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HUMAN AFFAIRS *24*, 406–422, 2014
DOI: 10.2478/s13374-014-0237-6

NEW MEDIA, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION: SLOVAKS IN THE UK[1]

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Abstract: This paper investigates Slovak migrants' use of new media to build social capital. It draws on data from a pilot study with 36 Slovaks living in the UK, and on content analysis of the main Facebook page for Czechs and Slovaks in the UK. The data suggest that Facebook is used for sharing emotions rather than to build a community and share practical information. While Facebook and Skype are used to maintain preexisting strong ties in the country of origin, face-to-face contact and mobile phones are used to maintain ties within the UK. However, social media do not seem to facilitate the formation of weak ties prior to migration, with face-to-face contact being dominant upon arrival. Transnational migration experience forms a separate dimension within the participants' identity, independent from social capital. The data are discussed in relation to findings from previous studies about Slovak migrants in the Republic of Ireland.

Key words: new media; social capital; transnational migration; Slovakia; UK.

Introduction

With the advent of Facebook and other social network sites, there has been a renewed interest in the use of information and communication technologies by migrants; especially regarding the extent to which these technologies facilitate migration and integration within the host society (see McGregor & Siegel, 2013 for a review). Mobility and connectivity are among the defining features of the 21st century migrant, ensuring continuity in migrants' lives and in the relationships they have with their environments at home, in the host country or in between (Diminescu, 2008). Therefore 21st century communication and transportation technologies facilitate the creation of transnational social fields by virtue of their low cost and rapidity (Glick Schiller, Bash, & Blanc Szanton, 1995). Transnationalism can be defined as "the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement (…), take actions, make decisions and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously" (Glick Schiller et al., 1992, pp. 1-2). From a social psychology perspective,

[1] This paper was prepared as part of VEGA project no 2/0144/12 "New media as an instrument of democracy fostering? Mapping current state and potential of civic participation online."

social networks and (multiple) identities are key in this definition (see also Deaux, 2006; Morawska, 2003). Dekker and Siegel (2013) note that in later operationalizations, integration within the host society sometimes disappeared and transnationalism was solely defined as the migrant's engagement with their country of origin. This is the definition we use in this paper, focusing on the social networks linking our participants to Slovakia and to ethnic ingroup members living in the UK, and on the role of new media in this process.

The role of new media in facilitating transnational migration

In this paper, the term "new media" is used to encompass both the digital technologies facilitating private communication, such as Skype or mobile phone applications, as well as the so-called social media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) define the social media as "a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content". This definition encompasses web logs (blogs), collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn), content communities (e.g. YouTube), virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life), as well as virtual gaming worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft) (Mc Gregor & Siegel, 2013).

McGregor and Siegel (2013) have identified four key areas where the social media in particular have implications for migration research: 1) the use of social media in triggering and facilitating migration in both positive (networks) and negative ways (human trafficking); 2) the role of social media in migrant integration; 3) the use of social media with regard to diaspora engagement; and 4) the use of social media in conducting migration research. While in our previous research on Slovak migrants in Ireland we focused mainly on the third area—civic engagement and participation of migrants—, this paper deals predominantly with the first area.

Various theorists agree that migration is mediated by a range of interacting macro- and micro-level structures and not solely by economic factors (see Morales & Giugni, 2011). Micro-level structures refer to social networks of migrants that may facilitate migration by lowering its transactional and psychological costs. Concepts such as 'cultural capital' and 'social capital' are often applied in this context (Castles & Miller, 2009; Dekker & Siegel, 2013). Several researchers conceptualize the relationship between social media and migration precisely by considering whether and how it facilitates the formation of social ties and social capital (Haythornthwaite, 2002; Hiller & Franz, 2004; Komito & Bates, 2009; Komito, 2011; Dekker & Engbersen, 2012).

There has been a presumption that in chain migration people go where they already have contacts (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964). But with the new technology, contact may be made in advance of travel, so risk and cost no longer prevent migration (Komito & Bates, 2009). Indeed, Dekker and Engbersen (2012) argue that social media are not only new communication channels, but also transform migrant networks and lower the threshold for migration. Using new media (1) helps migrants to maintain strong ties with family and friends; (2) establishes a new infrastructure consisting of latent ties; (3) provides a means of communication with weak ties that are relevant in organising the process of migration and settlement; (4) gives a rich source of unofficial insider knowledge on migration (Dekker

& Engbersen, 2012), and (5) offers an enhanced ability for individuals to participate in the culture and politics of the countries in which they grew up (Komito, 2011).

For example, Komito and Bates' (2009) research with Polish migrants in Dublin in Ireland shows that potential Polish migrants have access to information about the host country and contacts with Polish people in Dublin prior to arrival; in fact, they can join a local virtual community before even arriving in Dublin. These weak ties have major benefits for migrants as they move from one society to another (Komito, 2011). Komito (ibid) argues that whilst the first set of popular Internet applications facilitated social networking by linking people who only had weak ties (Granovetter, 1973); social media enables ties of all types, whether these are "strong", "weak" or somewhere in between these two ideal types.

