

## A R T Y K U Ł Y I R O Z P R A W Y

*NATALIA BLOCH**University of Warsaw**Adam Mickiewicz University*ENGAGED ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE NEED FOR EMPATHY:  
ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS  
IN THE FACE OF THE SO-CALLED REFUGEE CRISIS

In this paper I wish to focus not so much on proving that the task of the anthropologist is to get engaged as on attempting to answer the question as to how we can do so.<sup>1</sup> As an anthropologist dealing academically with the geographic mobility of people, including as refugees and migrants, I focus on the phenomenon of intensified refugee and migration processes in the years 2015–2017, which in public debate were labelled with the term “refugee/migration crisis”. It triggered a wave of nationalist intensification, xenophobia and Islamophobia (cf. Buchowski 2016; Dagi 2018; Pustolnicescu 2016), which in the Polish context was above all discursive in character, since — despite preliminary declarations — the Polish government did not join the solidarity programme for the resettlement of asylum seekers among the countries of the European Union. The anti-refugee, anti-immigrant and Islamophobic discourse was exploited in the political fighting, all the more so since the beginning of the phenomenon coincided with parliamentary elections in Poland (Gigitashvili, Sidło 2019: 5–6). Ultimately such discourse proved effective (CBOS 2017) —and in the October 2015 elections the conservative right-wing won on

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<sup>1</sup> However, I am aware of the problematic nature of this involvement, as I write about elsewhere (Bloch 2015).

a wave of fear before an “invasion of Islamic hordes” flooding European (meaning Christian) civilisation, bringing with them disease and a “social jihad” (Bertram, Jędrzejek 2015). The very term given to the refugee and migration phenomena in the years 2015–2017 bore connotations of a state of emergency, and as such was expected to evoke fear—which in turn was an effective tool of social engineering.<sup>2</sup> After all, the feeling—generated by politicians and the media—that all asylum seekers and migrants from the poor Global South are standing at the gates of Europe and threatening our prosperity was not reflected at all in the numbers, and what we were dealing with was more a crisis of our own, European values than a “refugee/migration crisis” (Buchowski 2017: 521).

The anthropological interventions that I present in this paper, and which I had the opportunity to create or co-create, were measures aimed at impacting the shape of public debate regarding refugees and migrants. They were carried out under the auspices or with the participation of the Centre for Migration Studies functioning at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Centrum Badań Migracyjnych UAM—CeBaM AMU), in collaboration with the so-called social environment. Although the CeBaM AMU is an interdisciplinary university facility, most of the researchers there are anthropologists. The said measures were: (1) the project “We’re all migrants. (Re)covering migrant memory”, comprising an exhibition, educational programme and research in the field, which led to me wanting to shift away from reducing the migrant/refugee figure to the category of Other, and to talk about us as migrants, restore the memory of our own migration history; (2) the social campaign “Adopt a lifejacket”, in which lifejackets such as those worn by refugees when crossing the sea were placed in public urban space, the purpose being to evoke discussion about the absence of actual refugees among us; and (3) the campaign “Gallery without a home” addressed to primary school pupils, who during a series of workshops on refugees prepared illustrated and sound postcards for children housed in camps in Serbia, Greece and Italy (the postcards then making up a virtual and mobile gallery).

#### SEDENTARISM AND OTHERNESS

When we established the Centre for Migration Studies at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in 2009, we strived in vain to get the

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. the special edition of the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, ‘The Mediatization and Politicization of the Refugee Crisis in Europe,’ vol. 16 (1–2), (2018).

media and local authorities interested in the topic of migration. The year 2015 radically changed these relations, and suddenly we were being approached practically every day with requests for a speedy comment regarding whether Poland should accept refugees, whether refugees spread disease, and why they have smartphones. To this very day I recall the descent of a Polsat television production truck on the small locality near Poznań where my parents live, and where I was spending the weekend with my son of a few months old; all of the neighbours poured out onto the street to see what was going on. I have also been invited on numerous occasions to take part in debates, discussion panels, conversations or film screenings. Being experienced in research in Tibetan refugee camps and among seasonal migrants working in the informal tourist sector in India, as well as numerous projects concerning immigration to western Poland, I strived to present a different perspective—anthropological, non-sedentary, and post-colonial—of migration and refugee phenomena.

I did so because there were two issues in the public debate that had then flared up that particularly irritated me. Above all, the sedentary perspective, which had been accepted as natural (cf. Malkki 1992; Ahmed *et al.* 2003; Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013).<sup>3</sup> In this perspective, settledness or being assigned to a place is treated as the norm, which causes displacement—resulting from refugeehood or migration—to constitute a deviation from the norm, a peculiar anomaly, while the refugee/migrant comes across as a “matter out of place” as defined by Mary Douglas (1966). The vector of mobility is of course important here: a mobile Other arrives from a world perceived as poor, backwards and frequently torn by armed conflict, to the satiated “Global North.” Such a refugee/migrant constitutes a threat to our territorially-understood culture and its values, to our prosperity, and ultimately to our security. Fear of the above was stoked in public debate by politicians, but also frequently, and unthinkingly, by many journalists and even “experts” from the world of science — and despite these images having no confirmation in numbers: the vast majority of refugees in the world are taken in by countries of the so-called Global South (Tibetan refugees live in India; Afghans in Pakistan; Palestinians in Jordan, etc.). According to a report by the UNHCR, of the first six countries accepting refugees in the year 2014, not one was of the so-called Global North, not to mention Europe itself. In fact, the said six were Turkey and Pakistan (each country with over 1.5m refugees), Lebanon (which, despite

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<sup>3</sup> My attention focuses on this issue in research project no. 2016/20/S/HS3/00085 financed by the National Science Centre (cf. e.g. Bloch 2018; 2020).

having a population of barely 5m itself, took in over one million escapees from Syria, including Palestinian refugees who had previously been taken in by Syria), Iran (with 1m refugees), and Ethiopia and Jordan (each with over 600,000 refugees). In total, 86% of all refugees found shelter in so-called developing countries—as defined by the UNHCR (2015: 2). What is more, according to the latest report from 2019 this has fallen by barely 2%, mainly due to Germany’s policy of accepting refugees. As a result the world’s most highly developed countries provide shelter for 16% of refugees on a global scale, whilst 1 in 3 of all refugees live in countries classed among the poorest—since four in five refugees find shelter in countries neighbouring their countries of origin (UNHCR 2019: 2–3).

