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Contesting some and reconciling other disagreements between the structuration and morphogenesis approaches

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Abstract

This paper contests some and reconciles other disagreements between the structuration and morphogenesis theories – two approaches in present-day sociology which aim at bridging the macro–micro gap in social theorizing, but whose advocates have been either indifferent to or openly at odds with each other, instead of engaging in a close intellectual collaboration. The empirical illustrations of my arguments come from local statistical surveys and ethnographic studies conducted in Polish villages from the onset to the decline of mass transatlantic migration in the period 1870s–1930s.

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1 Introduction

Instead of engaging in a close intellectual exchange, the advocates of the morphogenesis and structuration models which rely on similar premises in trying to bridge the so-called structure–agency gap in sociological analysis have been indifferent to or openly at odds with each other. The relevant debate in the UK obstinately dwells on the old disagreements between Margaret Archer's morphogenetic theory (1995) and Anthony Giddens' structuration model (1984, 1976) without either refuting attempts to correct the former's misrepresentations of the latter's arguments (Stones 2001, 2005) or considering the propositions from across the Atlantic which are relevant to the subject matter of the arguments. For their part, apparently unconcerned with this fixation of their British colleagues, Americans elaborate on subsequent modifications of the different aspects of the structuration model proposed by their fellow-national colleagues, historical sociologists such as William Sewell (1992), Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998), and (a Canadian) Francois Depelteau (2010), and on the akin-in-spirit ideas about the societal processes of the historically minded sociologists Andrew Abbott (2001), Ron Aminzade, (1992) and John R. Hall (1999). Such a conversation would be helpful, I believe, as some of the arguments of the British contesters of Giddens' structuration model are perfectly reconcilable, I will argue in this paper, with the formulations of this approach by those American scholars.

As a sociologist-historian-in-one by professional training and a long research practice, I subscribe to the 'American' version of the structuration model. The major premises informing the *historical*-sociological conceptualization of this approach are threefold. First, it conceives of both human actors and their surrounding societal environment as processes of continuous 'becoming' (rather than as entities fixed in time) and their forms and contents as always changeable and never fully determined. Second, it recognizes the ever-potential causal impact on the examined phenomena of the temporal dimension of the events and, specifically, their pace (slow/er or quick/er), rhythm (regular or irregular), sequence (the order in which the events happen), and duration (long/er or short/er) (Aminzade 1992). And third, it holds that the answer to *why* social phenomena come into being, change, or persist, is revealed by demonstrating *how* they do it, that is, by showing how they have been shaped over time by the constellations of changing circumstances (Abrams 1982). In order to show how/why a social phenomenon evolves in a certain direction and assumes specific characteristics, a historical sociologist identifies the constellation of circumstances that shapes these developments.

Before I present my arguments about the affinities of the morphogenesis theory and the historical conceptualization of the structuration framework, I should explain the understandings of the main concepts – social structure and human agency – as used in the latter model. *Structures*, denoting more or less enduring organizations of social (including economic and political) relations and cultural formations, are created and recreated in a process of the collective practice of social actors who occupy particular – and changeable – positions in small and larger groups where they enact specific roles whose normative prescriptions they have more or less internalized. As these position-and-role-specific practices – chains of practices, actually, as there are many acted out by many people at the same time in an ongoing fashion – become routinized and repetitive, they generate over time properties with characteristics and effects of their own, distinct from or external to the features and intentions of the individual people whose activities led to their emergence.

Structures are plural in character (different-purpose organizations, strong and weak informal networks, [sub]cultures), scope (global, regional/national, local), dynamics (more or less stable), rigidity (more and less permeable), and durability (long- to short-*durée*). Their multiplicity imbues structures at all levels with inherent tensions or even direct contradictions that create 'gaps' or 'loopholes' between different social arrangements and, resulting from these imperfections, an inconsistent and mutable capacity both to enable and constrain human agency in different forms and intensities (on differential capacities of societal structures to impact human actors, see Sewell 1992; also Archer 1982).

Human agency denotes the everyday 'engagement by individuals of different structural environments which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing situations' (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 970). It may be represented as comprising three analytically distinguishable components (in lived experience they closely interrelate). The *habitual* element refers to 'the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thoughts and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity'; the *projective* element encompasses 'the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future'; and the *practical-evaluative* element entails 'the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgements among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations.' Depending on a particular configuration of circumstances, 'one or another of these three aspects might predominate' in guiding individuals' actions (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 970–72). As social actors adjust their habitual reactions and future-oriented projects to their assessment of the practical situations of the moment, they recreate different structures of social life. This reproduction, however, is never ideal. New situations, in particular, enable actors to reinterpret schemas and redesign resources. In this way, like societal structures, human actions generate emergent properties that are irreducible to the social conditions in which they evolve (on this ability of individuals, see Sawyer 2001).[1] This 'causal' facility of human actors, however, is not simply the product of their agentic volitions but of the dialectics of the *power to* and *power over* as these actors (re)define and pursue their purposes, playing with or against different structures.

