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The trap of transnationalism—Polish organizations in Germany

The concept of transnationalism is perhaps one of the most in-fashion concepts of contemporary migration studies. Although it is a useful tool for analysing the diversity of relations that link migrants, the sending, and the destination country, it is also an extremely broad notion with blurred boundaries. The motif of “multiple and constant interconnections across international borders”, and migrants’ “relationship to more than one nation-state” (Bash et al., 1995: 48) is quite capacious, for it encloses not only economic relations—expressing themselves mostly as remittances (Landolt 2001, Georges 1990, Massey et al. 1994), and transnational entrepreneurship (Kyle 2000)—but also contain social relationships—in the form of the creation of social networks (Levit 1998, Portes 1996, Glick Schiller, Fouron 1999)—as well as political relations (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, Smith 1994).

When focusing on only the political dimension of transnationalism and the role of immigrant organizations (henceforth IOs), it is clear that most researchers are concentrating on the ways in which migrants and IOs are directly (through double citizenship, taking part in elections, and supporting political parties) or indirectly (through exerting influence on destination country politics) affecting the political situation of the sending country. Eva Østergaard-Nielsen (2003: 762) formulates a definition of political transnational practices that explicitly underlines these focal points: “various forms of direct cross-border participation in the politics of their country of origin by both migrants and refugees (such as voting and other support to political parties, participating in debates in the press), as well as their indirect participation via the political institutions of the host country (or international organizations).”

Since this approach seems be one-sided and reflects the situation of only some IOs, I would like to propose a slightly different perspective. This is one based on the notion that in the case of some IOs, their transnationalism expresses itself not in the transnationalization of their powers, but rather in their entanglement in a set of transnational determinants (like the immigration and integration policy of the receiving country, the diaspora policy of the sending country, and the bilateral relations between the sending and receiving countries). In such a case, transnationalization of IOs may end up restricting and hindering their activities—an influence which is articulated in the title of my presentation, “the trap of transnationalism”.
This paper is organized in the following way: Initially, as necessary background, four factors affecting the situation of IOs in general will be described. The second part contains a short description of Polish migration to Germany and the process by which the Polish diaspora in Germany organized itself. In the last part of the paper, three transnational factors determining the situation of Polish organizations in Germany will be discussed with the use of empirical findings: German policy towards immigrant organizations, Polish policy towards immigrant organizations, and Polish-German relations.

Immigrant organizations

One of the most important and widely discussed problems in the sociological and political literature on migration is the political participation of immigrants. Among the basic types of immigrant participation (Introduction 1985), involvement in ethnic immigrant organizations is one of the most important (Stoll 2001, Rex et al. 1987). The question of the relevance of immigrant organizations is generally analyzed according to two different approaches (Vermeulen 2006). The first approach focuses on the role of organizations in the life of immigrant communities. The second approach pays more attention to the integration of immigrants into host societies. The problem of representation of immigrants interests lies however somewhere in between those two approaches, because this function of immigrant organization is implemented in interaction between the immigrant group and host society. This is the reason why the problem of conditions of the relevance and situation of immigrant organizations should be analyzed in context of multiple factors.

The first factor is the characteristics of the immigrant population, as well as the immigration process. The existence of ethnic conflict (Olzak, West 1991), expected functions of immigrant organizations that usually change over time (Jones-Corea 1998), as well as the cohesion of the immigrant group (Erdmans 1995), may all to a great degree influence the process of the immigrant organization, the condition of immigrant organizations, and their capabilities.

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1 The data presented in this paper come from my research project entitled “Polish nongovernmental organizations in Germany”, funded by the Polish-German Cooperation Foundation. This study, conducted in 2008–2009, was based on two research techniques: in-depth interviews with the leaders of the most important Polish immigrant organizations, and a postal survey of organizations. Of about 100 Polish organizations in Germany, 42 took part in the survey research, and 8 organization leaders were interviewed.
The second factor is the policy of the host country authorities towards immigrant organizations. This is often described in terms of the political opportunity structure (Koopmans 2004), which can affect immigrant organizations. However this influence does not have to be direct (Schrover, Vermeulen 2005).