The distinction between weak and strong ties corresponds to the distinction between bridging and bonding social capital. While the former focuses on strengthening collective membership within a group, the latter links diverse groups (Putnam, 2007). Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) report a strong association between undergraduate Facebook use and various types of social capital[2], with the strongest relationship being to bridging social capital. However, Komito (2011) argues that while social media can indeed facilitate bridging social capital and integration into the host society, in the case of Polish and Filipino migrants in Ireland they are specifically used to maintain bonding capital, e. g. links amongst friends and relations both within and outside Ireland. Similarly, Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield (2006) found that users mostly use Facebook to build connections with people they have met offline, and are less likely to use social media to establish new connections. Komito (2011) suggests in this respect that if the first wave of Internet applications helped to extend personal networks and build bridging social capital, the second wave is, in addition, enhancing and supporting communities by contributing to bonding capital.

These findings point to potential drawbacks of new media use for migrant integration. In fact, social networking can act as an 'emotional buffer', decreasing motivations to integrate (Komito, 2011; Komito & Bates, 2009) and has the potential to virtually segregate migrants from the wider society in which they live (McGregor & Siegel, 2013). On the other hand, Van den Boss and Nell (2006), in a study on Turkish Kurds and Iranians living in the Netherlands, show that there is a difference between first and second generation migrants in this respect. Whereas the first generation's life online often reveals extensions of offline networks, the online practice of the second generation reflects these networks in subtler ways. Moreover, there are theoretical and empirical arguments proposing that the building of a coherent migrant community as well as the transnational activities of migrants can actually assist integration (Aretxabala & Riezu, 2012 in McGregor & Siegel, 2013; Dekker & Siegel, 2013).

Furthermore, Lingel, Naaman, & Boyd (2014) show that there are modes of migrant Facebook use that diverge from typical social network site use as being predominantly connective. They argue that the research on transnationalism should not oversimplify the use of information and communication technologies among transnational migrants as being

[2] Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) introduce an additional dimension of social capital that speaks to the ability to maintain valuable connections as one progresses through life changes. The concept, "maintained social capital," permits them to explore whether online network tools enable individuals to keep in touch with a social network after physically disconnecting from it.

unproblematic and primarily about maintaining and forging ties, rather than manipulating or breaking them. Another problem is that studies generally focus on the use of social media by migrants, and overlook users in the country of origin. This change of perspective might help us understand how social media factor in to the decision to migrate and to the choice of location (Benitez, 2012; McGregor & Siegel, 2013), and how social media may change family dynamics in the case of transnational families (Miller & Madianou, 2012; Bacigalupe & Cámara, 2012).

Finally, in spite of the democratization of access to new media, many migrants still face difficulties in engaging in everyday communication with their countries of origin due to political issues, legal status or lack of digital literacy. Others manifest no particular interest in preserving close ties with their home country, or in cosmopolitan sensitiveness. This brings into question the assumption that cosmopolitanism is becoming an emblematic lifestyle of the modern migrant (Nedelcu, 2012).

To date, there have been a few studies on Slovak migrants in the UK focusing mainly on au pairs (Búriková, 2006; 2007; Búriková & Miller, 2010); romantic relation formation, housing patterns and community building (Jenčová, 2007a,b; 2008); language use in mixed Slovak/British families (Bačová, 2010), and the integration of Czech and Slovak Roma living in the UK (Třísková, 2011). None of these have focused specifically on (new) communication media use by migrants. New media have been explicitly addressed solely in our previous research with Slovaks in Ireland, focusing on the particular ways in which they are used by migrants' organizations to mobilize participation in community activities (Petrjánošová & Lášticová, 2010; Lášticová & Petrjánošová, 2013; Petrjánošová, 2011). This paper offers some first insights from a pilot study on new media use by Slovak migrants in the UK, and on the ways it helps them to form and maintain social capital both within the host country, and within the country of origin. The structure of migrant identities is also analysed with respect to social capital and transnational migration.

Slovaks in the UK "offline" and "online"

The UK, together with the Republic of Ireland and Sweden, opened its labour market to migrants from the 10 "new" EU member states immediately after the 2004 EU enlargement. According to the estimate by the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad, as many as 90 000 Slovaks were living in the UK in 2008, directly before the economic crisis struck.[3] Although Slovaks are currently only the 22nd largest group of foreign nationals living in the UK; the group expanded more quickly than any other between 2004 and 2010, growing by more than 600%. While in 2004 only 8 000 Slovaks lived in the UK, in 2010 it was as many as 51 000 according to the British Office for National Statistics (ONS).[4] According to other data, there

[3] http://www.uszz.sk/sk//pocty-a-odhady. The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad is a Slovak Government funded institution, providing support for Slovaks living abroad, including those who are not Slovak citizens anymore. For example, it offers (often minimum) grants for migrant cultural, educational and community initiatives, it issues "Certificates of Slovaks living abroad" (up to the third generation), compiles statistics on Slovaks abroad, and documents the activities of Slovak migrant organizations.