2 The morphogenetic and structuration approaches

Now to the purpose proper of this paper. My opening proposition regarding the relationship between the morphogenetic and structuration approaches is twofold. I claim that the idea of the duality of structure or the mutual reconstitution of human agency and social structure(s) posited by the structuration model and the analytical dualism founded on the notion of agency and structure as not only analytically separable but also factually distinguishable, are not incompatible. This argument is based on a premise shared by the morphogenetic approach and the earlier-noted historical-sociological reformulations of the

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[1] Unlike the proponents of the historical conceptualization of the structuration model who conceive of human agency as obviously shaped by but not reducible to its time- and place-specific societal environment, the advocates of the morphogenesis model tend to hold human agency to be exclusively 'collective' in nature (Archer 2000; for an up-to-date summary of relevant arguments and a strong collective-agency position, see Carter 2010).

structuration framework, namely, the conceptualization of human agency and societal structures as the ongoing processes of becoming. This proposition is illustrated in Figure 1.

If we conceive the interplay between societal structures and human agency posited by the structuration model as an ongoing process evolving over time, it becomes possible to view the two sides of this relationship as mutually (re)constituting each other over a long stretch of time, and at the same time to allow for the 'pre-existence' of structural conditions that human actors negotiate as they pursue their everyday lives here and now or, put differently, to allow for the temporal delay in the transformative effects of people's activities on societal structures, particularly larger and more 'remote' ones. To use Fernand Braudel's (1981) famous metaphor of the multi-storied historical structures stretching from global-scope, intermediate, to local-level patterns of our everyday activities, unless broken to pieces by violent revolutions from below (e.g. the Bolshevik one in 1917), long/er-established and well-settled mezzo- and macro-level systems transform more slowly than social arrangements framing people's daily pursuits.[2] In my comparative-historical investigations of international migration-related issues in different parts of the world today and in the past, I have indeed derived most cognitive gain by beginning my analysis with identifying the enabling and constraining structural (material-technological, socioeconomic, political, cultural) opportunities or the dynamic limits of the possible and the impossible within which people conduct their activities at the examined moment; reversing this investigation in the next step of my analysis or phase of the structuration process by looking at these actors' creative negotiation of their societal environment; and then, in the next-next phase of the temporal flow, examining the intended and, often, unintended consequences of these activities on the immediate and – time and *Sitzfleisch*[3] permitting – also mezzo-level societal structures. This three-step structuration analysis is presented in Figure 2.

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[2] This proposition does not imply that all micro-level societal structures are easily amenable to change: there obviously exist quite rigid local systems such as patriarchal gender relations in the families. I argue, rather, that relative to the remote macro-level systems, these local arrangements can be unsettled by fewer people in a shorter durée of time, for example, by a rebellious daughter's staunch refusal to marry an old man chosen for her by the father.

[3] The ability to endure or persist in some activity.

Figure 1: Structuration process in long- and short-term perspectives

Structuration Process

Structures → Individuals → Structures

Habitual
Practical   agency
Projective

economic structures
macro
mezzo
micro

social structures
macro
mezzo
micro

political structures
macro
mezzo
micro

cultural structures
macro
mezzo
micro

economic structures
macro
mezzo
micro

political structures
macro
mezzo
micro

social structures
macro
mezzo
micro

cultural structures
macro
mezzo
micro

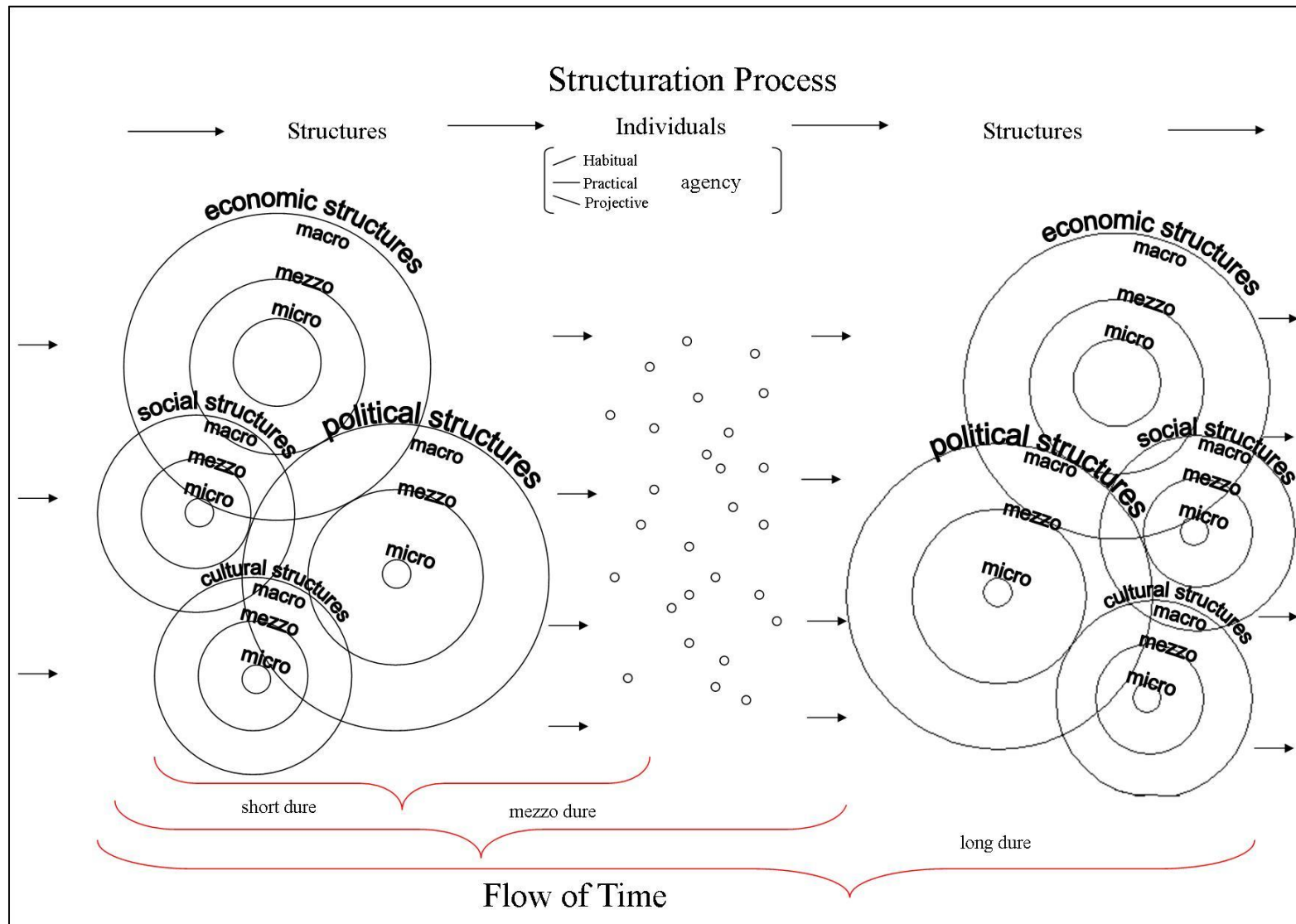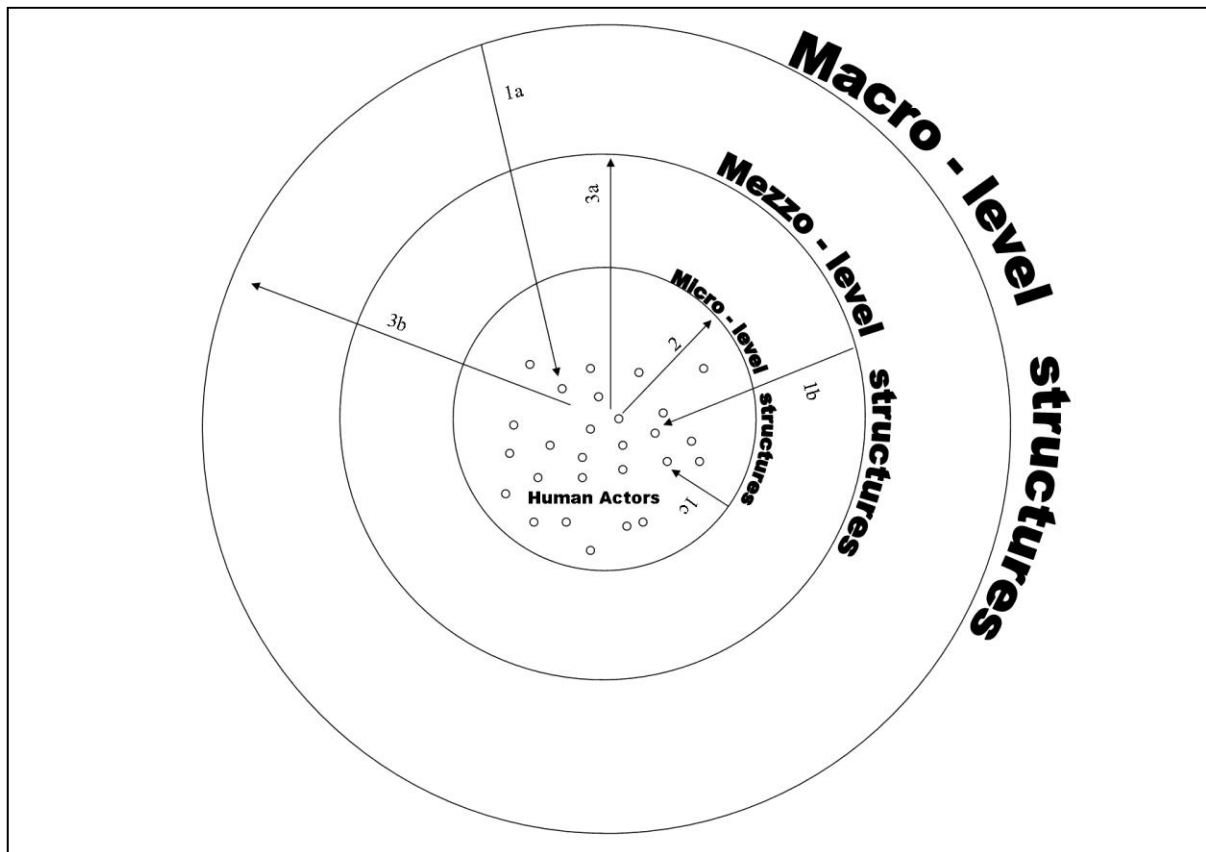short dure   mezzo dure   long dure

Flow of Time

Figure 2: Three-step structuration analysis

Closely related to the above proposition, I argue that while Archer's assumption of the pre-existence of societal structures makes good sense in the analysis of actors' orientations and practices in bounded, time- and place-specific situations, by taking a *longue durée* perspective on the process of (re)constitution of human agency and societal structures one can arguably make a similar claim regarding (inter)acting people. In this context, and neither presuming individuals to be 'ultimate' and 'hyperactive' nor holding structure and agency to be 'simultaneous' – these are the terms of Margaret Archer's critique of Giddens' structuration model (Archer 1995: 39, 67), I also propose that, if we assume the plurality and multi-dimensionality of societal structures, it makes sense theoretically to allow for the possibility in historically specific shorter-*durée* situations of the co-existence of pre-established 'harder' macro- and mezzo-level technological, economic, and political structures and 'softer' immediate ones more amenable to change through individual actions. Note here that the latter proposition, founded on the conception of societal structures as inherently diverse in character, scope, dimensions, and durability – the multiplicity which, as William Sewell argues (1992) generates inescapable tensions or even direct contradictions that create 'gaps' or 'loopholes' in between different social arrangements – challenges the customary treatment of structures by morphogenesis advocates-critics of the Giddensian structuration model as the supposedly homogeneous units with commensurable 'external powers' over human actors.

To illustrate the above arguments I use an example of pioneer labour migrants moving to the United States from the village of Maszkienice in south-eastern Poland in the mid-1880s before the onset of mass transatlantic travels from that area in the following decades.

The local evidence in this case comes from an extensive ethnographic survey, highly unusual for the time, of labour migrations from that place (Bujak 1901; see also Morawska 1989 on the mechanisms triggering and sustaining labour migrations of turn-of-the-twentieth-century peasant residents of that and the surrounding regions).

It was only in the five decades preceding the First World War that Eastern Europe entered the process of accelerated urbanization-and-industrialization. This was a protracted, uneven, and incomplete transformation, fraught with contradictions. It was initiated and executed from above by the old feudal classes, constrained by the dependent character of the region's economic advance, which lacked internal impetus and was significantly influenced by and subordinated to the far more developed core countries of Western Europe, and encumbered by the ubiquitous remnants of a feudal past in social forms and political institutions. The abolition of serfdom and alienation of noble estates (1848 in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and 1861/62 in Russia), executed without rearrangement of the socioeconomic order and combined with a demographic explosion, impoverished and dislocated large segments of the population previously occupied in the countryside, especially landless peasants and rural petty traders and craftsmen.

Triggered by structural relocations of masses of people in East European economies ('push' forces) on the one hand and, on the other, by the increasing demand for manual labour in the rapidly expanding economies of much more developed Western parts of the Continent and, over time, across the Atlantic ('pull' forces), and facilitated by the advances in transportation technologies, the increase in size and distance of income-seeking migrations of impoverished peasants and petty traders and craftsmen across and outside of this restructuring region was both a consequence and a constituent part of its incorporation into the Atlantic world-system. Historians estimate that combined short- and longer-distance, seasonal and permanent migrations by East Europeans between 1870 and 1914 affected no less than 25–30 per cent of the total population of that region. (On the dependent character of East Europe's economic development and structural relocations of its population in the last decades of the nineteenth century, see Berend and Ranki 1974, 1982; Trebilcock 1981; on growing labour migrations in the region, Nugent 1992; Hoerder and Moch 1996.)

The adverse effects on the impoverished residents of the belated and incomplete modernization of the socioeconomic structures in the south-eastern part of Poland were particularly pronounced owing to the profound backwardness of this region and its semi-colonial status under the political domination of Austria (Poland was partitioned between Russia, Austria, and Germany in 1793 and did not regain independence until 1918). According to an 1875 visitor in this region, the Polish part of the Habsburg Monarchy, 'poor and debt-encumbered [with its natural resources plundered, almost no industry of its own, and agriculture fragmented into lilliputian holdings incapable of sustaining the majority of the rural population] can only balance her accounts by the large exportation of her own labour' (after *Polish Encyclopaedia*, 1922, III: 293).

If the external pressures of macro- and mezzo-level structures had made it necessary for Maszkienicans and their neighbours to leave their villages in search of livelihoods, the specific destinations of these migrations were co-shaped by the available means of transportation in the region, political opportunities for travel (migrants trying to cross the Monarchy's borders needed to apply for passports which were not easy to obtain) and – of concern here – the micro-level local socio-cultural structures made up of the existing

information and social support networks and the accustomed migration culture that directed income-seeking travellers to particular destinations. In the case of Maszkienicans, nearly half of whom could not sustain themselves from the soil alone and were obliged to seek work elsewhere (Bujak 1901), such customary destinations of seasonal labour migrations in the late 1870s to the early 1880s included farms in Hungary and Austria, and coalmines and brick factories in upper Silesia. Of about 40 per cent of the total number of young male residents who in the early 1880s left Maszkienice every year for several months to earn income, nearly all headed to the above destinations (Bujak 1901; Szczepanowski 1905; also Pilch 1984; Misinska 1971).

Reflecting the slower pace of the incorporation of the south-eastern parts of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy into the Atlantic capitalist world-system, the first American employment agents appeared in Maszkienice and the surrounding area only in the early 1880s, or about a decade later than in Poland's north-western regions. Since the socially and culturally institutionalized destinations of – or, in terms of the structuration model, micro-level structures shaping – the residents' long(er)-distance income-seeking activities had already been set, however re-constituted through the travellers' habit- and practical-assessment-based decisions, those agents' solicitations were not successful. People preferred to follow the accustomed paths which brought the desired rewards. But in 1885, a young Maszkienican, persuaded by an acquaintance from the neighbouring village solicited by a steamship-company agent, gave up his usual income-seeking travels to Ostrava and accompanied him instead to dig coal in Pennsylvania. Both of these pioneers were marginal members of their local communities looked down upon by local residents because of their regular absence from church services and unaccountable disappearances from the villages. Viewed as no-good *niespolegliwi*, untrustworthy deviants, by their fellow villagers – conformists who sought their desired goals through the socially accepted means – in terms of Robert Merton's (1968) classical elaboration of Durkheim's theory of anomie those two pioneers of transatlantic migrations were 'innovators' who moved around or beyond the established local structures in the pursuit of their purposes.

When after two and a half years our innovator returned to Maszkienice and – sporting a smart suit, a derby, a celluloid collar, and a shiny cravat and telling stories about how he ate fat meat and white bread every day in America (in East Europe peasants ate rough dark bread and could afford meat at best once a year) – with his American savings purchased a dozen or so hectares of land and began building a new house, the villagers went wild with envy and desire. America became the subject of feverish conversations, and long processions of people visited the returnee to learn about the opportunities for work, the amount of savings, and the ways to get to this 'incredible land.' Talking about it with their family members and with their fellow villagers, Maszkienicans began to calculate their savings from work in their accustomed destinations in Hungary and Austria against those available in America, which showed the clincher rate of 1: 5-6.

As the much higher financial returns from labour and better material conditions of life in the United States which the well-fed, urbanely dressed, and cash-rich returned pioneer bore witness to demonstrated to the villagers – the message further intensified by their dreams of a better life – America as the focus of their projective agency began to compete with the habituated trajectories of their income-seeking travels. The demonstration effect of this pioneer transatlantic adventure translated, first, into the decisions to follow in his footsteps by two more and, then, another two young Maszkienicans in 1887 and 1888,

three of whom came back with sufficient savings to buy sizeable pieces of land and to tangibly elevate the material status of their families (the fourth one decided to remain in America for good). The demonstration effect of these achievements of fellow villagers had further enhanced the chances of a new, American option in the projective-practical deliberations of travel-capable Maszkienicans regarding the destinations of their income-seeking migrations. By the mid-1890s, with the earlier-outlined macro- and mezzo-level structures which constrained the economic development of the region and exerted strong migratory pressures on its impoverished residents still firmly in place, initially prompted by the success of a few individuals, the villagers had already regularly travelled to America in search of income.

My next argument concerns the so-called emergent properties of societal structures or the outcomes of agentic pursuits that acquire characteristics of their own, different from the features of the contributing actors (for good summaries of the main positions on this issue, see Sawyer 2001; Elder-Vass 2007). Although, again, I claim that there is no unresolvable theoretical disagreement in this matter between the morphogenetic and time-sensitive structuration approaches, this premise of the former has been admittedly the least, if at all, elaborated by the advocates of the structuration model, including its historical-sociologist practitioners. I try to demonstrate here the *how* of this next phase of the structuration process – the translation of individual actions into micro-level societal structures – using as illustrations the emergence of (i) social networks of information about living and working conditions in America and the (trans-)local social control system, and (ii) the transatlantic migration culture among turn-of-the-twentieth-century East European income-seeking peasants. The data for the empirical illustrations of my arguments come from local statistical surveys and ethnographic studies conducted in south-eastern Poland between the 1890s and 1930s, as well as immigrant letters and memoirs pertaining to this period (Daszynska-Golinska 1892, 1903; Bujak 1901, 1903; Thomas and Znaniecki 1918-20; Chalasinski 1934; Duda-Dziewierz 1938; Gliwicowna 1937; Witos 1964; *Listy Emigrantow* 1973; *Pamietniki Emigrantow* 1977; also Wyman 1993, Nugent 1992).

The available historical evidence indicates that the earlier-outlined local-level mechanism triggering large-scale labour migrations from Maszkienice to the United States was similar in the surrounding area and, beyond it, in the whole region. As more villagers abandoned the customary destinations of their income-seeking travels and went instead to America in search of better fortunes, even more people followed, relying on the support of their kin and acquaintances who travelled earlier. According to a report of the US Immigration Commission conducted at the beginning of the twentieth century, nearly two-thirds of the newcomers from East Europe declared their passage was arranged by immigrants already in America, and an even greater number were headed for destinations where relatives and acquaintances from their home villages waited for them (US Immigration Commission, 1909-11: *Immigrants in Cities*, pt. IV).

Information about living and working conditions and wages in particular American cities and industries, available housing and the possibilities of savings, the best routes and cost of travel to West European ports and on the ships across the Atlantic, and the appropriate answers to questions posed by immigration officials at US entry ports in Ellis Island in New York and Boston (where the majority of immigrants landed) arrived in the villages through the returnees and letters sent by those in America to their kin and

acquaintances at home (nearly 5 million such messages[4] were sent to Russia and Austria-Hungary between 1900 and 1906 alone – Balch 1910). The villagers contemplated in awe the photographs sent from America by their fellow villagers in which they appeared like *pans* (the gentry in their manors in the East European countryside) (see Figure 3 for the typical representations of turn-of-the-twentieth-century peasants in the region and the photographs of themselves that migrants sent from America). They endlessly discussed and compared the news about wages and the possibilities of savings in the American wonderland as they worked in the fields, in the taverns in the evenings, at homes, and at the *odpusts* (church fairs) and other local celebrations. Through this process a body of collective knowledge, constantly adjusted and updated, emerged – call it a (trans)local information system – which began to exert an 'external' impact on individuals considering migration to America who relied on it in making their decisions as to whether, when, where, and how to travel. While consisting of items contributed by particular migrants knowledgeable about specific aspects of the situation in Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and New York (the major destinations of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Polish income-seekers in the United States), as a whole this expanding body of information about life and work in America was not reducible to these individual pieces.

The transatlantic social control systems that had formed by the beginning of the twentieth century between the sender villages in south-eastern Poland, and Polish colonies in American cities where migrants settled, provide another illustration of the emergent structures. As William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki observed in 1918, 'the [village] community [does not] reconcile itself to the idea that the emigrant may never return, may ever cease to be a real member of his original group' (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918–20, 5:11). And so, as an immigrant in Johnstown, Pennsylvania observed in his memoir, 'homefolk passed judgement on their own in America…by the standard of the remittances: this one sends much and frequently, so he is diligent and thrifty; that one sends but little and irregularly, so he is negligent and wasteful.' And conversely, closely following the events in their home villages, migrants in American cities assessed the activities of those left behind: 'Every movement in Babica I know,' wrote a migrant in Detroit to his wife in south-eastern Poland, 'because I live here among Babicans.' Gossip about particular people's misbehaviour regularly circulated both ways across the Atlantic and shame was put on the culprits: 'I hope it is not all true [what] I have been told about you', wrote another migrant to his wife at home, referring to the news he heard in a local pub about her flirty philandering with a younger man from a nearby town; and in the opposite direction went a complaint from a mother who heard in church on a Sunday about her son in Homestead, Pennsylvania having been caught in a petty theft in a local store: 'It does not please me much what I hear about you, better behave yourself than dishonour your family in the world' (citations from Molek 1979: 45; Duda-Dziewierz 1938: 27; *Listy Emigrantow* 1973: 50–68).

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[4] As most turn-of-the-twentieth-century East European peasants were illiterate, they dictated those letters to somewhat better educated tavern keepers or shopkeepers, often Jews, in the villages and foreign colonies in America.

Figure 3: Photographs of nineteenth- and twentieth-century East European peasants at home and in America
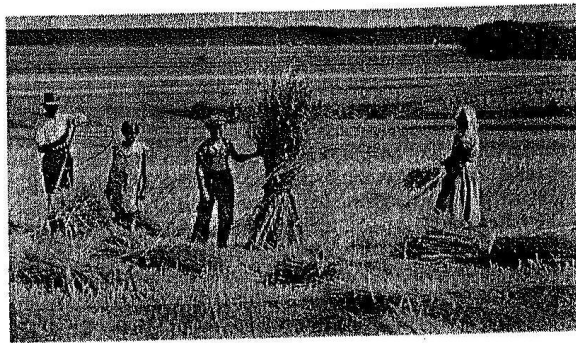

Plate 1. Eastern Europe, early twentieth century – the fields. Collection of Mary Mesaros.

Plate 11. Immigrants in Johnstown dressed up for photographs to be sent to the village or hung on the walls at home in the foreign colony, beginning of the century. Collection of Ann Novak.

As indicated by the fervent excuses for and spirited explanations of their deeds (the matters discussed ranged from expected vs. actual levels and (late) arrival of remittances to the confessions of or, more frequently, denials of unfair accusations of infidelity, lackadaisical work and other misbehaviours) contained in the letters densely circulating between Polish villages and migrant colonies in America, the transatlantic social control system exerted a considerable 'power of judgement' over group members on both sides of the migratory circuit. 'Don't be angry for what I write you' – an immigrant in Detroit implored his family in Poland – 'it is a duty to respect and help [one's family] until the last moment of [life] because so says Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holiest Mother Virgin Mary…Only, my dear, you demand so much.' What will people say, he worries at the conclusion of his letter explaining why he cannot provide as much money as 'Mother asks [for]…sister [asks] also, the brothers also', if he would send only so much of it (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918–20, II:270).

As in the previous case, while the particular pieces of this social control system were founded on the information provided by the individuals, as they became part of the collective knowledge-and-judgement about 'our homefolk,' the resulting situation – like a scrambled eggs dish made up of individual eggs – acquired distinct features irreducible to the traits of the component elements, such as the capacity to assign an individual a collective respect or to ostracize him/her.

The culture of transatlantic migration emerged in the villages in south-eastern Poland in a similar fashion to the information and social control systems. The 'normalization' of American travels among peasantry in that region by the beginning of the twentieth century was the combined effect of the rapidly growing number of income-seeking migrants heading for America; enormous sums of money sent home by those travellers, which made thousands of East European households dependent on these remittances (between 1900 and 1906, the total amount of remittances sent from America to Russia and Austria-Hungary was a staggering $69 million, with residents of Maszkienice receiving in 1901 alone an average of $850 per capita or the equivalent of the purchase price for three to four acres of land – Balch 1910; Bujak 1901); the effective transatlantic management of 'split' households; and the keeping alive of the extended community ties through dense information and social control networks sustained by back-and-forth travellers and letters. As a result, transatlantic migrations in search of income had become the socially accepted – and, increasingly, expected – behaviour primarily of young men, but with time also young women who either followed in the footsteps of their brothers or, against the (originally unequivocally negative) ambivalent village opinion about the appropriateness of such female travels, ventured to America alone (Gabaccia 1994). The outbreak of the First World War in Europe in 1914 and, in its wake, the implementation of immigration restrictions by the United States that effectively ended its long-standing open-door policy – the macro-scope events and structures – first halted completely and then cut back to a trickle the swelling flow of Polish labour migrants to America. The Great Depression on both sides of the Atlantic further diminished these transatlantic travels. But the *Amerykance*, the departees who eventually settled in the United States for good but who continued to send money, letters, and advice to their home-country villages as well as visiting them, have remained a meaningful presence and an important reference framework in the lives of Poles throughout the Communist era.

In this context, I would like to address the issue which has been the subject of controversy in the American discussions about the structuration model. It concerns the source of the (re)constitutive capacity of human agency, with one interpretation locating it in our individual 'vital energies,' and the other viewing it as emergent in the process of 'trans-action' or exchange among actors (for critical overviews of these positions, see Emirbayer 1997; Depelteau 2010). Rather than arguing for the individual or interactive nature of human agency, I propose that we allow theoretically for both sources of actors' capacity to (re)constitute their environment, and make our assessments of their actual relationship time- and place-dependent. Such assessments should consider the circumstances, such as people's accustomed world view and their socio-cultural capital, the mode of operation of the economy/labour markets, the degree of differentiation/individualization of society, as well as the phase of the structuration process under examination. In the case of concern here – the decision-making process of transatlantic labour-seeking migrations of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Polish peasants – it makes sense to distinguish between what Douglas Massey et al. (1998) call the 'triggering' and 'sustaining' phases of the migratory process. It is reasonable to propose that while the pioneer 'innovators' travelled to America primarily mobilized by the projective desires of their individual human agency (and actually against the local custom and opinion), the decision-making of their followers was interactive as they moved to the already-established colonies of their fellow villagers in American cities mobilized by the already-existing local culture of transnational migrations and relying on the information and assistance it provided in such ventures.

If one were to continue the structuration analysis, the next-next phase of the evolving process of the (re-)constitution of structure and agency to consider would be the formation of *larger-scope* new structures as an extended-over-time and mediated through multiple intercessions effect of the activities of migrant actors. I briefly note here two such developments: one in Polish immigrants' home country and the other in their host country.

The former was the emergence among Polish peasantry during the late teens and twenties of the twentieth century of a collective modern national consciousness and a network of organized civic activities for the purpose of propagating Polish nationalism – a process to which transnational engagements in the home localities of Polish immigrants in America were an important contributing factor. The other, concomitant stimuli of these developments included the educational work towards the incorporation of the peasantry into the national 'imagined community', carried out in the villages by members of the urban intelligentsia at the turn of the twentieth century and, broader in scale, legal-political provisions and public education for this purpose implemented by state authorities during the interwar period when Poland regained state independence. (Information about the role of *Amerykance* immigrants in the spread of modern national consciousness and self-organizations in Polish villages is from Park 1922; Greene 1975; Jacobson 1998; Hoerder and Moch 1996; Wyman 1993; Bodnar 1985.)

The overwhelming majority of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Polish peasant-immigrants in the United States arrived there with a group identity and a sense of belonging that extended no further than the *okolica* (local countryside). Paradoxically, it was only after they came to America and began to create organized immigrant networks for assistance and self-expression, and establish group boundaries as they encountered an ethnically pluralistic and often hostile environment, that these (im)migrants developed translocal national

identities with – to use a distinction of the Polish sociologist, Stanislaw Ossowski (1967; see also Anderson 1983) – their old-country ideological *Vaterland* (fatherland) or the imagined community of the encompassing *Patria* as distinct from the *Heimat* or the local homeland. Among the variety of agencies that immigrants created to help them confront the new environment, self-educational groups, cultural and historical societies, and the Polish-language press played an important role in defining ethnic-group boundaries and fostering solidarity by propagating identification with a commitment to the old-country *Vaterland*. Once established, these communal structures began to exert a pressure on group members in the form of social control to support financially and participate in the activities of these organizations and to conform to the image of a 'good Pole' they promoted. The typical reply of an immigrant in Detroit in the 1920s to the question why, after nearly twenty years in America, he did not seek naturalization in that country – 'I do not want to forswear myself'[5] (quote after Morawska 1996: 237) – is a good illustration of the effectiveness of this socialization. In the year 1925 only 20-odd per cent of Polish immigrants permanently residing in the United States were American citizens.

As the émigrés visiting or returning to their home country presented themselves to their fellow villagers as 'proud Poles', sent or brought with them newspapers with stories about Polish national heroes and famous events and the representations of national membership and its obligations, and shared their American know-how about establishing cultural and educational associations to pursue these ideas, an interest in and a sense of a more encompassing identity with their *Vaterland* together with the skills of self-organization began to put down roots among the locals. This reception was facilitated by the high prestige of the *Amerykance* and America in general in the eyes of the villagers and, not unimportant, by the financial assistance extended to their villages by émigré communities for the purposes of self-organization, the purchase of books, and the preparation of national festivals.

By the interwar period nearly 2 million Polish peasant-immigrants lived in the United States, most of them in tight-knit Polish colonies where they created hundreds of national (ethnic) organizations. The majority of them maintained regular contacts with their home villages. The multiplication effect of these immigrants' transnational activities was their tangible contribution to the emergence in the Polish countryside during that era of two new structures: modern national consciousness and a growing network of local (self) organizations. As the involved actors' sentiments and activities became routinized and the symbolic and organizational arrangements they created acquired over time the capacity to set normative expectations of others, socialize the young into the specific orientations and practices, and direct action into particular channels, these sociocultural structures became 'external' to the individual residents of Polish villages.