Another important factor is the influence of the sending country especially, its cultural and social tradition as it affects organizational activity (Panayi 1995). It is also worth remembering that immigrant organizations are often financially and politically supported by the authorities of the sending country (Bonacich 1972). This component becomes even more important when we take into consideration the growing transnational character of contemporary immigration. Organizations often build active relationships with the sending country (Schiller et al. 1995) which can both stimulate and restrict their effectiveness in representing the interests of immigrants (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003).

The last factor is the international relations between the authorities of the host and the sending countries. Although immigration processes are usually analysed as a part of international relations (Cornelius, Rosenblum 2005), the existence of immigrant and ethnic minority issues as a part of the political interactions between two countries is usually underestimated. They can however be of great importance when it comes to explain the position of immigrant organizations in the host society, and their capabilities of acting in the defence of immigrant interests (Wolff-Powęska, Schulz 2000).

Each of these conditions may bring certain constraints and facilities that may condition the effectiveness of immigrant organizations. However since my paper will concentrate on the transnational perspective, I will only describe the last three factors. I argue that in the case of Polish organizations in Germany, the transnationalism of migrant organizations is in fact a trap which to some extent complicates their situation and hinders their effectiveness.

**Poles and Polish organizations in Germany**

Polish migration to Germany has been ongoing for about two hundred years, occurring in a number of waves. For this reason, Poles in Germany are very heterogeneous group. Individuals vary by legal status (some have Polish citizenship, some German, some both, while some are stateless), material situation, and the strength of their relationship with Poland and with Polish identity.
The history of Polish migration to Germany has been mostly conditioned by the relative situations of these neighbouring countries—with the relatively economically and politically strong neighbour as the host country, and the weaker neighbour as the source country—but also by their uneasy historical relations.

Poles are one of the largest immigrant and ethnic groups in Germany. According to data from Mikrozensus 2007 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2007), citizens of Poland living in Germany constitute the third most populous group of foreigners in the Federal Republic of Germany, counting 289,000 people (after 1,180,000 Turks, and 410,000 Italians). Other element of the Polish group are Poles naturalized in Germany (about 240,000), and about 100,000 Polish immigrants in the second and subsequent generations with German citizenship. Apart from these, there is also a significant group of resettled people (Aussiedler), who have strong links with Poland, the Polish language, and Polish culture, and the descendants of the prewar Polish national minority in Germany, whose number is hard to estimate. The size of the Polish and Polish-speaking group in Germany is assessed at about 1.5 or 2 million people. However this high number is not necessarily reflected by the status of the Polish group in German society.

While Polish migration to Germany has been continued for about two hundred years, occurring in a number of waves, the process of organizing the Polish diaspora in Germany started only in 1877 with the establishment of the Jedność Society (Towarzystwo „Jedność”). As Janusz (2001: 22) states, “over the next few years in western Germany, about one hundred such organizations were created”. After the end of the First World War, the process of organizing the Polish diaspora began to intensify. This activization expressed itself mostly in the form of unification processes. On August 27, 1922, the Association of Poles in Germany (Związek Polaków w Niemczech) was established with 45,000 members (Kostrzewa 2005: 18), which gave the Association great power. Janusz (2001: 25) also observes that the Association of Poles in Germany played a vital role in creating a cooperative platform between minorities in Germany.

After the Second World War, the Polish movement began to be more heterogenic, because each wave of immigration tended to create its own organizations, which led to conflicts and weakness. In the 90s, a process of unification began, resulting in the creation in 1998 of the Assembly of Polish Organizations (Konwent Organizacji Polskich w Niemczech) in Germany by five umbrella organizations—the Rodło Association of Poles in Germany, the
Zgoda Association of Poles in Germany, the Congress of German Polonia (Kongres Polonii Niemieckiej), the Polish Council in Germany (Polska Rada w Niemczech), and the Catholic Centre for the Propagation of Culture, Tradition, and the Polish Language (Katolickie Centrum Krzewienia Kultury, Tradycji i Języka Polskiego)—as the representative of the whole Polish movement in Germany. Although this structure is not registered, and the Rodło Association no longer participates, it is the most representative organization of Poles in Germany.