[4] Data by ONS cited in http://profesia.pravda.sk/ludske-zdroje/clanok/17736-slovaci-su-najrychlejsie-rastucou-narodnostou-v-britanii, retrieved on 05/05/2014.

are 49 340 Slovaks who migrated between 2004 and 2011 living in England and Wales alone.[5] Another indicator, capturing only those who work in the UK, is the UK National Insurance Number (NI). The ONS quarterly report states that 11 780 NI numbers were allocated to Slovak citizens in the year ending March 2014. This represents a 3% increase on the previous year and places Slovakia 12th in the number of registrations, the first three places being held by Poland, Romania and Spain.[6]

There is little data on the socio-demographic characteristics of Slovaks living in the UK. According to the Labour Force Sample Survey in the Slovak Republic[7], in the fourth quarter of 2013 there were 5 400 men and 3 900 women officially working in the UK, their places of residence in Slovakia being mainly Nitra (N=2600) and Banská Bystrica (N=2100) regions.[8] The 2004–2009 Accession Monitoring Report[9] also provides breakdown by profession. In this period, as many as 47% of Slovaks living in the UK worked in administration, business and management; 21% worked in hospitality and catering, 6.5% worked in agriculture, 6% in manufacturing, 4.5% in food processing, 4% in retail, 4.5% in health and medicine, 3% in construction and land, 1.5% in transport and 1.7% in entertainment and leisure (100%=96 065 people working in the top ten sectors of the British economy). The number of Slovaks working in administration, business and management somewhat contradicts the stereotype of Slovaks as a cheap labor force but, of course, these numbers concern only registered workers.

There is a plethora of organizations and websites dedicated to Slovak migrants in the UK. Some of them were created before 2004, serving various waves of (Czecho)Slovak immigration, while others were established only after Slovakia's 2004 EU accession,[10] addressing potentially different groups of migrants, and offering different services.[11] In

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[5] http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Population+by+Nationality+and+Country+of+Birth#tab-data-tables, retrieved 01/06/2014.

[6] http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/may-2014/msqr-may-2014.html, retrieved 01/06/2014.

[7] Labour Force Sample Survey results in the Slovak Republic for the 4th quarter of 2013, including Ad Hoc Module 2013: Accidents at work and other work-related health problems. Statistical Office of Slovak Republic, Headquarters Bratislava, publication date: 30/04/2014, publication code: 21714. Accessed 14/08/2014 from http://www.susr.sk/

[8] While Banská Bystrica region had the second highest rate of unemployment out of eight Slovak regions in December 2013 (18.26%), the unemployment rate in Nitra region is (12.52%) is lower than the rate for Slovakia as a whole (13.5%). Accessed on 14/08/2014 from http://www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/nezamestnanost-mesacne-statistiky/2013.html?page_id=268686.

[9] Accession Monitoring Report May 2004- March2009, A joint online report between the UK Border Agency, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs and Communities and Local Government. Accessed on 07/08/2014 http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ 20100422120657/ http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/ reports/accession_monitoring_report/report-19/may04-mar09?view=Binary

[10] See http://www.slovenskecentrum.sk/en/page/34#left for a comprehensive list of the most important organizations, retrieved 01/06/2014.

[11] For example, the Slovak Circle in Great Britain was founded in 1971 and was preceded by the Association of Slovaks in Great Britain, created in 1951. Slovak Circle also helped set up a weekend school for Slovak children, opened in 2006 (retrieved 12/07/2014 from www.slovaklearning.co.uk). Another older organization, Velehrad London charity (1964), helps migrants from former

addition to these organizations' websites, there are a number of other sites, usually dedicated to both Czechs and Slovaks since they share a common history and a similar language. The Slovak Centre London, a non-profit organisation for migrants, provided a list of more than 50 websites or Facebook groups dedicated to Slovak and Czech migrants in April 2012.[12] These usually offer practical information, including job adverts, accommodation, and legal advice. The largest of them is www.pohyby.co.uk[13], a community with 30 000 members, created in 2004. As far as social network sites are concerned, there is a considerable Slovak migrant presence on Facebook, again usually together with Czechs. The largest Facebook page, "Czechs and Slovaks in the UK"[14], has more than 33 000 likes at the time of writing. It was launched in October 2009 and its most active members live in London and are aged between 25 and 34.[15] In comparison, the "Slovaks in the UK" Facebook page has only 4 833 likes. There are numerous "regional" Facebook pages, such as Czech and Slovaks in London and the London area (9 000 likes), Czech and Slovaks in Birmingham (1 250 likes), Czechs and Slovaks in Manchester (830 likes), etc.