This incompatibility of the statistics and the narratives to appear in the countries of the European Union (including in Poland) in the face of the so-called “crisis”—as well as the very terminology—shows how deeply-rooted in our minds is the discourse of refugees and economic migrants from the non-European world straining at “fortress Europe.” And it is here that the second predominant feature of that debate reveals itself, namely the reducing of the figure of the refugee/migrant to the category of the Other—alien in essence, geographically separated, and of doubtful morals. The narratives that have dominated in the media and in remarks by politicians since 2015 have not only treated the notions of refugee and migrant as synonymous. Very quickly the refugee/migrant was to become identified with the non-European Other, or ultimately a Muslim. As if we had forgotten how often we ourselves had been migrants and refugees in our own stormy history. As if we had forgotten that it was precisely European refugees who were the direct cause of the establishing of an international system for protecting refugees—with the right to asylum as a human right entered in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the 1951 Refugee Convention signed in Geneva, and the institution of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It was the mass-scale European refugee experience after World War II, which forced 30 million people to vacate their homes, of whom 11 million survived but many had nowhere to return to, that created the concept of refugee as understood today.

#### THE FRUSTRATION OF AN EXPERT AND THE NEED FOR EMPATHY

In my role as an expert I soon began to feel frustrated. Those who would come to debate were usually already convinced anyway, while the short television and radio spots or the trimmed comments in the press did not provide the space for nuanced explanations. I remember a lengthy

conversation with a reporter from one of the more popular radio stations, during which I explained to her what the “poverty trap” is in migration theories—that in order to migrate, especially when larger distances are involved, one has to have a certain minimum social and economic capital. I was dumbfounded to hear just one fragment of a sentence from this entire explanation in the news: “The poorest people don’t migrate”. Which of course questioned the authenticity of the refugees, who in our minds had to be poor (despite refugee being a political category, and not economic; cf. Bloch 2019). Apart from that, it was constantly action only on a level of knowledge and facts—and taken by a number of social players disconcerted by the brutalisation of discourse in the era of post-truth (see, inter alia, the daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* guide under the auspices of Poland’s Office for Foreigners, entitled *Więcej wiedzy, mniej strachu* [lit.: *More knowledge, less fear*], or the excellent web portal [uchodzcy.info](http://uchodzcy.info)). Yet I felt that having just “only the dry facts, the definitions, and numbers”, as the *Gazeta Wyborcza* described its guide,<sup>4</sup> was insufficient, as they still talked of the refugee/migrant as of the Other. I then reached the conclusion—inspired by the affective turn in anthropology, and the demand for co-experience (cf. e.g. Leavitt 2009; Stewart 2007)—that cognition by reason is an insufficient tool, that work is needed here on the category of empathy as the capacity to imagine oneself in the position of another person (cf. the empathic turn called for as a tool of cognition and shared feeling from the start of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—in anthropology: Hollan, Throop 2011; Hollan 2014; and more broadly: Cuff, Brown, Taylor, Howat 2016). After all, engaged anthropology is not only about diagnosing problems, but also about action to change the status quo in order to limit areas of discrimination, exclusion, and social injustice. In the meantime, I was becoming increasingly dismayed by the radicalisation of public debate, and the ever increasing dehumanisation and demonising of refugees and migrants. I felt the need to get involved in anthropological interventional measures that would possess the potential for evoking within us a sensibility and solidarity with other people. The question was: how could I do that?

As I see it, measures setting in motion a mechanism of empathy should achieve two goals. First, they should make us ourselves aware of the contingency of our own situation—of our convictions and of our desires—as defined by Richard Rorty (1989), with the hope that it is possible to build interpersonal solidarity (after all, I could just as well have been born in

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<sup>4</sup> <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,18834127,uchodzcy-w-polsce.html> [accessed: 09.11.2019].

Aleppo). However, this postulate is not about treating one's own situation as completely contingent, or about totally rejecting difference. Rorty's "liberal ironist" is aware of the adventitious nature of her own convictions, that her vision of the world is just one of many possible visions, and not necessarily closer to reality than others—but she has the right to defend it (for example in the face of nationalism or xenophobia). This is because the ironist's solidarity is not rational action, but an undertaking that by its very nature is moral, requiring the involvement of the imagination and one's sensibility (Rorty 1989: xvi). In order to place oneself in the position of the refugee fleeing war, or a migrant escaping poverty, the "liberal ironist" does not have to accept their worldview in matters of religion or nutrition. But her goal is to aspire for moral progress by limiting suffering, since this is how Rorty (1989: 91) defines a human being: as "something that can be humiliated".<sup>5</sup> It is therefore a concept combining relativism (in the form of contingency) with universalism (understood as human suffering and the universal call to counteract it).

Solidarity as defined by Rorty is not the acknowledgement of some kind of human essence in all people; it is the capacity to discern that "traditional differences" (religious, ethnic, customary, etc.) lose their significance if we compare them to similarity where susceptibility to suffering is concerned. Then solidarity also becomes the ability to think about people totally different from ourselves as jointly creating the "us" (Rorty 1989: 192). And here we pass on smoothly to the other goal that action furthering the stimulation of empathy should achieve, meaning work on the category of closeness by emphasising what connects us to another person, by referring to a certain community of experience (for example being a parent, a pupil, a woman, or indeed a migrant), instead of the incessant reproducing of difference — which public debate feeds on (the refugee/migrant as a Syrian/Muslim/person with a different colour of skin; as the Other). Although here too it is not about erasing difference, which after all could have an opposite to counter-hegemony consequence involving the blurring of the relations of power on which this difference (political/economical/social) is founded. Just as "writing against culture", meaning rejecting culture as existence understood in terms of essence, and which delineates hierarchical divisions into "us" and "them" (Abu-Lughod 1991), so actions furthering empathy are measures against difference described with

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<sup>5</sup> Rorty is of course anthropocentric in this view, since such a definition cannot be easily stretched to embrace other, non-human beings.

the term “cultural,” but not against global differences in terms of access to resources, status or rights.

### WE'RE ALL MIGRANTS

This was what gave birth to the idea for the project “We’re all migrants. (Re)covering migrant memory” carried out in 2016; I came up with the project’s idea, was its curator, and its editor. The intention was very simple: it was about reversing the perspective, and talking about us as migrants, about (re)covering our own—blurred, repudiated, blotted out—migration memory. So what kind of memory is this about? We’re happy to remember the political migrations of the elite—of Słowacki, Mickiewicz, or Chopin. This emigration of Poles is taught as part of the school curriculum and termed the Great Emigration, while the mass-scale overseas migrations of ordinary people in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the Americas, in search of a better life, seem to have been ousted from societal awareness. In the meantime, according to estimates, from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the outbreak of the First World War, at least 2.5 million people left the Polish territories divided between the partitions for the United States, while another 100,000 went to Brazil. We were among the first residents of Central and Eastern Europe to emigrate “across the Ocean,” thereby writing an important page in the history of modern-day migration.



I wanted to provide a reminder of our migration history, and letters sent by emigrants to loved ones left back in their home country were the pretext for doing so. Some of them, sent to the Russian partition, never actually reached their addressees; they were intercepted by the tsarist censorship. Saved by a miracle from the fires of war by Professor Witold Kula during the Warsaw Uprising (beforehand they had lain for half a century in the archives), they were published by Witold Kula, Nina Asorodobraj-Kula and Marcin Kula in 1973 and later in 2012, but never reached a wide audience. I worked on these letters with my students at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at Adam Mickiewicz University (IECA AMU) during classes entitled “Migrants’ narratives.” With the painstaking method of thematic coding, we identified the leading themes reoccurring in most of the letters. And these were to become the groundwork for the exhibition “We are all migrants. Letters from Polish emigrants in America from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,” which I put together at the ZAMEK Culture Centre in Poznań as part of the broad col-

laboration between the ZAMEK Centre, the AMU's Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, CeBaM AMU, the State Archive in Warsaw (where the original letters are held) and the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń (which loaned artefacts and photographs from the period of these migrations to us).

Creating the actual exhibition—a form which is essentially visual—was of course a major challenge. Simply putting letters on display was insufficient, as they would have been illegible both in terms of form and content. As such I decided to weave the tale of the migration experience from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century around eight themes. These were “(Un)obvious reasons” (on the overlapping of economic and political reasons behind the decision to migrate), “Road of thorns” (on fears tied to emigration, especially journeying across the Ocean—a journey that could be one's last, and about being at the mercy of dishonest intermediaries), “Promised land” (on pride from the rise in social and economic status that emigration can provide), “Work in 3D” (on immigrants taking jobs described in source literature as the 3Ds: *dirty*, *dangerous*, and *demeaning/dull*), “Closeness at a distance” (on longing, jealousy, loneliness, concern and attempts to maintain closeness with wives, children, parents and friends thousands of kilometres away), “Memory of (for) things” (on attachment to objects), “Double homes” (on managing the home at a distance, meaning attempts to run two homes simultaneously—that back in one's country of origin, and the new one in the country of immigration), and “Our folk” (on the support given to immigrants by their ethnic enclave, on self-organisation, and on the formation of migrant institutions).

Each of these themes was assigned a single “island”—a kind of large chest of drawers, as these are usually where personal documents such as letters are kept. Each chest had eight drawers, and in them—letter fragments that I had selected, and which illustrated the particular theme, together forming a complete story. Visitors to the exhibition could walk between the islands, and open drawers of their choice. Alongside the letters, they would also find photographs from both sides of the migration (on the American side from the archives of the Library of Congress in the United States; these photographs were also projected onto enormous tulle screens suspended from the ceiling and subtly dividing the exhibition space), documents (original letters, advertising materials for the shipping lines, boarding cards, etc.) and objects—both from a century ago and contemporary items, including those appealing to the senses (such as fragrant tobacco or chocolate-coated plums—so keenly requested by migrants when loved ones came to visit, before Polish shops began ap-

pearing abroad; hidden in one of the drawers, they vanished in the blink of an eye).

However, I did not want to create a purely historical exhibition, but also wanted to talk about the universality of the migration experience. Because although 125 years had passed since the letters were written, all of us who had ever lived abroad, as well as those today seeing Europe (just as we once saw America) as giving an opportunity for a secure and better life, could relate to many of the experiences, desires and emotions expressed in them. This aspect revealed itself to us as an effect of working with the letters, because during the above-mentioned course—on “Migrant narratives”—we analysed different narratives: those from half a century ago and others from the present day. It turned out that despite the obvious different historical and geographical contexts, certain elements of the migration experience are universal, as was shown by the themes selected for the exhibition. I was of course aware that visitors to the exhibition might not infer this from it, and therefore placed a written guide in each chest, in which I outlined the context of the particular issue, pointing out directly the analogies between those past migrations and today’s voyages across the Mediterranean Sea to the European promised land, or the experiences of many of today’s immigrants from Poland. Besides, the letters themselves—“written” by illiterate peasants (meaning dictated) appealed very powerfully to one’s emotions. I give selected fragments from each of the themes to illustrate this point:

(Un)obvious reasons

*And you’ll learn dear parents whether she’d live well and have a good life, but there’s no point mentioning it as you can’t compare America with that stinking Russian land.*

Road of thorns

*I forgot that on our ship with the 1313 people we arrived with, than only 1 child died at sea, and 1 was born. And here in Sante Antonie I lost a baby still sucking at my breast.*

Promised land

*And I’m telling you that in Brazil I’ll eat dishes you’ve never seen, and in Poland you can dream but won’t see them. And as much land as I want [...].*

Work in 3D

*[...] in the month of April they’re going on strike, all the workers want an eight-hour day and want more pay, currently all the workers are doing ten hours.*

Closeness at a distance

*[...] and now to describe how I’m missing you; if I were to have wings, I’d be on my way to you right away my dear wife, I’d fly to you.*

*I can't write any more how sad I am as the tears are welling in my eyes, so my hugs dear wife and for my dearest children.*

Memory of (for) things

*Dear brother-in-law I'm sending you three American coins, they're worth 4 and a half roubles in Poland, you can bring us a large grey scarf and a thick woollen one, please ask mother to buy one in Rypin.*

Double homes

*I don't have much else to say now, I'd just remind you Dear wife to send our son to school, so that when I come, he can read me something [by muj tysz co przeczytał].*

*Now to answer your question, then yes, you can plant the potatoes [...]. And if I don't come you can sell them or buy pigs and have them graze.*

Our folk

*Back in Poland they told us we'd live without religion, but it's not true, because we have priests and bishops, and those who want to can take confirmation, and it's all just like in Poland.*

The exhibition, which was open for two months and was the main such event at the ZAMEK Culture Centre in autumn 2016, was accompanied by numerous other events. First of all, there was an educational programme in the form of lessons on the “World of migration” for high school pupils. Apart from seeing the exhibition, pupils could take part in workshops providing them with basic knowledge on the types of migration, their causes and their consequences, as well as forms of social integration. Run by a former student of mine (and currently an employee at the ZAMEK Culture Centre, Bartek Wiśniewski), these lessons proved highly popular, since they provided teachers with an opportunity to confront an urgent subject, one frequently not easy for them to tackle, along with competent support and in an interesting formula. Altogether over five hundred pupils attended these lessons. Secondly, a workshop was held on searching for one's own family migration stories (I dream of this being one of the project tasks in every school). And thirdly we had a series of related meetings: with the reporter Małgorzata Szejnert, who talked about her work on gathering materials for her book *Wyspa Klucz* (2009) about Ellis Island—the largest immigration station in the history of the United States (Szejnert herself was an immigrant to the USA in the 1980s; when asked which book influenced her most in her life, she indicated the migrants' letters without hesitation); with Professor Jan Kula, son of Witold Kula, on working with the surviving letters; with Professor Dorota Praszałowicz on the history of 19<sup>th</sup>-century migrations told from a non-national perspective (Poles, Jews and Germans migrating together); with anthro-

pologists working in the USA and Brazil, Dr Elżbieta M. Goździak and Dr Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska, on life today among the descends of those migrants; and finally on the descendants of those who stayed behind, with participants from the field research for “(Re)covering migrant memory”.

Part of the project comprised ethnographic research in the field, conducted in the villages of origin of the migrant authors of the letters, and located today in three districts: Golub-Dobrzyń, Rypin and Lipno, in the borderland of the former Russian and Prussian partitions. Together with 22 undergraduate and postgraduate students at the IECA AMU we took the part of “postmen arriving 125 years late,” and set ourselves a few goals. For a start, we wanted to attempt to deliver the intercepted letters to the descendants of their addressees, and check whether memory of their migrating ancestors was still alive, and also to try and reconstruct the later fortunes of the letters’ authors and their addressees (did families split by the ocean ever get back together again?). Secondly, we sought answers to the question as to whether in those villages from which so many residents crossed the ocean these mass migrations were remembered, or on the contrary—had been forgotten (does collective memory exist regarding these migrations?). This was connected to the issue of institutional memory. We wanted to check to what extent local institutions—not only museums and halls of memory, but also schools, churches and public offices—fulfilled a commemorating function in this respect. And thirdly and last, we wanted to collect all other migration stories in the region—and were interested in who the emigrants’ descendants are, and whether they themselves are migrants.

Our research showed that collective and institutional memory regarding migration across the ocean among peasants in the villages we investigated was practically non-existent; we encountered it much more often, despite the passage of time, in individual family histories. And not only regarding the above migration, but many other migrations as well, since it turned out that villagers in these regions had migrated not only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also following the two world wars, in the nineteen-seventies and eighties, and then after the political transformation following Poland’s accession to the European Union. Today most of the young migrants work in Scandinavia and Ireland, while older ones go seasonally to Germany and France to pick asparagus, cucumbers and apples. Meanwhile, others migrated to the region: from other partitions to work in sugar plants, Germans from Bessarabia, and so on. The land proved to be saturated with migration stories, with mobility a strategy for coping with unfavourable economic or political circumstances. This also explains why the 19<sup>th</sup>-cen-

tury migrations across the ocean were not perceived as particularly special, since they were part of the broader processes of mobility (for more on the research, see Bloch 2016).

During the research and the processing of the findings we kept a collective diary and an archive for the materials collected (photographs, documents) on the project's Facebook fanpage (#odzyskiwaniepamieci),<sup>6</sup> which clocked up over 1050 likes. We presented the findings in the form of thirteen reportage accounts. My aim was to reach a broader readership through this attractive, accessible and popular literary form, to step beyond the hermetic language and market of strictly academic papers. With this goal in mind, the research participants met with Włodzimierz Nowak, then editor-in-chief of a leading reportage magazine, *Duży Format*, who shared a number of writing hints. They then worked on their accounts with me during a separate course, when not a single sentence escaped our attention (I completed an ordinary degree in journalism, and my diploma thesis was about reportage; I also ran journalism workshops for students of ethnology and cultural anthropology; cf. Bloch (2016: 174–321). The rest of the book, which crowned the project as a whole, comprised materials from the exhibition as well as popular-science essays on the history and the present day of migrants. Visually, the book was designed by the graphic artist Marcin Markowski, who was responsible for the entire project's visual identification. We wanted to come up with an attractive and unusual form (the book does not really have covers, has a specially designed font, and features large-format foldouts)—we knew that we were able to attract readers in such a way. And indeed the printed copies were snatched up like hot buns, while the book itself won a Gold Medal in the category of *Book Layout* in the European Design Award competition, along with a distinction in the competition for “Most Beautiful Book of the Year 2016” by the PTWK (the Polish Association of Book Publishers). When the print run was exhausted we provided open access to it online.<sup>7</sup> Copies of the book were distributed in the field as well, to the protagonists (many of whom were in regular e-mail and Facebook contact with us). Likewise the exhibition, which after being on display in Poznań was on show at the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, and after that the Museum of Dobrzyń Land in Rypin and at the Culture Centre in Golub-Dobrzyń. We joked that perhaps there was no memory of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century migrations across the

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. <https://www.facebook.com/OdzyskiwaniePamieci/> [accessed: 09.11.2019].

<sup>7</sup> “Wszyscy jesteście migrantami” ([https://ckzamek.pl/media/files/Wszyscy\\_jestesmy\\_migrantami\\_EXZ4kL.pdf](https://ckzamek.pl/media/files/Wszyscy_jestesmy_migrantami_EXZ4kL.pdf)).

ocean when we'd arrived there, but certainly by the time we'd left it had taken hold.

The project generated significant media interest. A reportage by Violetta Szostak (2016) was published in *Duży Format* regarding the “125-year late postmen” (and the author also retraced our footsteps). A programme on the exhibition was also broadcast on Polish Radio, with readings of the letters, and we were also guests on “Radiowy Dom Kultury” on “Trójka” (Polish Radio 3) and featured in the Polish TV news programme *Tele-expres*. The project gained the recognition of the academic community as well. For “(Re)covering migrant memory” we were awarded the prize for “Anthropological study of the year 2017” by the Social Anthropology Section of the Polish Sociological Association. In particular, the jury acknowledged the public and involved aspect of the project: “The book contains a reliable depiction, critical of the mainstream public discourse. It thereby continues the tradition of engaged anthropology: it is a good example of how a compilation rich in ethnographic and historical content while embedded in an interesting theoretical framework can at the same time constitute a building block for public activeness and serve the dissemination or recollection of migration experience at a historical moment, a moment when we so need such a reminder in our country.”

#### ADOPT A LIFEJACKET

In autumn 2016 we received 49 life jackets, found on the beaches of the Greek island of Chios, from the international humanitarian organisation Oxfam International. They were dirty, faded, and worn-out; *second-hand*. The lifejackets worn by refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea were to be used during an October happening, “In Solidarity with Refugees,” preceding the sitting of the European Council concerning migration policy. Oxfam was coordinating the campaign in several European cities, and in Poznań the organisation’s representative responsible for it was Stana Buchowska. The event was prepared by the One World Association (SCI Poland) and CeBaM AMU, and the Migrant Info Point run by the Centre for Migration Studies Foundation. We walked around the city’s main pedestrian precinct in life-jackets, and encouraged passers-by to put on a lifejacket and try to imagine what was felt by a refugee wearing one while fleeing. When the happening was over, we were left with lifejackets filling up the entire small office of



CeBaM AMU. Karolina Sydow, the campaign's initiator and coordinator, said: "Putting on such a lifejacket made a huge impression on me. I realised that I didn't actually know what had happened to the person who crossed the sea in it, on an overcrowded fishing boat. How their voyage ended. Since then, we've been wondering what else to do with them, so as to reinforce that message." And that was what gave birth to the idea to give the lifejackets away for adoption.

We sent out offers for adopting them. Such a lifejacket could be adopted by any public institution that was prepared to make room for it within its own space. Because the lifejackets symbolised the absence of refugees among us—following how the Polish authorities refused to accept the "quota" proposed by the European Union—they were to take the place of the person who had worn them: at a café table, on a cinema seat, in a waiting room in a public office, on a school bench (most of the lifejackets we received were children's versions). So that somebody going to the cinema to watch a romantic comedy, and given a place next to such a lifejacket, would at least for a moment feel that (non)presence and think about it. So that they would be able to touch the lifejacket, think about who had worn it, and why. Because a refugee, just like any person, would also want to go occasionally to the cinema or have a coffee in a café, as Martyna Nicińska of the ZAMEK Culture Centre (which adopted two jackets) pointed out. Because lifejackets without people cannot speak, we attached a shop-like label to each one, which explained as follows:

*This lifejacket was worn by a refugee fleeing across the Mediterranean Sea to the Greek island of Chios. We don't know whether they reached shore safely. We don't know what happened to them. We do know that they aren't here. This lifejacket is meant to remind us of the absence of refugees among us.*

*Because we did not open humanitarian corridors, based on humanitarian visas, to ensure safe escape from places caught up in war.*

*Because we did not launch programmes for resettling from camps in countries adjacent to places of conflict.*

*Because we did not join the programme for relocating refugees from temporary camps in Italy and Greece so as to show solidarity with and support these countries.*

*We're turning our eyes away, closing our borders, putting up defences, erecting fences.*

We did not want to leave people alone with nothing but an uncomfortable feeling of helplessness, and as such attached a second tag with a list of non-governmental organisations directly helping refugees, ones they could support financially. Every institution adopting a jacket had to

sign a contract, just as with any adoption. In it, they made a commitment to provide “proper care” for the lifejacket, and not just to treat it as an “exhibit on a wall”. In addition, the adopting institutions were required to keep photographic documentation of the lifejacket’s presence, and to provide accounts of reactions by people visiting specific places—materials which we posted on the campaign’s Facebook fan page (#zaadoptujkamizelke).<sup>8</sup> When I listened to the remarks given by people for whom the words I had written on the label resounded, I could feel the agency of such campaigns: these people were talking about their feelings using my words.

The campaign achieved significant publicity in the media—and even TNV24, the leading television news channel, turned up to report on it. All of the lifejackets were adopted—and not only in Poznań, but in other cities in Poland as well (Białystok, which took as many as 10 lifejackets, organised its own adoption campaign; in addition, lifejackets found their way to Piła, Leszno, Zbąszyń, Wrocław, Kielce, Płock, Gryfice and the village of Wicimiece in northwest Poland). In fact there were so many willing to adopt that we had to request more lifejackets. Among those adopting them were cafes, restaurants, pubs, clubs, bookshops, cinemas, theatres, culture centres, museums, foundations, editorial offices, public offices (including the Marshals Office and the City Hall in Poznań, where lifejackets found a place in the waiting room of the Citizen Service Office, and at Poznań’s Department for Work and Pensions), higher places of education—including the Adam Mickiewicz University, in the rector’s offices (where a lifejacket found a home in the Senate Hall), four departments and two institutes—and in high schools, vocational schools and primary schools, in school boarding houses, libraries, and associations. Lifejackets attended lessons and other educational activities, faculty board meetings, academic seminars, dress rehearsals in theatres, and workshops. One person sat down with a lifejacket at a café table: “We were eating soup. I wanted to ask her so much. To tell her so much. And that huge lump in my throat, growing—a mixture of shame, regret, sympathy and fury...”. In schools, the presence of a lifejacket was a pretext for teachers to organise lessons, meetings and workshops on the topic of refugees. Refugee Lifejacket Ambassadors were appointed in a high school and a junior high school, and together they put and ran classes about refugees (a total of 18 such lessons). One girl from a technical college said: “I don’t want to even imagine what that child felt, such a tiny lifejacket”. A teacher at a rural school in

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/zaadoptujkamizelke/> [accessed: 09.11.2019].

Wicimiece wrote: “Thank you for the opportunity to Adopt a Lifejacket... For all the questions, emotions and reflections that SHE gave rise to!”

Only churches refused—although we had really hoped for the lifejackets to find a presence within their walls (we even sent an official letter to Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki inviting him to take part in the campaign, but it remained unanswered). The Republika Róż café announced that “all revenue from sales of coffee to guests who choose to sit on the seat with the lifejacket shall be set aside for foundations tackling the problem of refugees and the victims of conflict”.<sup>9</sup> In the Muza and Pałacowe cinemas, lifejackets had their permanent seats in the auditoriums, seats for which tickets could not be bought. The director of the Muza cinema, Małgorzata Kuzdra, remarked that “the lifejacket opens one’s eyes to the fate of the individual. That is a powerful stimulus, though not intrusive.”<sup>10</sup> Joanna Grześkowiak of Teatr Polski said: “Personally, my skin crawls when I see that lifejacket. It bears traces of mud, sand, and indeed — when you think that this lifejacket was worn by somebody really desperate, and on top of that by a young child, then it becomes... uncomfortable.” Many teams that adopted a lifejacket took photographs of themselves with it. Lifejackets were photographed with actors, students, pupils, politicians, scientists, and even with AMU pro-rectors and its rector (who himself drew attention to the importance not so much of education and knowledge as human sensibility: “I am exceedingly pleased that our university’s Centre for Migration Studies was the coordinator of this major campaign, after all their mission is to raise not only highly qualified and thoroughly educated specialists, but above all people who are sensitive to the misery of and wrong done to others”).