As my research on the situation of Polish organizations shows, the Polish movement is in bad condition mostly because both the human and material resources available for Polish organizations are limited (Nowosielski 2010). Most of the associations administer an annual budget no larger than 5,000 euros. More than half have no material assets, no office, and no office equipment. Of the forty-two organizations investigated, twenty-seven did not employ any form of staff. Associations are mostly membership-oriented, not goal-oriented. Additionally there is an overbalance of organizations focused on the execution of expressive, cultural functions, while the instrumental associations focused on, e.g. advocacy or social help, are limited in number. As a consequence of these conditions, the potential of the organizations does not seem to be great.

**German policy towards Polish immigrant organizations**

Since the Second World War, Poles have lost their national minority status in Germany, a status which would entitle them to special prerogatives, as is the case with the Schleswig Danes, Frisians, Sorbs, as well as with the Sinti and Roma. Poles in Germany are treated as any other ethnic or immigrant group. German policy towards immigrants and their organizations can be described as “neutral”, which means that the Federal Republic of Germany is a democratic country that complies with the standards of law-observing states and, for example, guarantees the right to establish ethnic and immigrant associations, and

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2 This means that they are maintained by members alone, which usually gives rise to several problems. The first such problem is the lack of efficiency: in most cases, members are professionally active people who are able to devote only their free time to the organization’s activities. No matter how great their devotion may be, their capabilities are limited. The second problem comes from the lack of professionalism: contemporary organizations are often professionalized—which on one hand brings serious threats (such as the threat of ignoring the organization’s mission or of losing the spirit of civil society)—but on the other hand it permits the further development of the organization. Professional staff is more effective in fundraising, in maintaining the organization’s image, and in dealing with external contacts.

3 Unlike the Weimar Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany recognizes as ethnic minorities only those ethnic groups that are connected with a certain territory within the German state. The state also does not recognize the so-called new minorities—new migrants without German citizenship. As a result, only four ethnic groups are so recognized: the Schleswig Danes, Frisians, Sorbs, together with the Sinti and Roma (Janusz 2000).
There are possibilities for immigrants to participate in the social and political spheres, e.g. through the medium of such institutions as the immigrant councils (Migrationsbeiräte), integration councils (Integrationsbeiräte) and foreigner councils (Ausländerbeiräte) that operate at different levels of authority. Apart from these, there is also the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration), who is responsible for integration policy and contact with both immigrant organizations and with its counterparts (who operate under different names and are variously located in the administrative structure) in each Land (state) of the Federal Republic.

At the same time, this “neutrality” refers to the fact that although the Federal Republic of Germany offers immigrants a certain ability to participate in the German public sphere, it does not follow that they actively support the immigrants. Eva Østergaard-Nielsen (2003: 3) calls the German incorporation regime one of “the most exclusive in Europe”. The above-mentioned councils play only a consultative role. In only some of the federal Länder does their composition come from free election; in other cases it is forced. The participation of immigrant and ethnic groups in mainstream German politics is rather limited. Immigrants and their descendents rarely take exposed political positions—even at the local level. The concern of German political parties in representing the interests of immigrants is also inconsiderable. With the exception of EU citizen who may vote in local elections, immigrants not possessing German citizenship are not able to vote.