On the other side of the ocean, a larger-scope structure in the emergence of which Polish immigrant actors played a recognized contributing role was the appearance on the American political scene in the 1930s of the inclusive nationwide labour union, Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). (The information about this development comes from Bodnar 1985; Brody 1980; Montgomery 1979; Kolko 1976; Galenson 1960.)

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[5] Polish national membership has been traditionally conceived as the primordial, particularist-exclusive attachment, and this was also the type of commitment internalized by turn-of-the-twentieth-century immigrants in America through participation in their ethnic communities.

By the 1920s, the predominant majority of Polish immigrants, about 90 per cent, were still industrial labourers. As America became their permanent home,[6] these immigrant workers gradually developed the shared interests and identity as an 'ethclass for itself' (a similar development also occurred among other South and East European groups). By the interwar period their initial unequivocal enchantment with the 'Land of Promise' had sobered into a more realistic, ambivalent assessment of their situation. 'Nowhere did [we] have it so good as in America, but nowhere did [we] suffer as much as in America', wrote an immigrant in his memoir, and another one echoed, 'He who is strong and healthy can make here [good money] but when you work you must toil like an ox' (*Archives of the Immigration History Center*, Polish file, 1928). Ruthlessly exploited and deprived of any welfare provisions by mill and factory owners, and excluded from the all-American, nativist American Federation of Labor (AFL), 'foreigners' – as they were commonly referred to by native-born American workers and company owners – began to organize their own self-help associations and hold meetings to talk about and find ways within their own ethnic communities to alleviate their work-related problems such as notorious industrial accidents, and lack of health and life insurance and old-age pensions. Already in the late teens of the twentieth century practically all larger Polish immigrant communities in American cities created such ethnic working-class organizations and carried out related activities.

With time, and with the important impact of their American-born, English-speaking children, the majority of whom had retained their parents' class position,[7] Polish immigrant labourers became more assertive, taking part in labour protests organized together with other South and East European groups, and publicly voicing their demands. The macro-level external structures that set the climate in America in the 1930s – the acute economic recession and the pluralist spirit of New Deal-era politics – made it possible to translate these collective activities into the foundation of the immigrant-friendly nationwide labour organization, the CIO, which had soon become and remained an influential political player in the country until the postwar era. The structuration-model argument about the causal impact of social actors on societal structures which this case illustrates is founded, let me reiterate, on the notions of (i) the temporal delay (not simultaneity) of the actor-structure constitution, and (ii) the multiple-factor mediated nature of this causal effect.

In both cases presented here, immigrants' activities were a (not 'the') factor contributing over time to the emergence of larger-scope structures or, put differently, their contribution was mediated by several other – also structural – circumstances. And in both cases once established, these developments acquired characteristics of their own and began to exert an 'external' pressure on human actors who found themselves within their grid in the form of normative prescriptions, social control, and interactive bonds until, several decades later, new processes started to undermine these arrangements.

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[6] Historians estimate that about one-third of the total number of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Polish income-seeking migrants to America eventually returned home (Wyman 1993).
[7] The occupational advancement of the native-born American children of South and East European peasant-immigrants involved primarily a move from unskilled to semi-skilled positions in the mills and factories.

Conclusion

I would consider this exercise a success if it would inspire a closer intellectual exchange between post-Giddensian structuration and morphogenesis theorists. The specific contribution – and an incentive to such a conversation – of the historical approach to sociological analysis, both theoretical and empirical, which I have used in my presentation, is, I believe, twofold. The approach conceives of both societal structures and human agency as ongoing processes of becoming rather than as entities fixed in time, and, importantly, it tries to apply this conceptualization not only in the statements of the theoretical premises informing the proposed model, but also in the empirical analysis. And it premises theoretical and empirical investigations of the examined phenomena on the conception of societal structures as inherently multi-dimensional and, thus, 'gappy', potentially contradictory and 'out of phase' with each other. These two stipulations of the historical-sociological conceptualization of the structuration model allow for – actually encourage a researcher to look for – diversity and flexibility rather than homogeneity and fixity in the patterns of the evolving actor–structure relationships.

Should the morphogenesis scholars find this approach appealing or at least worthy of discussion, advocates of both theories could focus together on an issue which, as their present-day representatives agree, awaits further analytic attention in both models, namely, the elaboration of the conditions of the emergence of micro- and mezzo-level structures; symbolic/affective dependence of members on their group(s); and, important to the extent that human agency is inseparable from the unfolding dynamics of current situations, those happenings here and now.

Having identified the most important conditions of the emergence of societal structures in the process of international migration, we might move on to another issue in need of analytic efforts by both morphogenesis and structuration theorists, namely, the elaboration of a link between the clusters of *circumstances* contributing to the examined phenomena and the actual *mechanisms* through which they 'make' societal structures evolve over time. Mario Bunge's (2003) ideas on identifying the mechanisms that make things 'tick' in order to explain them may provide a good starting point in this task.[8] And next – I would move here from empirical to theoretical analysis rather than the other way round –we might consider the approach informing the time-sensitive structuration model which recognizes the *longue-durée* multiply-mediated causal impact of individual actions on the (re)shaping of societal structures against Ronald Jepperson's and John Mayer's (2011) argument that macro-level causal pathways are distinct from micro-level ones and, thus, require structural-only (not individual-level) explanations.

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[8] I thank Claudia Schneider for this suggestion.

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