of the ancestors who built them to protect the roofs from snow. There are gardens next to the houses, where you can find plants typical of the descendants of European settlers: potatoes, beets, dill, cabbage, onions, as well as flowers – usually roses and mallow (Rafaela H. Ludwinsky; Nivaldo Peroni; Natalia Hanazaki, 2020). The houses are far from the road, and when you want to enter one, you should stand in front of the gate and applaud loudly. At this pre-arranged signal, the hosts leave the house and invite you inside. They greet each other in Polish: *dzień dobry* (literary 'good day') here used in the morning and *dobry wieczór* (literary: 'good evening') in the afternoon. The Polish phrase *dobry wieczór* is related to the influence of the Portuguese language, where *boa tarde* literally means 'good afternoon' and this term is used after noon.

In Rio Claro you can hear *dobry wieczór* or 'good evening' as early as 1 p.m. or 2 p.m.

Nowadays in Rio Claro do Sul, in many families, the Polish language is spoken daily and many customs are practised and passed on from generation to generation. Moreover, there is one folk group, called *Kraków* (Cracovia, one of the biggest and oldest Polish city). In the municipality town, Mallet, there are also some people that promote Polish culture; Polish language lessons are organised and the folk group *Mazury* and the Mikołaj Kopernik Society is in operation. More and more people visit Poland as tourists, pilgrims or students, symbolically 'returning' to the country of their ancestors (Wessendorf, 2007; Tsuda 2013). Since 2019, citizens of Brazil and Argentina of Polish origin can apply for *Karta Polaka* (Polish Charter) – a document that confirms belonging to Polish nation[159] and gives its holders possibility to work or study in Poland. It facilitates also obtaining work and residence permit in the whole European Union. All this activities, narratives and emotions I call 'cultural heritage'. I argue, in order to understand practice and narratives of Brazilians of Polish origin, one may refer to a critical concept of cultural heritage, and especially it uses (cf. Laurajane Smith, 2006).

Let us then go back to the initial question of this chapter, which is: who can be considered Polish in Brazil? Are those people who speak Polish, is Catholic, eat pierogi or have some contacts in Poland? Am I "more" Polish than 3–4 generation of migrants? I cannot answer this question as for anthropologist, since national belonging is not only inherited or objective, but also socially constructed and individually declared. What is more, migrants from Polish lands were not citizens of Poland (as there was no Poland as independent state), and many of them were people of borderland (which is now part of the Ukraine).

[159] Polish Charter may be given to people who cannot obtain Polish citizenship. In the case of individuals from South America it is especially related to lack of written documents.

Cultural heritage is defined very widely today. It can mean tangible objects, such as buildings or statues, but also intangible things: languages, melodies, or festivals. Usually, the term carries positive connotations: it is a value that is worth to safeguard, and it is tied to history and rememberance of national or ethnic groups. It is also heavily politicised as it is often supported by national institutions and organisations, government, and non-government programmes. The division between tangible and intangible heritage introduced by UNESCO is, however, artificial, and it has been proven by anthropologists (e.g. Michael Herzfeld, 2004) that both types of heritage in fact overlap. Moreover, as noticed by Ronda L. Brulotte and Michael A. Di Giovine (2014, p. 1), the understanding of heritage is different among its practitioners, politicians, and scientists. At the same time, the claims to something that one group considers its heritage might be raised by other groups as well. Along similar lines, Polish anthropologist Ewa Klekot notices that "heritage is a category that legitimises community, which means that it excludes those, who do not have the right to the 'common heritage' from it" (Ewa Klekot, 2014, p. 60–61).

Moreover, Klekot states that heritage relates not only to the past of a certain group of people but also to their present and future. "Heritage is a kind of a tool, which allows to organise cultural matter and select it in such a way, that the identity becomes plausible due to its anchoring in the specific elements of the contemporary cultural reality, which are regarded as impressions of the past" (Klekot, 2014, p. 47–48). In other words, heritage is a materialisation of the contemporary approach to the past.

In my research, I focus on everyday practice of cultural heritage, which I recognize as grassroots actions of individual social actors. It is close to the term 'tradition', understood as the thing that a given group of people regards as valuable (because it is connected to the migratory past and the ancestors' homeland), worthy of reproducing and passing on to next generations. Because they are individual actions, they can look differently depending on gender, age, or education. Thus, without negating the characteristics of Polish Brazilian heritage that are widely known and

recognised, such as literature or theatre, I want to prove that everyday life of Polish farmers in the village in Parana can also constitute a part of this legacy and that the legacy itself is very dynamic and changeable. My goal is to give the voice to them and to show that the term cultural heritage itself is underpinned by notions of 'class' and 'hierarchy'.