In the case of immigrant and ethnic organizations, the “neutral” German policy means that not only is there a lack of proactive policies aimed at developing these organization, but neither is any advantage taken of their potential in carrying out integration policy. Zrinščak (2009) notices that this is especially visible in the case of organizations focused on social help. Although Germany is widely known as a country of very well developed third-sector organizations engaged in social help and generously financed by the state (Spiegelhalter 1990, Zimmer, 2000: 34), according to the subsidiarity principle (Nell-Breuning, 1976) this does not apply to immigrant social work organizations. Tasks of care for immigrants are granted to specialized German organizations rather than to “foreign” organizations. Lack of funding

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4 For an evaluation of German integration policy, see the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPI).
causes underdevelopment of immigrant social help organizations in Germany, in comparison with other western countries and immigration regimes.\(^5\)

Relations between Polish organizations and the German public administration at various levels is an obvious expression of the “neutrality” policy. Very few Polish organizations state that they have any cooperation with German authorities of any level. Only seven of the forty-two organizations investigated here undertake regular cooperation with German public administration offices at the federal level, while sixteen do so sporadically. The scope and range of this cooperation varies depending on the growth, importance, and specialization of the organization. The Assembly of Polish Organizations in Germany maintains the most intensive contact with German authorities, especially with the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (*Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien*, BKM). Smaller and more specialized organizations cooperate (although usually not very intensively) with officials of the federal ministries that correspond with their activities.

It has to be underlined that in most cases, the cooperation between Polish organizations and German authorities at the federal level is limited to applications for funding. No evidence was found of any cooperation based on consultations about German policies concerning Poles in the Federal Republic of Germany. Therefore associations seem to be treated as the objects and not the subjects of policies, and the relations between the organizations and the federal government is reduced to the allocation of limited financial resources.

An example of such a non-partnership relation in dialogue with Polish organizations was the 2006 National Integration Summit (*Nationale Integrationsgipfel*), which was aimed at preparing an integration plan—a tool for improving the situation of immigrants in Germany. None of the Polish umbrella organizations were invited to the Summit.

*I will describe it with the example of the National Integration Summit. We were not invited at all […] In 2006 [...] was called first. We were not invited. We wrote a letter ourselves […]. After a long time, there was nothing. Then the vice-minister of the Interior answered that there were two Polish organizations represented, the Polish Social Council (Polska Rada Społeczna) here from Berlin,*

\(^5\) This also finds expression in the situation of Polish organizations in Germany, in that there exists only one such organization.
and there was another organization, also from Berlin, incorporated in the women's group […]. Well ok, they could have informed us that there are such organizations, and then we could have submitted our problems to them or something, so that would inform us openly (RK5)

The failure to invite the biggest Polish umbrella organizations may be interpreted as evidence of the fact that Polish organizations are perceived as marginal, and that they are being treated as objects, not subjects, of policy. Apart from that, the Assembly of Polish Organizations in Germany is not officially recognized by the German authorities as the representative of the Polish movement, although such recognition has been made by the Polish government.

The characteristic feature of the relations of the Polish organizations with the German public administration at the federal level is the fact that the Polish organization are in a sense forced to maintain contact predominantly with the BKM—an institution that, apart from a relatively small fund dedicated to Polish organizations—does not have any direct influence on shaping the situation of either Polish organization, or of Poles in Germany. There is no information that any of the researched institutions had contact with German offices such as the Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration, or the Federal Commissioner for Resettlers and National Minorities (Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für Aussiedlerfragen und nationale Minderheiten). Therefore one can conclude that the desiderata of Polish organizations as regards immigrant and ethnic minority issues are usually addressed to a non-decision-making institution. As a result, even if the Polish organizations had enough negotiation power, they would not able to actively influence German policies towards Polish and Polish-speaking groups.

[Organization of the Polish Year] was done in cooperation with the BKM and the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And I think that this German MFA… I don’t know how is it now, but […] then it looked like these people had a different attitude, that those people care more for becoming closer to Poland than the BKM, which is more concentrated on supporting other things (CK3)

Polish policy towards diaspora organizations in Germany

The size of the Polish diaspora—also referred to as Polonia—is estimated to be between 17 and 35 million people. Poles scattered all over the world maintain ties with their
homeland to different degrees. The Polish state also maintains different degrees of contact with different Polish, and supports their activities with unequal engagement.