As our participants were addressed via the "Czechs and Slovaks in the UK" Facebook page, in what follows we briefly present the results of the content analysis of posts on this page. The period between January 1 and June 15, 2014 was analysed. Posts by "Czechs and Slovaks in the UK" can be categorized into eight main categories (table 1). There is no clear pattern of posting; some days there are no posts by the page administrators, other days there are at least 10 posts. Individual followers also make 10 to 15 posts on the page per day (usually work and accommodation related requests), which makes the information feed quite difficult to follow.

Table 1. Categories of posts on "Czechs and Slovaks in the UK" Facebook page

	Job adverts	Upcoming events	Ads for services	Slovak Embassy info	Videos	Photos/ Pictures	Links to articles	Other	Total
Freq.	11	33	27	2	4	31	12	3	123
%	8.94	26.82	21.95	1.63	3.25	25.20	9.76	2.43	100

Czechoslovakia with education, it provides spiritual assistance and pastoral services for Catholics and has also been a meeting point for Czechs and Slovaks living in London (http://en.velehrad.org.uk/about-us/, 12/07/2014). In contrast, Slovak Centre London was only created in 2004, aiming to provide practical guidelines on living, studying or travelling in Great Britain, as well as supporting the cohesion of the Slovak community in the UK, reinforcing Slovak cultural identity and making Slovak culture known to other foreign nationals living in the UK (retrieved 15/04/ 2012 from www.slovakcentre.co.uk). Following the return of its founder to Slovakia, the centre currently functions as a web portal.

[12] http://www.slovenskecentrum.sk/sk/page/38/adresar---slovaci-v-anglicku, retrieved 15/06/2014.

[13] http://www.pohyby.co.uk/. Pohyby means "movement" both in Czech and in Slovak.

[14] https://www.facebook.com/czechoslovakia.uk

[15] https://www.facebook.com/czechoslovakia.uk?ref=ts&fref=ts, retrieved 01/06/2014.

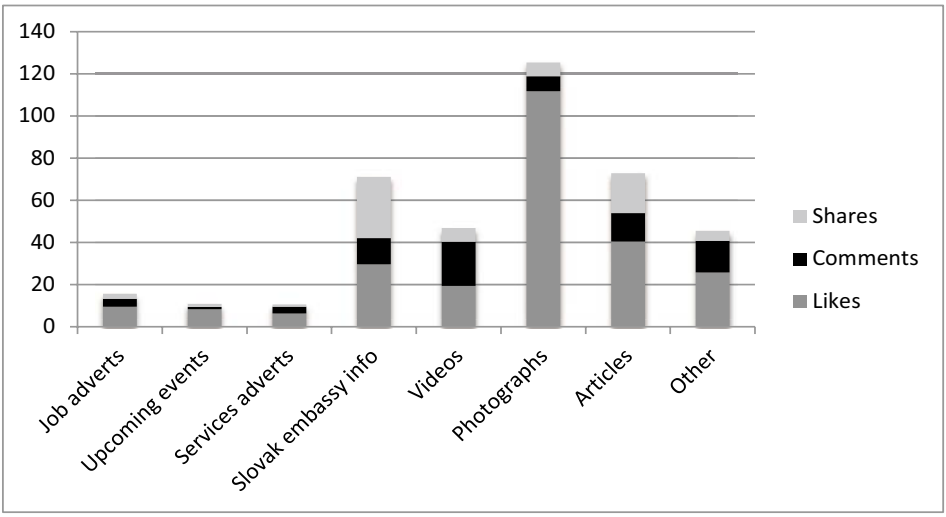

Figure 1. Categories of posts on "Czechs and Slovaks in the UK" Facebook page and average numbers of likes, comments and shares (January 1 – June 15, 2014)

We also looked at the extent to which these categories of posts were liked, commented upon or shared (Figure 1). Upcoming events[16] were the most frequent (26.82%), but were not among the most liked, commented or shared. Photos of the UK countryside represent the second most frequent category of posts (25.2%) and these are the most liked, but are seldom commented upon or shared. Although adverts for different Czech and Slovak service providers (a Slovak lawyer, a Czech hairdresser, a Czechoslovak taxi service, etc.) are the third most frequent kind of posts (21.95%), they generated only a limited number of likes, comments or shares. Conversely, links to newspaper articles from the Czech or Slovak press (featuring mainly information about Czech/Slovak migrants living abroad, Scottish independence or the potential UK withdrawal from the EU) represent less than 10% of posts, but were liked, shared and commented on more than the adverts. Information from the Slovak embassy was posted only twice, but generated the largest number of shares. To sum up, apart from the embassy information, practical information about jobs, events and services is liked, commented on or shared less than photos, videos and newspaper articles.

Methods and participants

The pilot study was carried out as part of research for a Masters' dissertation by Jozef Vrabec, completed at the Institute of Applied Psychology, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University in Bratislava (Vrabec, 2014). In the first stage of the pilot,

[16] These are rarely posted as Facebook events – there have been only 6 Facebook events since January 2014, less than 20% of all upcoming events posts.

five semi-structured face-to-face interviews were carried out with Slovak migrants who currently live (N=3) or have recently lived in the UK (N=2), the length of stay varying between 1 and 9 years.[17] The interviews were conducted in Slovakia, mainly during the Christmas holidays, when the interviewees were visiting their relatives. The interviews explored general experiences of migration to the UK, focusing particularly on new media use, and social capital and networks. The participants were contacted via snowball, two were students, one was a working student, one was a manual worker, and one worked in a hotel.

Thirty-one participants volunteered to fill in the questionnaire, administered online and posted via the "Czechs and Slovaks in the UK" Facebook page in March 2014. The questionnaire asked about their use of communication media when contacting family and friends, their knowledge of Slovak migrant organizations in the UK, their social capital and their identity. All the participants arrived in the UK after 2004 and have lived there for at least 6 months; with 13 participants (41.9%) living there for more than 3 years, 28 participants (90.3%) live in England (8 of them in London). They are aged between 18 and 49, with an average age of 27.2. Seven men (22.6%) and 24 women (77.4%) participated in the study. The majority of the participants have a university or a high-school education. Thirteen of them (42%) have a university degree (BA and MA combined) and 12 (38.7%) are educated to secondary level and hold A-levels. As far as the purpose of stay in the UK is concerned, 19 (61.3%) work there, 8 (25.8%) work and study at the same time and 4 (12.9%) are students. They work in various fields with cleaning, manual work, services, administration and nursing being the most frequent job areas.

Results

New media use

The questionnaire data suggest that Skype is the most frequent communication medium used to contact friends and relatives living in Slovakia (54.8%). 22.6% of participants primarily use social network sites (Facebook), 16.1% mainly use their mobile phones, 3.2% use Pokec[18]—the biggest Slovak community/chatroom—and 3.2% use mobile applications, such as Viber. As far as contact with friends and relatives living in the UK is concerned, face-to-face contact is dominant (41.9%), with 25.8% of participants primarily using their mobile phone, 22.6% mainly using Skype and 9.7% using social network sites, mainly Facebook. In fact, Facebook is the social network site our participants use most on an everyday basis (93.5%). This is not surprising, as the participants were recruited via the "Czechs and Slovaks in the UK" Facebook page and Facebook is the most popular social network site in Slovakia (Velšic, 2012). Google+ is the second social network site most frequently used on an everyday basis by our participants (22.6%).

However, the following participant reports that Skype is his favourite communication medium for contacting family and friends living in Slovakia, because it allows for more in-depth communication than Facebook. In general, new media are referred to in the interviews

[17] The participants' identities were anonymized for the sake of this paper.

[18] http://pokec.azet.sk/

as a means of inducing the feeling of "being at home". Igor also suggests that while the new media help a person maintain social capital in the country of origin, in the host country face-to-face contact is more efficient, with the university environment being especially helpful for social as well as professional networking.

> *Skype represents about 50% of my contact. It is hard to exchange messages via Facebook, to look only at the pictures people post there. You don't get a very good idea about their lives. So, others may prefer different things, but for me Skype is best. Because I can have a conversation on it... You can't do that with Facebook. (…) I just log in to see what's new and then I ask people to have a conversation via Skype. And then there is also e-mail. (I: And what about the other Slovaks you know, is it the same?) Those I know only use these three media* [Skype, Facebook, e-mail]. *I probably don't know anyone who would use Twitter. (…) I would recommend studying abroad to everyone, because of the social media as well. You have contact with family and friends. So, if you are not that attached, if you don't need to be at home every weekend, or once a month, I see no reason why not* [to leave]. *Today, all these things* [new media] *make you feel you are still at home.* (Igor, male, 21, student, 3 years in Scotland)

Similarly, in the following account, it is pointed out that the new media, especially Skype, are the main communication channel that facilitates maintaining ties back at home. The main reason is that it provides opportunities for easy and cost effective communication, compared with regular mail used before the advent of new media. This participant does not acknowledge the existence of a potential digital gap, as she assumes every (Slovak) migrant has a computer and Internet access. The difference between the communication "now" and "then" is large, while the difference between "here" and "there" is becoming smaller thanks to the new media. As the interviews were carried out in Slovakia, the adverb "here" refers systematically to Slovakia, and "there" to the UK. It would be interesting to see whether this adverbial use would change if the interviews were carried out in the UK.

> *I would say I mostly use the Internet, and either Facebook or Skype. Of course, I also use e-mail, but rarely, because it takes longer to read. (…) Twelve years ago, when I first moved away* [from Slovakia] *I used regular mail, 'cause I didn't have either a mobile or the Internet, so it was normal to send postcards or letters. Every Sunday, I sat down and wrote, and wrote. And I was very happy if someone wrote back to me. (I: How has it changed since?) Well, now I do have a mobile and the Internet. The Internet is fast; you can have a conversation or send messages for free. So I don't send letters anymore. (…) It is easy now, as there is Skype, today everyone has the Internet or a notebook so we spend hours talking on Skype about how life is* ***here*** *or* ***there****. So we don't feel any difference that I am not* ***here*** *or* ***there.*** (Zuzana, female, 30, student/nurse, 9 years in England)

In the following extract, Jakub talks about his experience from 2008, when Facebook was not yet widely used. Back then, he contacted family in Slovakia via phone and in urgent cases only. Other Slovak migrants in the UK were contacted via chat, phone or face-to-face. The participant supposes that, thanks to the new media, Slovak migrants are more networked and active than they were in 2008.

> *Maybe those communities are more alive or more interconnected now. At that time* [2008] *Facebook and things like that were not that popular. I communicated with friends via the Pokec*

chatroom – there was a special chatroom for Slovaks living in England – and I also used ICQ. And when something urgent came up, the phone with my family. But we didn't really talk to each other that much (Jakub, male, 25, manual worker, 1 year in England in 2008).

In contrast, Viera speaks of the growing difference between "here" and "there" during her stay in the UK, in spite of social media use. She prefers face-to-face or phone contact to communicate both with friends in the UK and in Slovakia.

Facebook was OK, but after some time I found I didn't have much in common with people from Slovakia. We each have our own lives, because they are in Slovakia and I am in England, and we have nothing to say to each other anymore. I don't like posting pictures about my life for people who don't actually know anything about it. So, I stopped going on it [to Facebook]. *And, if I'm in contact with someone, we can meet face to face in Slovakia. The same applies in England. With my friends in England, we have always phoned each other, or written texts, but our use of Facebook is minimal.* (Viera, female, 28, works in a hotel, 5 years in England)

When looking for information concerning a job, accommodation etc., the Internet and other information sources predominate (58.1%). 19.4% use the Internet only, 16.1% gather information from friends/family combined with other sources, 3.2% mentioned only friends/family and 3.2% newspapers, TV and radio. 61.3% of participants are familiar with websites dedicated specifically to Slovak migrants in the UK, but many do not remember the names of them. The "Czechs and Slovaks in the UK" Facebook page, where the link to the questionnaire was posted, and the biggest community site, www.pohyby.co.uk, were repeatedly mentioned and had been used by some participants to find information prior to migration.

As far as www.pohyby.sk is concerned, I visited it a couple of times. You can find some basic things there, advice about accommodation, about bureaucratic stuff. There are a lot of adverts concerning transporting stuff, moving etc. Slovaks sure are trying to help each other in those areas, they post information for other Slovaks to use. (Viera, female, 28, works in a hotel, 5 years in England)

Several participants suggested that there are different categories of migrants who have different purposes of stay in the UK, different social capital building needs, different levels of involvement in the Slovak community life in the UK, and different levels of interest in web content dedicated specifically to Slovaks in the UK. Students are repeatedly referred to as a distinct category.

I: Do you know any websites for Czechs and Slovaks there?
P: Not really, the community isn't big enough for them to flourish. (…) *If you don't plan on staying in the UK for a long time, then you're not interested in meeting other Czechs and Slovaks. For example, I have a neighbour who works in the UK; she goes there for three months and then comes back home for a month. So she just works there and in her spare time she isn't interested in meeting other people. Either she doesn't have that much time, or she thinks, 'I am going back to Slovakia in a while, why should I try to find someone'? Students are probably different; they are there longer, for at least a year.* (Peter, male, 19, student, spent 1 year in England)

Social capital

As many as 93.5% of participants mentioned that they have regular contact with other Slovaks living in the UK. Everyday contact was reported by 35.5% of participants, 22.6% are in contact with other Slovaks several times a week, 9.7% once a week and 32.3% of participants have contact with other Slovaks less often. The majority of participants (77.4%) reported that the main reason for contact is spending leisure time together.

The participants were also asked whether they knew of any Slovak associations or organizations in the UK. As many as 90.3% of participants reported that they did not know of any Slovak migrant/community association operating in the UK. Only one of those who knew some associations was able to name one—"Slovaks in Birmingham". Only 29% mentioned that they had attended events organized by the Slovak community in the UK, and had learned about them mainly via the new media. This was maybe due to the fact that the participants did not understand exactly what was meant by "Slovak associations" and did not have the opportunity to ask for clarification as they completed the questionnaire online. Yet, in the semi-structured interviews as well, the participants had difficulty thinking of any Slovak associations or community activities and, only when further prompted, did some of them mention that they knew people who attended Slovak mass or participated in a Facebook group for Slovak women married to Nigerians.

We were also interested in bonding social capital in our participants, e. g. the social networks they have in the UK that help them solve potential problems, finding a job, lend them money, give them advice, etc. We used five items from Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2008), with answers on a 5-point Likert scale (1- totally disagree; 5 – totally agree). The answers indicate a fairly good level of bonding social capital in our participants ($M=3.90$; $SD=0.83$; $\alpha = 0.76$).

51.6% of participants indicated that people who embody this kind of bonding social capital are mostly Slovaks. 22.6% reported that these people are mostly British citizens, 16.1% mentioned Slovaks together with other nationalities, and 9.7% mentioned mostly Czechs. The participants generally reported becoming acquainted with these people *upon arrival* to the UK via face-to-face contact (45.2%); 19.4% met them face-to-face *before arrival* to the UK, and 32.3% became acquainted via social media, mostly *upon arrival* to the UK (29.1%).

