

Separate Taps and Red Brick Houses: On Adaptation of Polish Migrants in the UK

Renata SEREDYŃSKA-ABOU EID

School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies, University of Nottingham

Nottingham, United Kingdom

e-mail: renata.eid@nottingham.ac.uk

Abstract

The 2004 enlargement of the European Union resulted in a massive migration from Poland to the United Kingdom (UK). Polish migrants made conscious decisions to move to a new culture and often unknown environment for multiple reasons. Issues such as adaptation, lifestyle and cultural translation have become increasingly more important in cultural and migration studies. As for migrants, experiencing different architectural styles and interior designs can be a disharmonizing experience that may evoke numerous identity questions.

This paper focuses on the analysis of one aspect of the results of a doctoral project *Translating Cultures – Adapting Lives* conducted among Polish post-2004 first-generation migrants in the East Midlands, UK. The host culture and its interpretation for the purposes of adaptation to the new environment and the confrontation of expectations and reality have been researched in the light of challenges of social integration from migrants' perspective. Local architecture, certain urban and interior design solutions seem to simultaneously amaze and appall migrants of the Polish decent. Observations and remarks collected in this qualitative study seem to suggest that while British political and economic liberty is appreciated by Poles, their Polish sense of beauty in architecture and interior design is at odds with local styles. Hence, it is intriguing to research how differences in taste contribute to and shape migrants' perception of and adaptation to their new environment.

Keywords: migration, cultural adaptation, design