Two people opted for adoption that we called mobile, and they included the Poznań performer Monika Wińczyk: “The moment of adoption itself was already a powerful experience. I was holding the object in my hands, and could feel that it was a living being”. The lifejacket adopted by Monika travelled with her every day on public transport (she even punch a ticket for it every time), on her bicycle, she took it with her children to the playground, for the “drowning Marzanna” tradition, together they did the shopping, attended concerts and shows, attended *butoh* workshops, and went on trips to the seaside and down to Karpacz. And each of these occa-

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<sup>9</sup> Natalia Mazur, *Jedna kamizelka jak jeden uchodźca. Odbijają za nie nawet bilety w poznańskich tramwajach*, 17 March 2017 (<https://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,105531,21507318,niechce-nawet-myslec-co-czulo-to-dziecko.html> [accessed: 11.11.2019]).

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

sions where the lifejacket was present was documented and can be seen on Monika's blog.<sup>11</sup> The two-month long campaign culminated in a meeting among all those adopting a lifejacket, which was held at Poznań's City Hall on the International Day for Fighting Racial Discrimination, and where people shared their impressions from their adoption, and discussed possible future actions to do together.

The official end of the campaign did not mean the end of the campaign that we had initiated. Many of the lifejackets were already living lives of their own. Monika's lifejacket took part in further actions (shows, performances; and was the protagonist of a reportage written by an artist from Donetsk, Lia Dostlieva). The lifejacket adopted by the AMU's Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology continues to sit on a corridor chair, and keeps both students and staff company on an everyday basis. During the world congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences organised at the Adam Mickiewicz University, attended by over 700 people from almost 70 countries, the lifejacket had a seat in the main hall. The lifejacket adopted by Płock took part in the sitting of the Board on Equality at the City Hall. And the lifejacket adopted by the theatrical group Banina went with them for workshops, rehearsals and shows.

#### GALLERY WITHOUT A HOME

The idea for the "Gallery without a home"—a social campaign with the goal of promoting an empathetic stance towards refugees—was born while the "Adopt a lifejacket" campaign was still underway. Monika Wińczyk, a performer who adopted a mobile lifejacket, took it with her when she paid a visit to her daughter's primary school in Poznań's Łazarz estate, where she talked to the children about the lifejacket and about refugees. She and her husband, Hubert Wińczyk, read to the pupils the book *Hebanowe serce* about a boy who set off with his mother to cross the sea. At the end, moved by the story of the little boy Omenka, the pupils decided to make drawings for children in the refugee camps, wanting thereby to express their interest in how their lives unfolded, to comfort them, cheer them up. The school also adopted one of the children's lifejackets.

The project comprised workshops for pupils in classes 2 to 4 of Poznań's primary schools, under the slogan "I hear, I feel, I understand. Stories of young refugees." Apart from Monika and Hubert, they were run

<sup>11</sup> Cf. <http://monokamizelka.blogspot.com> [accessed: 11.11.2019].

by Maria Lebioda, graduate of the AMU's Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, and currently an educator in the non-governmental organisation "Horizons" Youth Initiative Centre. The project's coordinator was anthropologist Karolina Sydow. The campaign took place in the years 2017–2018 and, as with "Adopt a lifejacket", was organised by the AMU Centre for Migration Studies, the Migrant Info Point and Oxfam International, which ensured the project's financing. The campaign secured the honorary patronage of Poznań's Mayor. The workshops—comprising two 90-minute blocks for 20-person groups—were conducted in seven Poznań schools, and a total of around 360 children attended them. After each of the workshops, the pupils prepared postcards of illustrations and sound with greetings for children staying in camps for refugees. In addition, for two groups workshops were held that resulted in the production of audio plays with a refugee theme (these workshops were run by Hubert Wińczyk, who works with sound in a professional capacity). The original postcards, together with their translations into English, were sent to camps in Italy (to a camp in Venimiglia on Sicily), Greece (to camps on the island of Lesbos and in the north-western region of Epirus) and in Serbia (to transit centres in Obrenovac, Krnjaca, Sombor and Kikinda), while scans of them were put together to form a virtual and mobile gallery. My task in this project — as in the case of the lifejacket campaign—was to prepare the texts accompanying the exhibition and backing the campaign.

The mobile gallery without a home had to adopt a form that would allow for it to move around easily. It had to be light, yet simultaneously capable of housing numerous children's drawings. In this we were helped by Wojciech Luchowski of the ZAMEK Culture Centre, who had previously been responsible for the arrangement of the exhibition "We're all migrants." The idea was brilliant in its simplicity: the gallery was a fibre-board A-board, the height of an adult person, and from afar seeming to be covered on both sides by 35 black rectangular panels arranged alongside one another. These rectangles formed the large-letter phrase "Come closer." I remember coming up with the idea for this slogan when travelling in a rickety Indian bus from the village where I was staying to Hampi, where I was conducting research in the south of India. Our group of people connected to the Centre for Migration Studies arranged a brainstorming session regarding slogans for promoting the campaign, and "Come closer" seemed perfect to me—as it functioned on two planes. On the one hand, it was an encouragement to get emotionally closer to the refugees, to form a bond with them, and this would be achieved with the postcards created by the children. We wanted thereby to invite everybody into

the world of children's sensibility towards others and their fundamental needs. Without the rationalisations or excuses for why one could not help, or why it would not be worth helping, and which we knew all too well from the world of adults. We wanted to show that children feel (for others) and that we are also capable of that. We wanted to show in the refugee another person. Our description for the exhibition was as follows:

GALLERY WITHOUT A HOME is a campaign that reminds us that every person deserves respect and dignity. And whether one is a citizen of a particular country, or somebody who has been forced to leave their homeland, is immaterial. The essence of the refugee condition is that one's rights have been threatened or abolished in one's own country. Yet at the same time, while being a refugee, this is only one aspect of a particular person's current situation. They are also a pupil, a doctor, a carpenter, a student, a cat-love or a chess buff, a woman, a man, a grandfather, mother or child.

On the other hand, the slogan "Come closer" was intended to entice onlookers to approach the A-board, as only close up did it turn out that beneath the black rectangles were dozens of children's drawings attached to spiral binders — and as such they could be browsed through like a book. The campaign was also accompanied by other slogans: I Hear / Feel / React / Draw; If not now then when?; You feel, I feel, We feel.

The greetings written by the children affected people on a very basic level; their sincerity, their form replete with childish mistakes, together with the reference to children's most fundamental needs and desires, were truly moving (similarly to the letters "written" by the illiterate peasants). Here are a few examples:

*I wish you one hundred litres of water. And may you also not get ill. I'd really like you to go to our school. My name is Mikołaj. Best wishes.*

*I'm Karina and I'm 10 years old. I love swimming, how about you? I'm writing to you with enormous sympathy. I also wish you freedom in your homeland. Take care, be brave!*

*I feel verry sorry for you, I don't no how your feelling, that your reely sad, you have to flee from your country. From Igor.*

*Ive drawn a dog for you and I hope that youll have a dog! And I wish you a hundred lovely moments with your famly. From Julka.*

*Im sorry you have war and hope nothink has happened to you. May evrythink come to an end soon. I hope you get better if you get sick. Lots of good helth.*

*I wish four you a houss, toys, a bed and a smyle on your face. Zuzanna*

*Greetings from Poland. I wish you lots of warter and food and also wish you good fun with your friends! From Julia.*

*I wish you school and a playground and a football pitch, and a school where you have friends and a canteen. and fruits as well. All the best, Krystian.*

The children drew things they knew from their own world (home, school, a dog, their friends, toys, superheroes, a snowman, a Christmas tree, trees, a rainbow, the sun, hearts) as well as how they imagined war and refugees, images also formed as a result of the workshops (boats, people being evacuated by helicopter, bombs falling from aircraft). The educators used a selection of children's books on child refugees in their work with the pupils. These included: *Hebanowe serce* (mentioned above) by Renata Piątkowska, *Chłopiec z Lampedusy* by Rafał Witek, *Wędrówka Nabu* by Jarosław Mikołajewski, and *Kot Karima i obrazki* by Liljana Badyjewska (the protagonist of the last of these books, a cat fleeing war with his Syrian boy, reaches Poland; all schools taking part in the project received a set of these books for their school libraries). Exhibition visitors were able to listen to the sound-bite postcards and the audio dramas. In addition, we printed real postcards with three of the drawings for promoting the campaign. We felt that it was important to show the adventitiousness of the refugee experience. Which was why we wrote the following in the exhibition's description:

We don't choose the country we're born in, or whether that place is engulfed by war, natural disaster or famine. It's chance that determines whether it is our lot to live in a safe and affluent place. Neither do we ever know when fate will turn on us, and we will be the ones forced to leave our homes—because of war, persecution or poverty. We all have the same fundamental needs, among them safety—which we want to ensure for ourselves and our loved ones. As the poet Warsan Shire writes: "No one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land."

First of all the gallery went to the schools where the workshops were held. Then there was a special opening event at Poznań's City Hall—attended by the children who made the postcards. During the exhibition, visitors were able to draw their own postcards, due to which the gallery continued to grow; those who contributed included adults. During the opening at one of the schools, a total of 60 postcards were made in one day. Other than the City Hall and the schools the exhibition was also put on display at the Adam Mickiewicz University—in its rector's offices and in Collegium Martineum. Its home today is the waiting room at the Migrant Info Point, where it can be seen by immigrants. As with the "Adopt a lifejacket" campaign, "Gallery without a home" also had a second life following its official ending. Among other things, we received over 130 mini-basketball toy sets made by hand by the pupils of a class at

a Poznań school who didn't have the opportunity to attend the workshops; this was on the initiative of the children and teachers themselves, moved by the exhibition and reading the books.

#### CHALLENGES, OR THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN APPLIED AND ENGAGED ANTHROPOLOGY, AND THE ACADEMY OF HOPE

The actual implementation of projects of this kind entails numerous challenges. For a start, where university employees are concerned, such activities are most often undertaken in free time (which we do not usually have), since they are not “awarded points” by the universities. Whereas for some time now the university authorities in Poland have discerned the need for collaborating with the so-called socio-economic environment, they define such cooperation in categories of neoliberal usefulness (which in turn is a requirement of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education). They reward the rendering of expertise, services and commissions for external bodies (companies, or central and local government bodies), but not the conducting of social campaigns aimed at increasing society's sensibility towards specific social topics. In other words, we are expected to be experts in specific areas, but not engaged researchers. We are therefore entering here the area of difference between applied anthropology and engaged anthropology. The former is a science tasked with being useful for those who commission research or expertise, which most often means the market and components of the authorities legitimising the predominant discourses. The most extreme example of this was the so-called Human Terrain System, a programme in which social researchers were employed, including anthropologists, to support the army of the United States in “understanding local communities and their cultures” (the so-called *human terrain*) in Iraq and Afghanistan. In practice this meant a cultural reconnaissance by so-called experts, whose goal was to achieve more effective military expansion and management of occupied territories, or in other words what the colonisers used anthropologists' work in the past when our discipline was only just forming. This programme, and the involvement of anthropologists in it, was criticised very sharply in anthropology circles (cf. Jackson 2008; Forte 2011).

Engaged anthropology in turn is about diagnosing existing structures of knowledge and power, and taking measures benefiting those groups we describe as subaltern, or vulnerable. It is therefore about changing the status quo in order to eliminate, or at least reduce, areas of exclusion, inequality and discrimination. Refugees and migrants most definitely belong to such

groups. First of all, their right to self-representation is restricted—as usually somebody else speaks for them, about who they are, what they are like, what they need, and what they do not need; as such, they are denied a voice, to use the metaphor of Gayatri Ch. Spivak (1988). Secondly, in a world based on a “national order of things” (Malkki 1995), their position in relation to the citizens of nation states is secondary in regard to the ability to exercise political, economic and social rights. Refugee studies constitute one of those areas in which researchers recommend the so-called dual imperative, in other words a combination of cognitive and ideological motivation (Jacobson, Landau 2003)—meaning that we should be not only scientists, but also advocates of those among whom we conduct research, and both researchers and activists in keeping with the principle that “there is no justification for studying, and attempting to understand, the causes of human suffering if the purpose of one’s study is not, ultimately, to find ways of relieving and preventing that suffering” (Turton 1996: 96).

However, this is not about speaking out from higher moral or intellectual positions, and thereby falling into the traps of humanitarianism (cf. e.g. Fassin 2012), which itself defines who deserves help and who does not, or ventriloquism, in other words speaking on behalf of the subaltern (cf. Spivak 1988). Did we succeed in avoiding these traps, since in none of these projects were persons with refugee experience directly engaged? Activities aimed towards setting in motion the mechanism of empathy tend usually to be directed to the society from which the anthropologist derives. This can be clearly seen in the example of the “We are all migrants” project, which spoke about us as migrants (and not about “them” as migrants). As for the campaign “Adopt a lifejacket”, it was the absence of refugees among us—within Polish society—symbolised by the lifejackets they discarded as the leading theme, while what the lifejackets “said” was actually about us (what we hadn’t done, resulting in them not being here). The “Gallery without a home” campaign could have been the most problematic in this respect, since it embraced refugee-themed workshops for children from Polish schools. We would certainly have preferred them to be run by refugees, but they were not here. And this is why the canvas for these workshops, which *de facto* included material from global education (global economic inequalities and climate change as the main causes of the movement of peoples), comprised books telling readers about the refugee experiences of children (although again, due to the language, written by Polish authors).

To get back to challengers of a pragmatic nature, such activities have to be carried out outside of the “normal” working hours of the scient-

ists. Their marginality is also linked to their inadequate funding, because the classic sources of financing science in Poland—the National Science Centre and the National Centre for Research and Development—only embrace basic research (in other words “pure” science) or commissioned research (that is, applied). Social anthropological interventions therefore have to be carried out cost-free (and such was the “Adopt a lifejacket” campaign, where the only input we received was that of the refugees’ lifejackets), or soliciting for funds from other sources is essential (for example from non-governmental organisations, as in the case of the “Gallery without a home”, financed by Oxfam International). In order to obtain finance for “We’re all migrants”, we had to approach a different ministry, that of culture and national heritage, with a grant application. These sources of finance are limited and short-term, so they do not allow for a reliable evaluation of the results of measures carried out. Apart from reactions observed as they happened, and remarks directed our way on the initiative of the addressees themselves, we had no way of checking to what extent our campaigns really achieved the outcome we had intended. Despite the book “Wszyscy jesteśmy migrantami” [We’re all migrants] selling out entirely, there was no option of a reprint because the grant from the Ministry had ended. And even though after the “Gallery without a home” campaign came to an end we were still approached by many schools interested in the workshops, we were unable to offer them because the project and its financing had come to a close. In other words, we fell into a trap that numerous non-governmental organisations find themselves caught by: the lack of continuity in the financing of their projects. And finally, a major challenge for persons directly engaged in carrying out the activities described above was that they themselves became the object of attacks from persons spreading hate. Whereas it was difficult to strike at the campaign “We’re all migrants”—after all, it was about us Poles, as migrants—the campaign “Adopt a lifejacket” drew a wave of insults, profanities and threats via emails and social media posts targeting its coordinator and media face, Karolina Sydow. To this day I regret that we did nothing about it, that we did not report the crimes. The campaign was very brief, and very intense, and Karolina was overwhelmed by work and had neither the space nor the strength to additionally deal with the hate, and neither did we have any systemic support from an institution—since, after all, the activities were not scientific.

Nevertheless, involvement in the anthropological interventions discussed here gave me a huge sense of satisfaction and agency—the activity itself, contra-hegemonic in character, allowed me to feel that I wasn’t re-

maining passive. This is because I see anthropological interventions as practicing the “academy of hope”—an utopian vision combining interpretative, critical and emancipatory positions, and calling for action of which the goal (even if utopian) would be change towards social justice, equality, and fighting oppression.<sup>12</sup> In this sense the actions carried out and discussed in this paper are a response to the call voiced by bell hooks in her pedagogy of hope, to “highlight all the positive, life-transforming rewards that have been the outcome of collective efforts to change our society, especially education, so that it is not a site for the enactment of domination in any form” (hooks 2003: xiii). It is therefore about ways of working that “illuminate the space of the possible where we can work to sustain our *hope* and create community with justice as the core foundation” (hooks 2003: xvi, italics in the original).

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. the same demand voiced within the critical turn in social studies regarding tourism (Atelejevic, Pritchard, Morgan 2007: 3)—sometimes even called a “moral turn” (Caton 2012)—including the project “hopeful tourism” (Pritchard, Morgan, Atelejevic 2011).

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### Abstract

This paper is an attempt to consider how engaged anthropology could be practiced in connection with the refugee/migrant crisis. The author presents in detail

three anthropological interventions conducted in Poznań, a city in western Poland: (1) the project “We’re All Migrants: (Re)covering Migrant Memory”; (2) the campaign “Adopt a Lifejacket”; and (3) the campaign “Gallery without a Home.” At the same time, she criticises the sedentary perspective predominant in the public debate regarding refugees and migrants, and the reduction of the refugee/migrant figure to the category of an Other. She perceives a need to depart from the role of expert and to stimulate empathy by making people aware of the contingent nature of their lot in life and by emphasizing closeness to the other person rather than constantly focusing on differences. She points to the divergence between engaged and applied anthropology, and the related challenges facing anthropologists in Polish institutions who want to get involved in building social sensibility and interpersonal solidarity. She also calls for the propagation of hope.

*key words:* engaged anthropology, empathy, solidarity, hope, anthropological interventions, refugee crisis, refugees, migrations

ANTROPOLOGIA ZAANGAŻOWANA I POTRZEBA EMPATII:  
ANTROPOLOGICZNE INTERWENCJE  
W OBLICZU TZW. KRYZYSU UCHODŹCZEGO

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Abstrakt

Artykuł jest próbą zastanowienia się nad tym, jak można uprawiać antropologię zaangażowaną w obliczu tzw. kryzysu uchodźczego/migracyjnego. W odpowiedzi autorka szczegółowo przedstawia trzy antropologiczne interwencje zrealizowane w Poznaniu, w zachodniej Polsce: (1) projekt „Wszyscy jesteśmy migrantami. (Od)zyskiwanie pamięci migracyjnej”; (2) akcję „Zaadoptuj kamizelkę” oraz (3) kampanię „Galeria bez domu”. Krytykuje przy tym sedentarystyczną perspektywę dominującą w debacie publicznej o uchodźcach i migrantach oraz redukcję figury uchodźcy/migranta do kategorii Innego. Dostrzega potrzebę odejścia od roli ekspertów i podejmowania działań mających na celu uruchamianie mechanizmu empatii poprzez uświadamianie sobie samym przygodności naszego usytuowania oraz podkreślanie bliskości z drugim człowiekiem zamiast nieustannego reprodukcji różnicy. Wskazuje na różnice między antropologią zaangażowaną i stosowaną oraz związane z tym wyzwania, przed jakimi stają antropolożki i antropolodzy w polskim kontekście instytucjonalnym — ci, którzy chcą angażować się w działania mające na celu budowanie wrażliwości społecznej i międzyludzkiej solidarności. Wzywa też do uprawiania akademii nadziei.

*słowa kluczowe:* antropologia zaangażowana, empatia, solidarność, akademie nadziei, antropologiczne interwencje, tzw. kryzys uchodźczy, uchodźcy, migracje