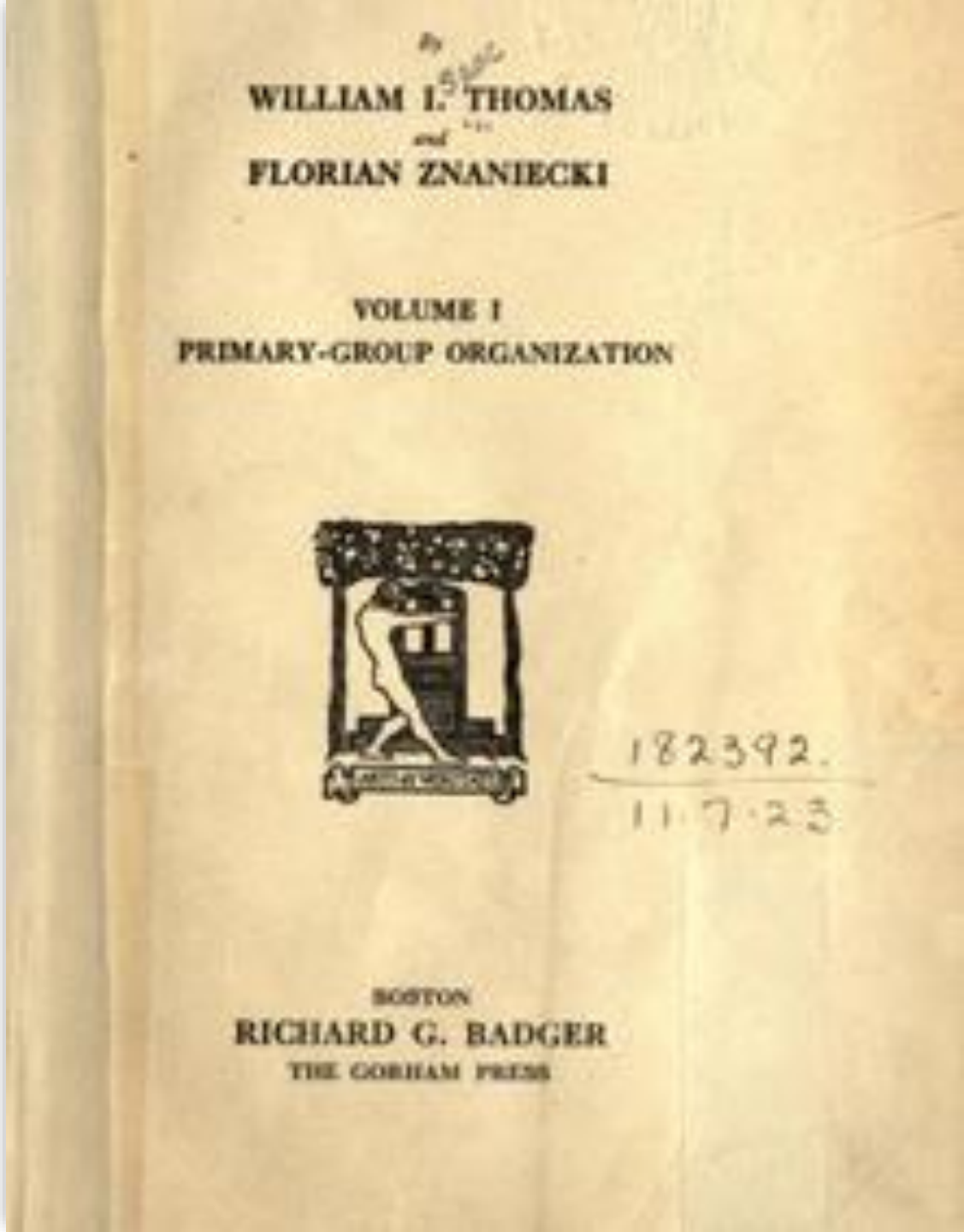
Men, masculinities and migration: theoretical perspectives

Katarzyna Wojnicka
Associate Professor
University of Gothenburg

The great paradox

- Classical studies on migration almost always about men
- …but almost never about masculinities
- Change after 2000



Who are migrant men?