As far as bonding and bridging social capital are concerned, two main strategies were described in the semi-structured interviews, connected to the needs and expectations of particular migrants. One of them is deliberately contacting mainly other foreigners/locals in order to learn the language and make as much as possible of cultural diversity (bridging social capital); another one is forming connections mainly with other migrants from the country of origin (bonding social capital).

For Jakub, being in contact with people from the same country meant having the social networks necessary to overcome everyday problems. He essentializes the tendency of migrants from the same country to form cohesive support groups, by repeatedly calling it "natural". He also automatically presupposes that people from the same culture are more able to form strong interpersonal ties than people from distinct cultures, and are more likely to provide each other with psychological support.

The beginning was quite difficult, because it was my first time abroad without my parents and I had to rely on myself. But what helped me was that I came [to the UK] *with two guys from eastern Slovakia, and then there were two Czechs, so I was able to find people who were closer to me, as they were from Slovakia. When people are abroad, they have a* ***natural*** *tendency to come together and help each other.* (…) *When you are a couple of hundreds or thousands of miles away from home, you* ***naturally*** *look for contact with people that come from where you come from, because they'll help you more than... Just the fact that they're from the same country can help you overcome problems you have. We always tried to stick together and help each other and I liked it.* (Jakub, male, 25, manual worker, 1 year in England in 2008)

Igor, who is a university student, reports that he has deliberately changed his strategy of networking with other people during his stay in Scotland, trying also to include other foreign nationals in his social networks. This strategy of going beyond the limits of ones' national ingroup is discursively constructed as a norm one should respect when studying abroad. Igor also distanced himself from those who do associate on the basis of shared ethnicity or culture.

I realized, after being mainly in contact with Slovaks that I really needed to enlarge my horizons. I try to find friends from other parts of the world as well, not only Czechs and Slovaks. If you mainly speak your mother tongue, it's not that appropriate, because I didn't go to study in Scotland to have Slovak friends. I could have stayed in Slovakia. (…) I think that in order to enlarge your horizons, it's important not to limit yourself only to ***those*** *Slovak and Czech associations and forget that you are in Scotland and should be involved in something other than just Slovak and Czech issues.* (Igor, male, 21, student, 3 years in Scotland)

Similarly, Viera denounces Slovak migrants who do not function transnationally and focus solely on the short or medium term economic gains instead of integrating within the host society. She constructs them as an outgroup, both explicitly and implicitly (using of pronouns "those", "they").

I know people who live in ***those*** *Slovak groups.* (…) *Because* ***they*** *came to England just to make some money,* ***they*** *hate England, they hate English people. The only thing they like there* [in England] *is that* ***they*** *can make money... **They** do not even live, like going somewhere to have fun and meet people. **They** save money to come back to Slovakia, to buy a flat or a car here* [in Slovakia]… (Viera, female, 28, works in a hotel, 5 years in England)

Social capital, transnational migration and identity

We also wanted to know which factors were important to our participants' identity and what position social capital and transnational migration experience occupied within the overall identity. The participants were asked to rate various items representing different sources of identity such as gender, education or nationality on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – not at all important; 5 – very important). The following five dimensions of identity were identified through Principal Component Analysis (Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization), accounting for 76.14% of the total variance.

1. Social status and social capital (items: gender, education, job, friends, partner, accounts for 23.78 % of variance);

2. National and local identity (items: nationality/ethnicity, place you come from, Slovak citizenship, accounts for 17.13 % of variance);
3. Intimacy (items: sexuality, religion, nuclear family/parenthood, accounts for 14.69% of variance);
4. Transnationalism (items: EU citizenship, living in the UK, accounts for 10.89% of variance);
5. Difference (items: speaking with an accent or in a dialect, accounts for 9.65% of variance).

The first three most important sources of participants' identity—job (77.4%), partner (71%) and friends (67.8%)—belonged to the social status and social capital dimension, representing bonding, but also potentially bridging social capital through job and education related contacts and networks. Items belonging to the ethnic, civic-national and local identity dimension, thus corresponding loosely to maintained/bonding social capital, were less important (32.3%, 38.7% and 45.2% respectively). Transnational migration experience forms a separate dimension with EU citizenship. While living in the UK is more important for the overall sense of identity than being a EU citizen (35.5% and 29% respectively), it is slightly less important than being a Slovak citizen (38.7%).

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this paper was to investigate Slovak migrants' use of new media to build social capital in the UK, and to maintain social capital in the country of origin. The paper drew on data from a pilot study carried out with 36 Slovaks living in the UK, and on content analysis of the main Facebook page for Czechs and Slovaks living in the UK—"Czechs and Slovaks in the UK".

The results of this pilot study suggest that the main Facebook page is used for sharing emotions, with photographs of the English countryside being the most frequent and liked posts, rather than for community building and/or sharing practical information (housing, jobs, services, cultural and sports events organized by the Czech and Slovak community). It has been argued that while the first wave of Internet applications helped to build bridging social capital, the second wave is also enhancing and supporting communities by contributing to bonding capital (Komito, 2011). It is questionable whether the Facebook page investigated for the purpose of this study has this community building ambition or potential given its focus is a large target group within the UK as a whole, and given the absence of original (rather than shared) content. It can be expected that bonding social capital would be enhanced in a more limited setting (e.g. local or regional), as the results from our previous research in Ireland indicate (Lášticová & Petrjánošová, 2013).

Our data further imply that new media also contribute to maintained social capital in the country of origin (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). In fact, while Skype and Facebook are used mainly to maintain pre-existing strong ties in Slovakia, face-to-face contact and mobile phones are used to form and further maintain ties within the UK. The participants do not seem to realize the existence of the digital gap and think of new media use as an option widely accessible to every migrant, which may significantly differ from the reality (Nedelcu, 2012). The participants also reported a fairly strong level of bonding social capital, based

mainly (but not exclusively) on contacts with people from the Slovak migrant community. However, social media do not seem to facilitate social capital formation prior to migration, with face-to-face contact upon arrival being dominant. Moreover, exclusive use of Facebook is insufficient for maintaining ties in the country of origin, with weak ties being broken in some cases (Lingel, Naaman, & Boyd, 2014). Finally, the social capital dimension is most important within the participants' overall identity, and is independent from the transnational migration experience. The latter forms a separate dimension together with EU citizenship that has, in fact, considerably enhanced the migration opportunities for Slovak citizens.

As far as involvement in community activities organized by Slovak migrant organizations is concerned, our participants have little knowledge of these activities and organizations and, when they do have knowledge, they learn about their existence via social media**.** The number of organizations dedicated to Slovak migrants in the UK differs significantly from the situation in the Republic of Ireland. There, migrant life is concentrated around Slovakpoint, a Slovak grocery store in Dublin and its projects, which have not only commercial, but also community and identity building effects (Petrjánošová & Lášticová, 2010). Moreover, unlike in Ireland where Slovaks are concentrated in the major cities of Dublin and Cork, there are more Slovaks in the UK and their geographical dispersion is much greater. This makes offline social network formation more difficult (Lášticová & Petrjánošová, 2013). Also, in contrast to Ireland, where there are few websites dedicated to Slovaks but they are mutually interconnected, in the UK there is a plethora of relatively independent domains. Thus, unlike in Ireland, it is impossible to refer to one dominant space (physical or virtual) around which an imagined community of Slovak migrants in the UK could be constructed (Petrjánošová & Lášticová, 2010).

The main limitation of this pilot study is the under-coverage—the small sample cannot be considered as representative for all Slovaks living in the UK, as it only captures first generation migrants, new media users and certain professions. The self-selection of participants for the questionnaire further undermines the representativeness, given the inevitable distortion, twice over: those who use the Facebook group, and those who volunteer to answer the questionnaire. The issue of self-selection has been frequently addressed in the literature on survey sampling, and there are several types of weighting adjustments that deal with this, at least partially (see i.e. Betlehem, 2009).

Moreover, a questionnaire posted online can only contain a limited amount of items, so the participant is motivated to complete it in its entirety. Thus, other groups of migrants with potentially different needs and expectations concerning integration, and different purposes of stay in the UK should be further addressed using in-depth face-to-face interviewing and other qualitative methods, possibly involving onsite participant observation. Another study could also focus on community website administrators and their strategies for constructing and mobilizing the transmigrant community (see Oiarzabal, 2012 on the Basque diaspora).

Finally, only one dimension for social capital—ethnic/national identity—is assumed in this study. However, bonding/bridging social capital applies to any group with a common identity, not just an ethnic group. It could be a local community with a physical existence, it could also be work related.[19] Thus the emphasis on nationality/ethnicity as the main defining factor in bonding social capital could be considered as essentialist, particularly

[19] The author thanks the anonymous reviewer for this comment.

since the participants do not seem to give it priority within their identity structure. Moreover, migrants working in leading positions in business, management or academia, which are underrepresented in this sample, might be more likely to rely on ethnically heterogeneous rather than homogeneous sources of bonding social capital. On the other hand, data from our previous research in Ireland show that Slovak migrants use their ethnicity/nationality (both implicitly and explicitly) as a dominant social category to distinguish between "us" and "them" in their everyday lives (Petrjánošová & Lášticová, 2010), and that their bonding social capital seems to strongly rely on shared ethnicity/nationality.

To conclude, our data partially support Dekker and Engbersen's (2012) claim that social media are not only new communication channels, but also transform migrant networks and lower the threshold for migration. However, as Komito (2011) cautiously points out, it is too early to estimate the impact that social media will have on the migration process, since many additional factors have to be taken into account, such as length of stay in the host society and commitment to remaining in the host society or to moving to new areas.

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