The main institutions that deal with the maintenance of relations with and financing of the Polish diaspora are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (especially the Department of Cooperation with the Polish Diaspora as well as Polish missions abroad) and the upper house of the Polish parliament, the Senate. To a lesser degree Poles living abroad are the concern of other institutions, e.g. the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, the Ministry of Economy, etc. Apart from that, there are Polish nongovernmental organizations dedicated to the support of Polonia, such as the Polish Community Association (Wspólnota Polska), the Assistance to Poles in the East Foundation (Pomoc Polakom na Wschodzie), and the Semper Polonia Foundation (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009).

Until recently, the priority of the so-called Polonia policy of the Polish state has the situation of Poles in the east, i.e. Poles living in the territories of the former Soviet Union. Most funding and organizational effort is devoted to their assistance (often humanitarian) and the sustaining of their Polish identity. Polonia in western countries and the organizations connected to it are usually perceived as less needy, and they therefore receive less attention and funding.

Nevertheless Polish organizations in Germany have very well developed contacts with the Polish public administration—especially with the Polish diplomatic missions. Twenty-five of the forty-two investigated organizations have regular cooperation with an embassy or consulate, while twelve of them said they had sporadic contact, and only two stated that they have no relations with Polish missions.

In many cases these relations between the organizations and the missions—although regular—are reduced to contacts at various meetings and ceremonies.

Well, there is contact in the sense that we are invited to ceremonies (CK3)

The consulate is present at all the meetings that are organized […]. It invites us in turn to meetings and ceremonies. So there is this exchange, this everyday contact (CK3)
More often, the cooperation between Polish organizations and Polish missions is more intensive. Firstly, the embassy and consulates support the organizations’ activities. This assistance may be financial—usually relatively small, but for many organizations, as one of their few regular funding sources, it is important.

I must say that we have very fine contact with the consulate in Cologne. Such good [...] working contact. [It] consists of their support for our magazine, and they even give us from time to time grants for printing it (PKK2)

The support of Polish missions can also be nonfinancial, which usually means lending the mission’s space to the organizations.

The second type of cooperation which was quite often mentioned by the investigated organizations, are consultations concerning the situation of Poles and their organizations. It must be underlined, however, that opinions on these consultations are ambiguous. Although such talks occur, they are not very regular, and do not necessary influence the strategy of Polish missions.

From time to time we meet with the ambassador to talk about current matters and to look at what has been done and what is to be done [...]. But instead I would see a need for closer cooperation, on the principle that we are going hand in hand, we are deciding on some kind of tactic of acting with the German side. In this way we can keep the German side in check (CK3)

Far fewer organizations have contact with governmental offices in Poland. Among forty-two investigated organizations, there were seven which stated that they have regular contact with the Polish government and its offices, and twelve which stated that such cooperation was sporadic. In most cases the governmental institutions involved were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Senate.

The accounts of the relations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the organizations appear in interviews with leaders of the umbrella organizations. Associations that are members of the Assembly of Polish Organizations in Germany often underline that the most important factor that affects their relation with the Ministry is the fact that the Assembly is recognized by the ministry as a the representing the entire Polish movement in Germany. The Assembly organizations believe that their official relations with the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs raises the prestige and importance of the Assembly, a fact which they believe also has significance in their relations with the German public administration.

*It is a giant success that something like the Assembly of Polish Organizations in Germany has been established [...]. And that it was noticed [...]. Thanks to that [...] there is a path of communication with Polish politics, because there were meetings with the president, the one and the other [...] and there were meetings at different levels and structures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Polish side promotes it (CK3)*

Apart from that, the ministry acts as a kind of relay of the Polish organizations’ needs. The demands of the organizations are passed on to ministry officials, which in some cases can communicate them to the proper German authorities.

*The Assembly [...] started to bring to light that this is not being implemented [...] and started to complain loudly, but through the Polish side [...] so we are beginning to shout and give information to the Polish side, and then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tells the Germans that they do not like this, and that, and this [...] And that is why I think that it is so good (CK3)*

There are also critical remarks aimed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In most cases they refer to the level of commitment of the Ministry to the concerns of Poles in Germany, which is considered insufficient and is judged not to yield tangible results. Aside from that, in the opinion of some of the organizations’ leaders, the Ministry does not appreciate or take advantage of the potential of Polish associations in Germany. This applies to the more significant affairs of Poles in Germany, and the participation of organizations in the development and implementation of Polish policy towards this group, as well as to shaping Polish-German relations in general. This lack of interest in making use of the organizations has a cause, according to some them, in the absence of a long-term strategy for the German Polonia, and in insufficient communication between the organizations and the ministry officials.

*I believe that [...] the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not make use of Polish organizations. And in general I think that the mentality in Poland is that they know everything better. And I believe it’s a total, giant mistake of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they see no possibility of taking advantage of the experience*
of the people that are acting here, that have done things, and who in different spheres of life have achieved success... of taking advantage of them. In my opinion this is all a mess, and nothing is being done. [...] It means there is no policy; in my opinion the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no policy towards Polonia (CK3)

This lack of strategy manifests also in the frequent changes in both tactics and in the personnel of Polish missions and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, resulting from political changes after each election. These changes negatively influence the cooperation between the organizations and the Polish public administration.

One of the pains of the [Polish government’s] cooperation with Polonia is the lack of continuity. For years I have encouraged the Polish political authorities to create a nonparty structure that would deal with affairs of Poles all over the world, and that would be free of being leftwing, or rightwing, or “Samoobrona” or whatever, but would just be itself... and would have a simple aim: contact, information, recognition and help for Poles that live outside the country. Just the way the Germans have it (M KK1)

The Senate is mentioned in the statements of organization leaders in a more positive light. The representatives of the Senate—especially those who deal regularly with Polonia—have better knowledge about the problems of Poles in Germany than do other politicians in Poland. However the political power of the Senate both in the context of Polish policy towards German Polonia and in the context of relations with the proper German authorities is limited. Mostly it provides financial resources that can be used to support organizations.

The Senate has no such political fixation [...] And that’s the problem. The Senate contends for us, the Senate is more on our side [...]. The Senate has money, so in this way it supports us, in a way. But they do not have the power of implementation here like the Sejm6 has, and the Sejm has more influence on governmental business, and indeed they could do more (RK5)

Polish-German relations

6 The lower house of the Polish parliament.
The situation of Poles in Germany and their organizations is additionally complicated by the fact that to some extent it is entangled in bilateral Polish-German relations. On one hand this has some positive consequences. The Federal Republic of Germany is one of sixteen countries which Poland has signed treaties with—treaties that contain guarantees of rights for Polish minorities and groups. The Polish-German Treaty on Good Neighbourliness, Friendship, and Cooperation was signed on the June 17, 1991 (Polish-German Treaty 1991). Although the German government did not recognize Poles as an ethnic minority in the way that Poland recognized ethnic Germans living in Poland, the Treaty stated that actions should be taken by the German government to protect and support the ethnic identity of German citizens of Polish origin. Apart from that, the Polish group should have their right to political representation in the issues that concern them guaranteed. There seems to be a lack of symmetry between their situation and that of the German minority in Poland, and a somewhat blurry category referred to in the Treaty as “persons having German nationality in the Federal Republic of Germany who are of Polish origin or affirm that they belong to the community of Polish language, culture, or tradition”. On one hand this could have a positive effect on the situation of Poles in Germany, because the category is very broad and incorporates not only ethnic Poles but also those ethnic Germans (mostly Aussiedler) who speak Polish and have close contact with Polish culture. On the other hand, the lack of minority status means that the special rights of Poles in Germany are only guaranteed by the Treaty, and not by German law. Apart from that, it must be noticed that speaking about the rights of “persons in the Federal Republic of Germany” means speaking about individual rights, rather than group rights. Despite the differences in the name and definition, the rights of these two groups—the German minority and the Polish-language group in Germany—should be symmetrical, according to the Copenhagen Declaration of the CSCE of June 29, 1990.

Nevertheless one can regard the situation of Poles in Germany as privileged in comparison with other groups not recognized by the German authorities as national minorities. This positive discrimination should express itself as support for Polish organizations’ activities, for the development of teaching the Polish language as a mother

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7 According to identical letters that the Polish and German Foreign Affairs Ministers exchanged on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty, the German side is also committed to ensure that Poles who are not German citizens but who live Germany will also able “to a great extent” benefit from the rights and options set out in Articles 20 and 21 of the Treaty (Graś 2000: 180).

8 Persons having Polish nationality who are of German origin or who affirm that they belong to the community of German language, culture, or tradition.
tongue, and for access to media. An example of such German activities is the fund dedicated to Polish organizations and managed by the BKM,\textsuperscript{9} of about 300,000 Euros a year.

It must be underlined that both the Polish organizations and the Polish government assert that the execution of the Treaty in the context of Poles in Germany is insufficient and unsymmetrical. The most undeveloped sphere is the teaching of the Polish language as a mother tongue, which is conducted only in very few Länders of the federation\textsuperscript{10} (and mainly in North Rhine-Westphalia). Aside from that, the BKM fund is relatively small and covers only the costs of cultural projects. The funding of indirect costs, such as office rental, personnel, etc. is ineligible.

One of the biggest problems with the execution of the Treaty is the division of powers in the Federal Republic of Germany. The federal structure of the German state means that matters of culture and education lie in the competences of particular Länders of the federation.

\textit{With the execution of the Treaty the Germans did a simple thing, because to sum it up, matters of culture, education, and basically everything that’s the subject of this treaty lies in the competence of the Länder. If it concerns us... it’s all in the competence of the Länder (RK5)}

In many cases this means that Polish organizations are in fact treated like any other ethic or immigrant organizations. There are no separate agreements between Poland and the Länder of the federation, and most of them anyway do not have enough knowledge of the Treaty agreement, or else show no will to execute it.

\textit{So at the beginning they appointed these commissioners, and they were all set up differently. Some of them meant something; the others meant nothing [...]. It was very confusing. [...] We had a meeting with some of these people, and they did not really know what the Treaty is (RK5)}

\textit{Well, the Land treats us like any other nation, like the Turks or the Russians (PKK2)}

\textsuperscript{9} Which explains why Polish organizations maintain relations mostly with this German office.

\textsuperscript{10} According to some of the Polish organizations, the teaching of Polish as a mother tongue reaches about 7,000 children in Germany, and the estimated amount of money available to fund this is about 1.5 million euro. At the same time, about 32,000 children of German national minority (which constitutes about 147,000 people) in Poland study German as a mother tongue. The Polish Ministry of National Education devotes about 15 million euro to this purpose (Małoszyński 2010).
The organizations are not sure how to solve this problem of the division of powers. There are some pragmatic proposals for “dealing with” particular Ländere of the federation.

*We should talk with the Länder, and when we’ve won over three Länder then we’ll have all of Germany. These three Länder are North Rhine-Westphalia, with 18 million inhabitants; Bavaria, with 12 million inhabitants; and Baden-Württemberg, with 10 million inhabitants. The rest will go in a stampede or else are unimportant (NON4)*

Others notice that the Treaty agreements are also obligatory for the Länder of the federation, and so the Polish government should aim to tackling the competence problem with German authorities.

*The Polish government* should sign no agreements with the Länder, because ... the Treaty was confirmed by the Bundesrat, which is the house consisting of the representatives of a particular Land [...] So it should not accept the logic... because if we accept the logic of the German side [we have to] to run around to all the Länder and talk separately with them. This is a matter for the federal government, the determination of the officials, and their powers of negotiation (RK5)

The Polish-German Treaty, together with the tradition of the Polish national minority in Germany—which still exists not only in the institutional continuity of some of the Polish organizations, but also in the consciousness of some Polish movement activists—complicates the perception of the social location of Poles in the German ethnospace. Some Poles want to distinguish themselves from other immigrant groups (although the overwhelming majority of them have their own immigration experiences), and some of the Polish organizations want to distinguish themselves from other immigrant associations.

