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## Rethinking the Role of the Intelligentsia Habitus in the Case of Polish Workers in the North of England

*Abstract:* This article considers upward mobility of UK Polish migrant workers by introducing a Bourdieusian habitus perspective. Drawing mainly on the interview data it was inquired whether the intelligentsia habitus understood as an example of embodied or learned “social expectations” concerning the position in the social hierarchy provides Polish migrants the motivational scripts for learning and innovating in the labour market. It was found that the intelligentsia habitus can legitimize successful jobs seeking strategies of some respondents. However, this paper also notes that a significant number of analysed respondents were unable to mobilize cultural capital resources and remained in a vicious circle of long hours of monotonous factory work that has created an additional constraint complicating their learning capabilities.

*Keywords:* the UK; the intelligentsia habitus; upward mobility; Polish migrants; segmented labour markets

### Defining the Problem

Following Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977, 1992) definition of habitus as transposable dispositions that direct individual and collective actions this paper is concerned with the question whether the Polish intelligentsia habitus may govern the course of upward mobility of Polish migrants in the north of England’s labour market. Following the literature on the evolution of Polish elites in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries it is assumed that due to the hegemonic position of the intelligentsia strata in the Polish public life its cultural capital oriented habitus identifies and classifies (mainly unconsciously) rules of the public sphere and socialization practices (Jedlicki 2008, 2008a; Czepulis-Rastenis 1985; Stefanowska 1976). It is thus inquired whether it provides Polish migrants in the UK with the motivational scripts for learning and innovating in the labour market. This motivational script is understood here as an example of embodied or learned “social expectations” that have essentially been “programmed” during the socialization process in Poland. Consequently as exogenous cultural traits (see Polavieja 2015) are exported with Polish migrants to the UK. There is some amount of evidence that intelligentsia habitus understood as self-explanatory discourses of the desirable position of the individual in the social structure are being exported with Polish migrants to the UK. For instance recently Smoczyński et al. (2017) while examining the social distance strategies employed by Polish migrants in the UK argued that these practices can be conceptualized as conditioned by an elitist intelligentsia habitus that while shaping Polish migrants’ interpretative frameworks of reality may then contribute both to

the rivalry and mistrust in Polish networks as well as at the same time legitimize bridging social capital. Importantly, they noticed that the intelligentsia habitus functioning as a naturalized structure of meaning permeates everyday social actions of the actual intelligentsia descend migrants but also members of other classes (e.g. working class members). This capability of conferring its ethos upon the broader social strata was noticed earlier by several authors as a crucial feature of the intelligentsia's social strategy which was visible from the very moment of its 19<sup>th</sup> century emergence, continued in 20<sup>th</sup> century and even during the communist period when the "new intelligentsia" adapted to universal ideals of the "old intelligentsia" (e.g. Chałasiński 1946). Historically, the elite of cultural capital—the intelligentsia achieved an informal position of national leadership in the Polish society through converting their cultural capital<sup>1</sup> resources (e.g. education, social altruism, ethos of freedom and social justice fighters) into the status of hegemonic symbolic capital which exceeded their strata boundaries (Janowski 2008; Kennedy 1992). In other words, its particular values, interests, political strategies and aims had been universalized and were broadly perceived as representing a desirable citizenship model which should be emulated by others regardless of their class position. Underpinning this regional peculiarity are three main historical factors: the first is the dependency of the pre-20<sup>th</sup> Polish agrarian society on noble elites which—in Weberian terms privileged the traditional honour status. The intelligentsia while gradually emerging out of the waning gentry in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries had inherited several features of its feudal noble predecessors; second is the weak position of the bourgeoisie in the Eastern Europe which did not manage to assume a position of the prestigious social strata and resonate as such with the broader social imaginary; and third is the impact of material capital dispossessions during the Bolshevik Revolution, the Second World War and then communism period which paradoxically have promoted the crucial role of cultural capital in the social hierarchy (Zarycki 2008, 2009).

The long-lasting dominance of the intelligentsia in Eastern Europe has not ended with the decline of communistic regimes. Although the Eastern European countries have witnessed the emergence of economic capital elites, nevertheless as Gil Eyal, