Title: „Besiged Fortress”, „Modernization and Progress”, „Functional passivity in disfunctional system” – on immigration discourses of Polish Social Services Professionals working with migrants.

Abstract

Following economical transformation Poland has faced cultural change towards values represented by neoliberal economy. Aspiring to become a member of „western world”, Poland tried to follow it’s patterns, among others, by fulfilling EU enlargement conditions. One of them was that, localized between cores and peripheries, semi – peripherial Poland, should undertake the role of buffer zone protecting the core from flow of immigrants from peripheries. Hereby Poland, though it was not itself an immigrant country, had adopted stricte and severe immigration policy. It resulted in anti-immigrant attitude in legal policy and institutional practices. Those tendencies were recently reinforced by echo of „anti – multicultural baklash” and voices expressing the „crisis of multiculturalism”.

Above described processes and policies are reproduced in practices on institutional and professional level. it can be traced from discourses of social services professionals working with migrants. There are three main discourses emerging from their narratives:

1) Discourse of „Besiged Fortress” combinig image of Poland as a buffer zone of centres and, reffering to the past, image of Poland as the „Bulwark of Christianity” and „Gates of Europe”.

2) Discourse of „Modernization, Civilization and Progress” in which coming from core, western migrants are seen as agents of progress and modernization and peripherial easterners and southerners as backward and uncivilized.

2) Discourse of „Functional passivity in disfunctional system” according to which undemocratic habitus of Polish institutions makes any bottom-up, directed on improvement of foreigners situation, change, impossible. Undemocratic habitus is also expressed by high power distance between social services professionals and their charges.

Above mentioned discourses shed light on national, ethnic, cultural, gender, sexual and class and religious differences between social services professionals and their foreign charges. They also provide examples of “critical incidents” that could be used in process of educating and shaping intercultural competence of professionals. As such, they may be subjected to considerations and actions concerning adult education.

Since I am using the wide definition of social services the range of respondents encompasses social workers, officials, clerks, teachers, lawyers, representatives of national and ethnic minorities, NGO workers, educational and psychological counselors, employment agents and clergy.