It seems that many authors take the relationship between the term diaspora and national/ethnic/religious identity for granted. However, in fact, there are many actions that are shaped by the local culture of origin and host countries. We need to remember that Poles arrived in Brazil at the end of the 19th century from poor overpopulated villages. Many of them were illiterate and of little mobility. To say about their practices that they are 'Polish' is a serious overstatement. They are in fact local – tied strongly to the region from which the migrants originated. In other words, for instance, there was never a Poland-wide tradition of eating pierogi or drinking home-brewed beer. Moreover, the language used by them is of a certain regional variety (it is a dialect). At the same time, as noticed by Ronda L. Brulotte and Michael Di Giovine, food is a 'powerful tool to articulate and negotiate individual and group identities' (Brulotte, Di Giovine, 2014, p. 89).

One of the migration waves to Rio Claro do Sul was comprised of Poles and Ukrainians (Ruthenians). They arrived from the regions which are nowadays located within the borders of Poland and Ukraine – at that time, it was a part of the Austrian occupation. They spoke different dialects, and primarily, were of different confessions (Ukrainians are Greek Catholic; the Poles – Roman Catholic). However, there is no distinction in terms of food. Pierogi are eaten by Ukrainians and Poles alike, and the differences relate only to details and their name. Both nationalities have *barszcz* (beetroot soup) and home-brewed non-alcoholic beer (*cerveja caseira*). Also, both consider and use it as a part of their heritage. What is more, there are many mixed marriages and people, who attend masses in both Roman and Greek Catholic churches. For example, one of my interlocutors was raised primarily in Ukrainian culture (her elder sister, who took care

of her after their mother's death, married a Ukrainian man, and the village they lived in, Rio Azul, was partly inhabited by Ukrainians), and currently works as a dispenser of holy communion in a church, which is serviced by a Polish priest. She, however, declares herself as Polish, even though she is submerged in a common Polish-Ukrainian or even Polish-Ukrainian-Brazilian culture. The national, ethnic perspective, together with the excluding and homogenous term of diaspora, however, do not allow being a Pole and a Ukrainian at the same time, however, they do allow – at least theoretically – being a Brazilian. The citizens of Rio Claro are in fact citizens of Brazil, and they speak Portuguese (Brazilian). This is, however, not how they are referred to in practice. Being Brazilian does not entail a migratory origin, even though Brazil, together with its widely understood Brazilian culture, is based on cultural and racial diversity. It is Brazilians who are the others, not the Poles or Ukrainians (Batista Machado, Menasche, Salamoni, 2005, p. 127). For my research partners, the others constitute people of unknown origin, or from a different region, or/and with a different skin colour. Hence, it is probably right of the Brazilian researchers to venture outside the national and ethnic perspective and write about 'common village identity' (*compartilhada identidade colona)* (ibidem), showing that it reflects the everyday practices of living in similar conditions and originating from the same – Central and Eastern European – region.

Insider or outsider?

As native Polish, coming from Poland but working at the public university in Brazil and speaking Portuguese, places me in the position of someone else than 'insider', but also someone different from most of those who come to Brazil to meet their compatriots: tourists, priests or Polish language teachers.

I usually conducted interviews and informal conversations in Polish. The inhabitants of Rio Claro mostly speak Polish, and it is in this language that I conducted most of my interviews and conversations. It is not,

however, contemporary Polish standard, but heritage language – various Polish dialects that originate from the end of the 19th century, developed in the contact with Portuguese and other local languages, mainly in terms of lexis. I am, however, a native speaker of Polish, educated in Poland. My interlocutors, although they communicate in Polish, they do not know its contemporary version and do not write in this language. I asked them to choose a language they want to speak with me, but almost always they chose Polish. This does not mean that they are more competent in this language, because usually it is not true. The choice of language was related to me as a native speaker of Polish, and especially my children who usually were with me and whom I communicated in Polish. However, we often switched to Portuguese automatically or applied some transidiomatic practices described by Marco Jacquemet (2005). At the same time, I had a possibility to learn – sometimes indirectly – various linguistic ideologies related to the contemporary Polish language and the Polish heritage language. Brazilians of Polish origin realize that their language is slightly different from mine. They also reproduce the popular ideology of superiority of the language standard over its variants (Adrian Blackledge, 2005) and sometimes even they felt ashamed to speak Polish with me. They used to say that their language is not 'pure, 'mixed' and 'not as nice as mine'. At the same time they expressed their joy of being able to talk to me because, as they say, there are fewer and fewer opportunities to speak Polish.

Polish is spoken mostly by the older and middle-aged people. The younger ones use Portuguese on a daily basis, but even they usually at least understand Polish a little bit. The intergenerational transmission of Polish language is still very important for the descendants of Poles. The 30-year-old and older interlocutors reminisce that when they went to school at the age of 6-7, they did not know Portuguese at all. Up to this day, there still exist some older people who do not generally speak Portuguese because of their lack of school education. Still, presence of young people or children speaking Polish was very unusual there and my sons' way of speaking was commented on as something surprising, but also admirable. It was sadly

said that 'their children did not speak Polish anymore' and that it was a pity that the language is less and less often passed on to subsequent generations.

Written communication, however, occurs generally only in Portuguese. The Polish language, although passed on from generation to generation, has only survived in spoken form. Few people read in Polish, and even fewer write. This gap is tied to the vacuum in Polish language teaching, caused by the 1938 ban on using languages other than Portuguese in public. The schools were closed, and in those that stayed open, Portuguese-speaking teachers were recruited. Many places, mainly cities, were sites of persecutions and arrests of people speaking languages other than Portuguese. Although this did not happen in such small places as Rio Claro – which allowed the Polish language to survive – even now, some people are embarrassed to speak Polish, knowing that it is not the literary Polish language. Recently, Polish has started to be taught in many areas inhabited by Polish Brazilians. It is obviously Polish standard, not heritage language, thus it is not familiar to many of them.

Every day, the inhabitants participate in many complicated communicative situations, using spoken common Portuguese and the dialect of Polish diaspora, and in written communication – literary Portuguese[160]. Some learn the Polish literary language that they use both in writing and orally. For most of my interlocutors, however, their first language is the mixed code, which entails various languages, dialects, types and registers, used to achieve their desired communicative goals (Jan Blommaert, 2014, p. 3). Usually young Brazilians of Polish origin do not speak Polish heritage language any more. They could have some expressions or words transmitted by older generations and sometimes remember their parents or grandparents speaking Polish. However, when they decide to learn Polish, they take part in courses of Polish language. Obviously, it is Polish standard. During COVID-19 pandemic online courses have mushroomed, and new possibilities of contacts with Polish language and culture emerged.

[160] See the models of becoming bilingual in: MIODUNKA, 2003, p. 158–22.

At the same time, pandemic limited personal encounters, especially among elderly people (AUTHOR, Sonia Niewiadomski, forthcoming).

The situation in the language – which is mixed and adapted to local conditions but still important – is similar to the situation concerning food. Brazilian anthropologist Ellen Woortmann introduced a division between common food (*comida típica*) and traditional food (*comida tradicional*). The former, according to the researcher, is marked by exoticisation and tied to the outside perspective. The latter, on the other hand, expresses the values and norms that are traditional for the given group (Ellen Woortmann, 2007, p. 111). What is important is that the traditional food constantly changes, undergoing continuous adaptations and transformations (ibidem, p. 194). In Parana, the knowledge about *pierogi* [dumplings], *barszcz*, *gołąbki* [cabbage wraps stuffed with meat], *placki ziemniaczane* [potato pancakes], or *kapuśniak* [cabbage soup] is common and it is widely known that they are Polish, or Polish and Ukrainian dishes. *Comida típica* is served during almost all the festivals in ethnic restaurants. It forms a part of the cultural programme presented by the Brazilians of Polish origin to their own communities and outside them. The dishes are tied to the so-called 'gastronomic memory' (*memoria gastronomica*) (Woortmann, 2007, p. 183) about the immigrant past and to the memories of older family members (Neli Teleginski, 2014, p. 89).

The dishes that are regarded Polish in Brazil are, naturally, slightly different than in Poland, where regional differences can also be observed. In Brazil, many dishes have been adapted to local conditions and culinary habits, for example, *pierogi* in Brazil are served with tomato sauce. The most popular *pierogi* in Brazil are stuffed with cottage cheese and potatoes[161]. Many people also make the sour-cabbage stuffed sort, but also ones stuffed with black beans – the so-called 'fiżon'.

Many dishes considered as common are not eaten daily. It is festive food – for festivals, Sundays, or other occasions. Pierogi and other

[161] In Poland, this type of pierogi is called 'ruskie' [Russian/Ruthenian].

'common' dishes became a part of the festive cuisine; nevertheless, they are still passed on from generation to generation in the homesteads. That is why – notices the historian Neli Teliginski – it is difficult to find them on the lists of dishes that are taught on cooking courses: it is because 'everyone knows how to prepare them' (Teleginski, 2014, p. 94). They are, however, still popular enough to be easily available for purchase, in the form of cheap frozen meals, in every larger supermarket in Parana. They are produced by various private companies, vary in ingredients, and are called in different ways (pierogi, pierogui, pirogui, pirogue). Thanks to their availability, pierogi have become an important product not only for the Polish ethnic cuisine but also the Parana regional kitchen (Teleginski, 2014).

Also, the traditional *rosół* [chicken soup] makes an appearance on the Christmas table. The interlocutors admit that in, the old times, they would slaughter a cock on Sunday in order to make it. It used to be, and in some places still is, served with home-made noodles, but also with rice and sweet potatoes. Daily food, on the other hand, consists of what is considered to be typical Brazilian food: rice with black beans, which makes a base for other dishes. It is most commonly served with meat and vegetable salad. The distinction into daily and Sunday food is typical not only for the descendants of Poles; it seems universal, mainly amongst farmers. Sunday dishes are regarded as better, richer, tastier and more nutritious; however, their preparation takes more time (Vania Grim Thies; Carmo Thum, 2015, p. 191).

Not only dishes came from Poland, but also the ways of storing and conserving food. Therefore, pickled cucumbers and sour cabbage are popular here, as well as pickled vegetables, characteristic of the descendants of Europeans from other countries. In the past, after slaughtering a pig, the pork fat was melted and kept together with meat in large, metal cans, so-called 'latka' (in Portuguese *lata* means 'a can'); or dried or smoked in the adjacent smokehouses. The descendants of Poles adopted a Brazilian word, however, for the device used for storing and cooling food that

was still unknown during the migration times – *geladeira*, which means refrigerator.

At the same time, the descendants of Poles, living among people who were ethnically and nationally different, adopted a number of their culinary habits. One of the examples is *chimarrão* a beverage prepared from the leaves of *erva mate* (Ilex paraguariensis), served in a gourd (*cuia*) and drunken via a straw (*bomba*). The Brazilians of Polish origin do not only drink *chimarrão*, but also cultivate *mate* (called 'herba' by them), and brew a tea from its stems (which they refer to as 'tea'). What is more, because of the fact that corn has been grown here since the Polish colonisation, it is known here as 'mileja' (Portuguese: *milho*).

Thus, as shown above, the Brazilians of Polish origin adopted not only new products, dishes, and ways of preparing food, but also new words. The most important are 'fiżon' (black bean, Portuguese: *feijão*) and 'milija' (corn, Portuguese: *milho*), but also 'mandzioka' (manioc, Portuguese: mandioca) or *chimarrão*, which is spelled in a Polish-sounding way ('szimaron') and adjusted to Polish declination and linguistic principles. And thus, despite the fact that barszcz, gołąbki, and pierogi are typical for Polish or Polish-Brazilian cuisine, it is difficult to imagine the contemporary cuisine of the descendants of Poles without rice, beans, corn, or the daily ritual of drinking *szimaron*. The dishes and products borrowed from the local inhabitants, together with the names that denote them should also be included as the cultural heritage of Polish Brazilians.

It is also important to keep in mind the dynamics of change connected with the new culinary preferences and transformations on farms. When I was in Rio Claro on the break of 2011 and 2012, I was amazed by the self-sufficient farms that grew basically everything that was required for consumption, including rice, beans, corn, potatoes, onion, wheat, and garden vegetables. Now, after only four years, the village landscapes are dominated by monocultures of genetically modified soy and tobacco. They are grown for sale, and many products that had been grown earlier are currently purchased.

I was seen through my Polish origin, which in a way legitimized my Polishness. It was understood as alleged attachment to the Catholic Church, patriotism, as well as a certain 'natural' adaptation to low temperatures, which, for example, was expressed as a surprise that I was cold or that I did not go to church every Sunday. At the same time, it was assumed that I had some embodied knowledge of Polish culinary practices, i.e. that I can make *pierogi* (dumplings) or beetroot soup. In fact, I do not make *pierogi* in Poland, as it is easy to buy them at any market, and it is one of the cheapest and fastest way to prepare a lunch. In Brazil, however, I made them many times. Anyway, it was always an opportunity to talk and exchange ways of preparing *pierogi*. Home-made food does not need strict recipes. They are very simple and based on the knowledge generally available in a given community as well as on specific skills (David Sutton, 2011, p. x). "Typical Polish food" in southern Brazil, is based on products that are available at any given time and on embodied knowledge, passed down from generation to generation, on how to make a given dish. As Neli Teleginski writes, even mandioc dumplings stuffed with black beans are 'Polish' (Teleginski, 2014, p. 103), and the recipes are based on basic knowledge, considered generally available or even obvious: "You make dough just like for bread" or "as much flour, as much dough will take". When I wasn't making pierogi, I was eating them. Almost every time my family was invited to Sunday lunch, the *pierogi* (and *barszcz*, *gołąbki* or other 'Polish' dishes) were on the table. We ate them very eagerly, and this only confirmed our hosts' belief that we were 'true Poles'. This kind of approach is successfully commercialized by the "king of pierogi' (*Tadeu, rei do pierogi*), Polish businessmen from Cutiriba who use to say: "We are Poles, we know how to make *pierogi*. You [Brazilians] know how to make *churrasco*. I can't make *churrasco*"[162].

My presence in the field not only verified but also undermined certain imaginaries. Many of my research partners had a very clear and

[162] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWgVdcHinso&ab_channel=ABvideoproducoes (access: 19.11.2021).

homogeneous picture of what is Polish – the language, eating habits, holiday customs. Myself, I tried to disturb it by showing the linguistic and cultural diversity in Poland itself. An example would be a conversation about language:

> – We call it 'kluski' (noodles) here. Because *makaron* (pasta) is Portuguese and *kluski* is Polish.
> – At home, I did not speak *kluski*, we say *makaron*. People speak differently in different regions in Poland. I am from southern Poland and we say *makaron*. Now I live in Warsaw and many people there say *kluski*.
> – Really? I thought *makaron* was not correct.
> – You can say it this or that way. How do you call 'potatoes'? *Ziemniaki* or *kartofle*?
> – We call them *kartofle*.
> – And in my house they say *ziemniaki*, but many of my friends say *kartofle*. You can say *it this or that way*.

With such conversations I *started to understand* many linguistic ideologies, especially ideology of monolingualism in Poland, i.e. the image of Polish language as being homogenous. Trying to show local and regional diversity I used to strengthen my interlocutors' feeling that they did not speak a "worse" language. We were equally eager to exchange information about Christmas customs, or what is put in the basket during the Easter celebration of popular Święconka. With such exchanges I was trying to diminish the distance and build up common knowledge.

Fieldwork and carework

Finally, I am woman, wife and mother. Most of the time in the field I spent with my husband, who did a vast part of photographic and video documentation for my research, and children: at first two, and then three boys. Although I am well experienced mother-fieldworker as I took my sons to my previous research in Macedonia (at least until I was

breastfeeding them), work in Brazil brought some different opportunities and limits to me.

There are some anthropological reflections of being mother working in the field (cf. Joan Cassell, 1987), although most of them are blogs and some practical tips how to combine looking after small kids and interview, participate, write notes and take pictures (ex. http://kidsinthefield.blogspot.com/ or https://anthropod.net) and how field research can shape family decision and anthropologist's career (Christopher D. Lynn; Michaela E. Howells; Max J. Stein, 2018). I did not do research about raising children and culturally constructed motherhood, although it was sometimes quite obvious topic for conversation and I was able to scrutinize it. I also was able to make strong and close relations with my research participants who were also mothers. My question was however, how being in the field with my family had shaped my research? How my sons' presence, appearance or even 'race', spoken language, ways of playing with other kids, and food choices shaped our conversations and my research partners' imaginaries of what it meant to be Polish from Poland.

In 2015 we (at time parents and two little boys – seven and four years old respectively) came to Rio Claro in early December to spend two months there. We only lived in Brazil for a months, children did not speak Portuguese yet, and did not attend a local school. They still remembered well the Polish anthem from the Polish school and kindergarten as they used to learn it for Independence Day (11 of November). This knowledge of the Polish anthem made the boys become 'celebrities' and were even invited to local radio. Our whole family became quickly recognizable, because while Poles from Poland sometimes came to visit the village, they were never children. In many cases, I did not have to look for interlocutors – they found me, knowing that I was with my family in Mallet, in a modest hotel ran for years by a family of Polish descent.

The first weeks of our stay in the field showed me what people thought about Polishness and Poles from Poland, and how much we fit into these thoughts. So we were all closely watched what we said what we were eating

and how we celebrated holidays. When we were invited for Sunday lunch, we obviously got pierogi and other food considered as 'typical Polish'. It did not mean they had always had *pierogi* for festive lunch – it was us, Poles from Poland – who 'evoked' a neccessity to show their belonging. Our appearance was also commented: you must be of Japanese origin, not Polish! – they talked about me jokingly and admired the bright hair of one of my sons.

At that time, however, I found it difficult to have long conversations during which I had to focus on the interlocutor and devote more time to him or her. With young children running around, however, I had the opportunity to observe people's everyday life, participate in the preparation of food or play with other children. We also used to go to the farms that farmers proudly showed us and told about them.

We also had the opportunity to participate in some feasts, especially Christmas. Therefore, there were occasions to talk about customs, food and also religious practices. The last one was especially difficult, because we are not religious, and our research participants, especially hosts in the hotel, assumed that since we were from Poland, we were Roman Catholic. Both my husband and I are brought up in Catholic families in which Christmas traditions are cultivated, as children we also went to church. Therefore, we know Polish prayers and religious songs and we know how to behave during the mass. Our children, however, do not know how to do this, and just in case, I usually went to religious services alone as I treated being there as part of my fieldwork, and my husband stayed with the children or walked around the church. Back then, it was quite easy to explain by the fact that the children in the church were bored, because other small children also often went out during the mass. However, we decided that we would teach them basic prayers and provide information about some customs in order not to destroy the image imposed on us. Until now, I wonder if it was an ethical behaviour, especially since we made friends with the local priest quite sincerely and humanly. While he never asked

directly what our religious practice was like, we felt that he assumed we were practising Catholics.

A slightly different situation was in 2019 and 2020 when I came to Brazil as a visiting professor, mother of three children, two of whom already knew Portuguese quite well. It was a time when I conducted a lot of expert interviews with employees of the municipality office or in the church. Myself, I was recognized as an expert in the field of Polish language and culture. I was invited to lectures, language lessons, and asked for advice on applying for the Polish Charter or a scholarship in Poland. At the same time, I was already an acquaintance and friend, and the older sons were happy to be with me only where they had friends themselves. In 2020–21 my research was significantly limited by the pandemic, but I kept in touch with people from the field through participation in WhatsApp groups popular in Brazil, online Polish lessons and lectures organized by Polish descendants. Our short stays in the field in 2021 during Easter and the celebration of 130 years of Polish settlement in Brazil were not only an observation, but above all a meeting – with acquaintances, friends, and we did not actually meet new people then, but we returned to those we knew.

Throughout this entire time, I was also a woman and wife, and conducted my research in an overwhelmingly patriarchal community. The division of space – both home and outdoor – is very clear (Renata Andressa Poderoso; Nivaldo Peroni; Natalia Hanazaki, 2017). Therefore, I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time in the kitchen, where, as I wrote above, my culinary skills were tested and commented on. I also had access to conversations with women and the opportunity to visit a backyard garden. We exchanged seeds and knowledge about plants. Other areas of the farm were the domain of men and I visited them only when we were walking with the whole family. It was also often the case that I and the hostess were at home or in the garden, and my husband and the farmer went into the fields or rode a tractor, which was a special attraction for my sons.

Conclusions

I realize that the enthnographic encounters I had with men and women in Rio Claro do Sul was significantly shaped by my nationality, mother tongue, social class and gender. As anthropologists we discover a small part of cultural and social reality.

I don't know what this research would have been like if I hadn't been part of it. I don't know what my field would have looked like without me. I do not know what it would look like if I were not Polish and did not provoke conversations in Polish and about Polish language. If I were not Polish, I also don't know if I would be invited for a Sunday lunch of pierogi or for churrasco. Were it not for the fact that my children spoke standard Polish, I do not know if our conversations about the language would be equally marked by emotions and various linguistic ideologies.

The Polishness of Brazilians of Polish origin is declared and embodied in action. For them, being Polish means participating in religious ceremonies, listening, dancing, singing or playing 'Polish' music, preparing and consuming products considered Polish. Speaking Polish is important but not obligatory. Sometimes a Polish-sounding surname, family history and pride in origin are enough. My presence – as a Polish woman from Poland – in the field evoked emotions, memories, attempts to speak Polish or preparing 'Polish' food. This calling was also reinforced by the fact that I was present in the field with my family, especially the children. They, especially how they spoke Polish, how they looked and played, what they liked to eat, were closely watched by the locals. They also evoked positive feelings, childhood memories and encouraged cross-cultural comparisons. Without their presence in the field, many topics would probably not have been even emerged.

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