- Not a homogenous group
  - Refugees
  - Labour migrants
  - So called expats

Theories I

Hegemonic masculinities

- A set of specific male characteristics that shape a certain desired model of masculinity, specific to a given society at a given time (Connell 2000)
- An idealized image of masculinity
  - Authority
  - Physical strength
  - Economic independence
  - Heterosexuality

Marginalised masculinities

- Men unable to identify with the hegemonic model
- Men rejecting the hegemonic model
- Dominated by hegemonic masculinities
- Deprived of power
- Ethnic and sexual minorities
- Lower social classes

Theories II

Protective masculinities

The type of hegemonic masculinity, understood as "male patriarchal domination over women" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005)

Related to physical strength, based on power and control (Wojnicka 2022)

The male role is defined mainly in the context of financial security and physical protection of subordinate women and children

Protected persons must recognize and accept the defender's authority

Women may be left unprotected if they reject male authority

Foreign masculinities

Type of marginalized masculinities

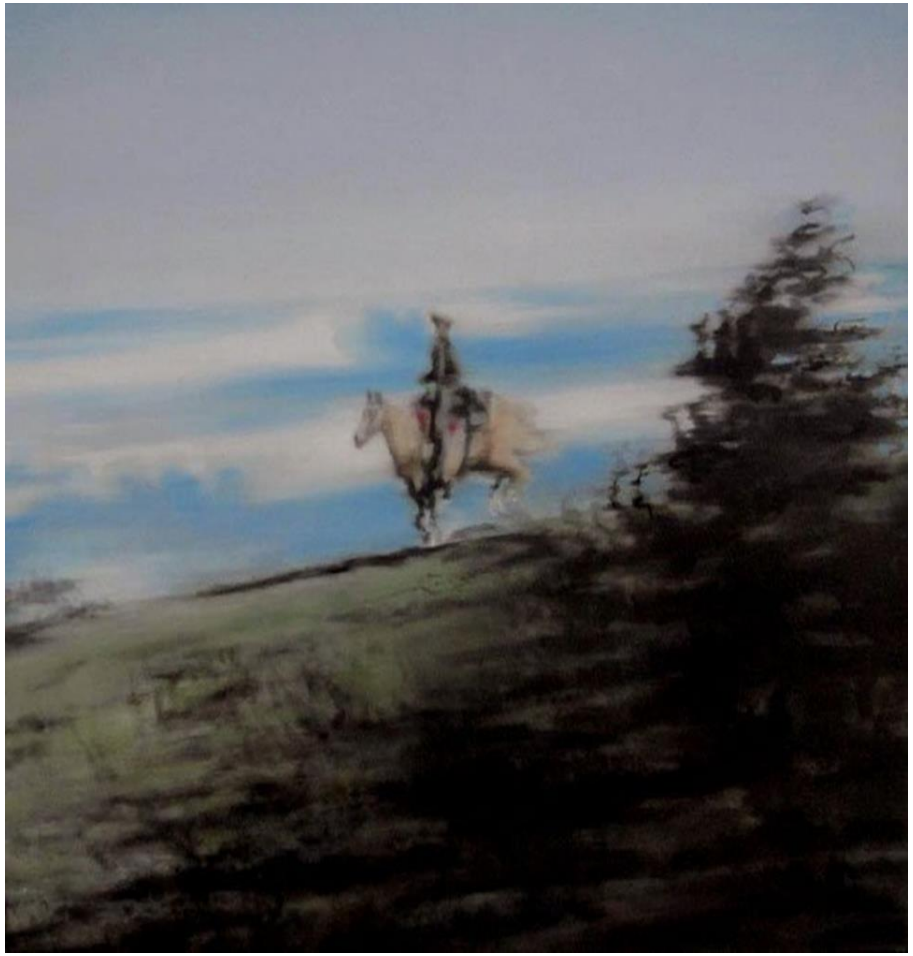
Associated with aggression, physical violence and lack of understanding of gender-equality norms (Schreibelhofer 2017)

Applied in the context of migrant, non-white, non-christian men, who are perceived as dangerous, mostly sex-predators

Utilized in anti-migration narratives

Associated with femonationalism (Farris 2017)

Theories III



Hybrid masculinities

A type of gender identity where certain elements of subordinated and or marginalized masculinities, together with the so-called feminine characteristics and practices, are selectively incorporated into the dominant model of masculinity

Young, white, heterosexual men, usually occupying privileged positions in society

