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Talk title:

Living an American Dream: Leisure of Polish Migrants in the U.S.

Talk synapse:

Leisure is a broad term that has been criticized for the lack of precision and various biases inherent in it (Europocentrism, androcentrism, privileging of middle class experience, elitism etc.). In the talk, I propose to discuss how this category can be used in migration studies.

Will an inquiry into migrants' leisure produce a more complex image of migratory situation? As a figure of public and political discourse, the word 'migrant' carries a number of negative connotations. Migrants are associated with threat, but also with suffering and social inequality.

Yet, migratory experience is also a quest for better life. Migration is motivated not only negatively, by poverty and persecution, but also positively, by the imagery of the opportunities in a new place, the ideas of 'good life' and dreams about better future.

The contention that the brighter side of migratory experience deserves better exposure in social sciences is not the only reason of my interest in migrants' leisure, however. Another important reason is the wish to demonstrate the complexity of migratory experience and its entanglement in various moral regimes that act upon mobile individuals.

I will use the empirical materials collected during a 6-month-long fieldwork among Polish migrants and Polish diaspora in Chicago. By focusing on migrants' leisure practices, I aim to demonstrate how they live their 'American dream', and what are the disciplining powers of the imageries of 'good life' in migratory situation.