*We wouldn’t like to, as they say, be pushed [...] into this bag of foreign organizations, I mean organizations of foreigners, you know. We are trying... to be a German organization, established according to German law, and involving people that speak Polish, right? I mean among other things, isn’t that what it is? But it’s also German, of course, isn’t it? [...] So we don’t want, as they say, to act like these immigrants, right? Because it all seems of course nice and beautiful, but*
This attitude results in very poorly developed cooperation with other ethnic and immigrant organizations. Only twelve of the forty-two investigated organizations have regular cooperation with such associations, while thirteen state that they maintain contact with them only sporadically. Apart from that, Polish organizations are reluctant to applying for funds intended for immigrants. As previously observed, none of the Polish umbrella organizations have contact with the Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration. This isolation further undermines the already bad situation of the Polish organizations.

At the same time the entanglement of German Polonia issues with bilateral Polish-German relations can cause their situation to in some cases become the object of political manipulation. Taking into consideration the institutional weakness of the Polish group, the organizations often need the support of Polish diplomacy in their relations with the German authorities. Although this is understandable, it must be underlined that such support may to a greater degree weaken the position of Polish organizations. This results from the fact that the issues of Poles in Germany are becoming one of many matters in Polish-German relations, and undoubtedly not the most important. Although these relations are generally smooth or (depending on political fluctuations) even warm, there are many unresolved points. Some have strong historic backgrounds, like the issue of the “Displaced” (Vertriebene), and the politics of the Federation of the Displaced (Bund der Vertriebenen). Some issues are more current in origin, such as the problem of the Nord Stream pipeline. These problematic issues may seem to be more important than, for example, monitoring the execution of the Treaty. Apart from that, there have been situations when in the name of politically correct Polish-German reconciliation, some of the problems of Poles in Germany have not been raised during diplomatic talks. Organizations seem to have noticed this problem.

This policy [of the German authorities towards Poles in Germany] is at the determination of the Polish government. The Polish government is, as they say… I had this feeling anyway that the Polish government was absolutely not interested in it, or maybe—it was interested, but there […] was no determination to, as they say, to put pressure on the German side. And since the Germans noticed that there

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11 For a catalogue of issues significant in Polish-German relations, see Wójcicki and Czachur (2009).
is no pressure, so they have been doing what they wanted to do, right? That’s the principle (LA9)

Conclusions

The concept of transnationalism is intended to express the situation of migrants and their institutions, such as associations, that are stretched between two countries and two societies. In many cases relations with the sending country, with the political and economic influence of the migrants, can bring about a strengthening or improvement in the situation of the migrants in the receiving country. However, as I have attempted to show by the example of Polish organizations in Germany, there are cases in which transnationalization may have as a consequence the limiting rather than the strengthening, and the degradation rather than the improvement, of IO situations.

In the case of Polish organizations in Germany, it is quite visible that the policy of the receiving country towards immigration and IOs, and the diaspora policy of the sending country, as well as the bilateral relations between the sending and receiving country may together constitute a combination that has a strong negative effect on the functioning of the whole Polish movement. Entanglement in the sometimes uneasy Polish-German relations, political dependence on Polish diplomacy (which may also be perceived as not so robust) caused by institutional weakness of Polish organizations, all cause that in many cases they become even weaker in contact with the “neutral” German integration policy. This stretching is visible not only at the level of actions taken up by the organizations, but also at the level of consciousness of their leaders. Dependence on Polish diplomacy is mixed with a lack of trust which greatly complicated dialogue with the Polish institutions that are responsible for relations with the diaspora. Strong feelings of difference between Poles and other migrant groups causes isolation and the further reduction of political and social power. The groups’ relations with the German authorities are additionally conditioned by the feelings of being a victim of constant deception when evaluating the execution of the Treaty. This all produces an impression of falling into the “trap of transnationalism”.

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