Lack of emancipatory potential

Cosmetic changes, reproduction of the existing gender order

Spacially intersectional perspective

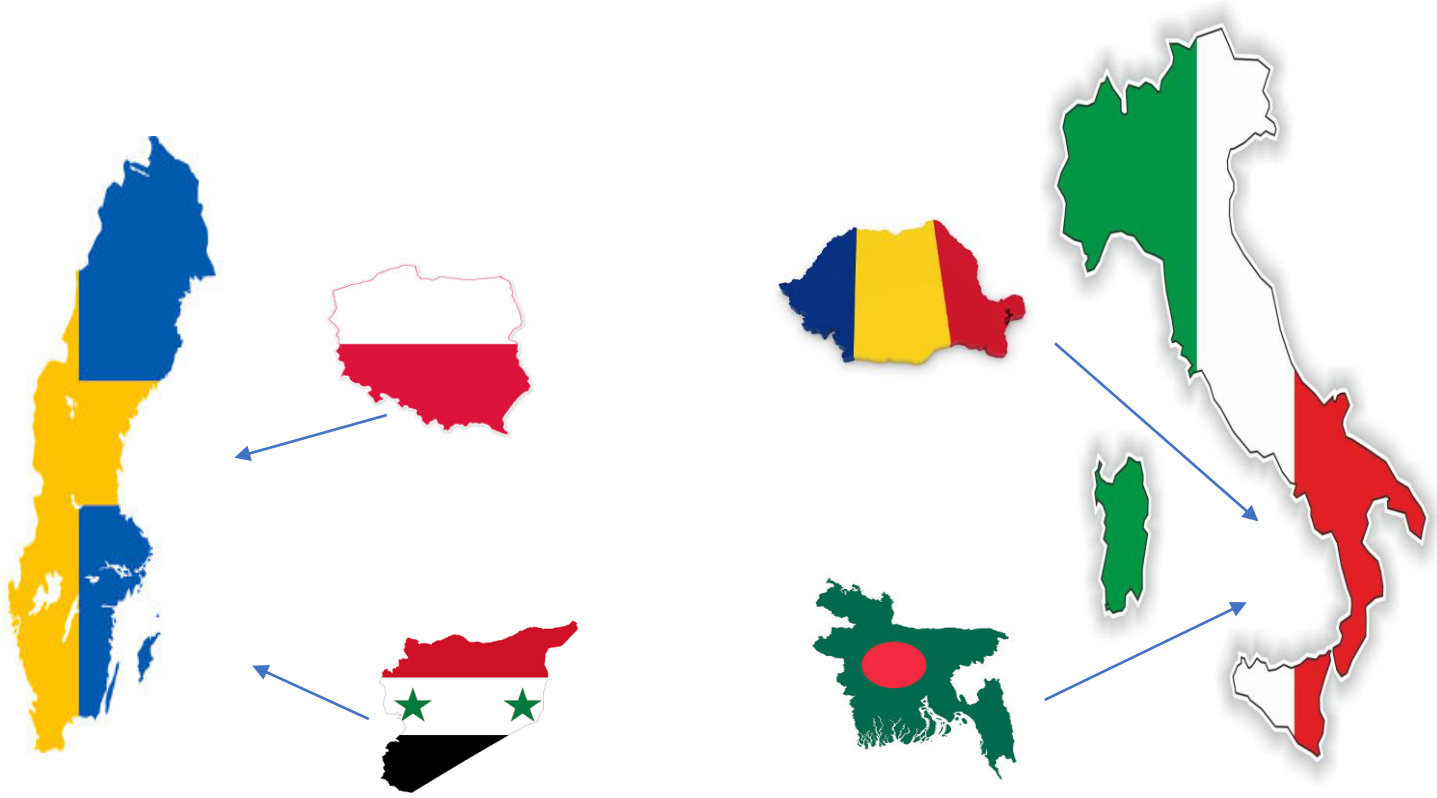
- Power and privileges are held by given dominant groups specific to geographical/spatial dimensions (Wojnicka & Pustułka 2017)
- Spacial belonging is one of the crucial elements of social embodiment and class status
- Socio-spatial locations are closely linked to the relations and distributions of power and, consequently, to hegemonic, marginalized and subordinated masculinities
- Mosaic of spatial freedoms and limitations of masculinities deeply embedded in the spaces where they operate
- Experiences of men are not only gendered, but also diverging with respect of marginalization and privilege, and these are conditioned by the specific locations and spaces of local, national or transnational dimensions and can change in time

Research project

- “Transnational bachelors. An ethnography about singleness among migrated men in the European Union" (VR 2019-2023)
- Aim: to understand how men imagine their romantic future, how they understand and relate to their families, and how transnational bachelorhood impacts their sense of masculinity:
  - Management of singlehood as part of their (masculine) identity
  - Dating practices

Geographical context

- Host countries: Sweden and Italy
- EU Intra migrants: Poland and Romania
- Global migrants: Bangladesh and Syria



Methodology and data

- Multi-sited ethnography
  - IDIs
  - (non)participant observations (events)
  - netnography (FB groups)

- Research participants
  - 51 research participants
  - All identified as single, cis men
  - 48 heteroexual and 3 gay men
  - 1st gerenation migrants (1 month to 23 years of stay in the host country
  - education: all levels
  - social class: working (EU-intra migrants) and middle class (global migrants)
  - never married bachelors, divorcees, separated persons, in open relationships, dating, not dating, with and without children

Hegemonic masculinity

- Majority of research participants share traditional perceptions regarding gender roles
- Desire for creating a monogamous, ”partnership” (with variety of definitions)
- Preferences to find a person who will adjust to their expectations rather than willingness to adapt to a new gender regime

There is respect... Example, Italian men... and Italian women... both of them work, both of them divide the expenses in two, instead you go to Bangladesh, only the man works, the woman a little, it is not that all the women work. They stay at home, have children, take them to school, do other things. So there is a respect, when the man comes home in the evening, everything is prepared, dinner, things like that... It's a different thing. Whereas here in Italy when you come home you have to cook together, you have to go shopping together. [LAUGHING]Even the woman has respect for the man if he works all day long - but here we all work and this is the problem.

Burin from Rome

Marginalised masculinities

- Experiences of deskilling
- Downward mobility dynamic & deprivation of hegemonic status
- Local partners (Italian and Swedish women) are rather unavailable due to low levels of capitals that men have (economic, social and cultural)
- Domination of narratives on love failures rather than stories of success:
  - broken hearts
  - incompatible short-term relationships
  - disappointments and bitterness

So during the first period of time, you find it hard to even speak with females or with anyone in general. The reason is that you come for example from Syria they look at you in a certain way, as if you are new here for example, we don't know who you are, Arab to be more specific. So I sometimes avoid conversations with women. Women who are not Swedes, they dare to talk to me more often but Swedish girls are more withdrawn from getting to know me and talking to someone who is a migrant like me who does not know the language ... so getting to know Arabs is easier.

Mo from Karlstad

Protective masculinity

- Breadwinning and providing financial support as the main task for me
- Migrant women do not have major problems with initiating relationships with non-compatriots (Siara 2014) - competition
- Narratives about the protection of “our” women who should not “be wasted” by other men
- Protection of their privileges

Foreign masculinities

- Reproduction of negative stereotypes regarding local men
- Loss of hegemonic position in masculinities hierarchies compensated by contempt for (other) more marginalised and subordinated men – homophobic and racist narratives

I don’t know what is happening. It is not only Sweden where it is happening, but Sweden… They are all getting weaker, or: more oestrogen comes in than testosterone. And you feel it (…) They are more passive, they are calmer and think there is no difference between a woman and a man but there is this difference and I do care. And this is fantastic, blurring the lines, I have no idea what it will lead to and I don’t want to know it. I might not be there any more. It is happening very fast, cultural and social changes so maybe I will be there to see where it is going. They are like really weak mentally, they want peace, they don’t have the balls and you feel it.

Szczepan from Götorg

Hybrid masculinities

- We did not identify such masculinity performances but other scholars did
- Mostly applicable concerning practices of expats or seasonal migrants who develop it in the host society and come back to hegemonic forms while being in the country of origin

Trąbka, A., Wojnicka, K. 2017. Self-positioning as a man in a transnational context. Constructing and managing hybrid masculinity, *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*. 12/2

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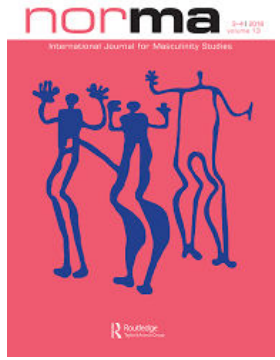

Spacially intersectional perspective

Dynamics of intimate and sexual relationships of (single) migrant men are negatively affected when transnational mobility occurs – change of the space changes experiences

Heterosexual male migrants face more challenges with dating and building romantic relationships than back in their home countries

Downward social mobility as a consequence of a change in the geographical space in the first place, intersecting with race, citizenship status, and social class

Decline of hegemonic status (Connell 2000) that transforms in marginalised forms of masculinities, resulting in activating narratives of protective and foreign masculinities as coping strategies

Publications

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Thank you for your attention

Katarzyna Wojnicka

katarzyna.wojnicka@gu.se

www.katarzynawojnicka.com

@DrKandTheMen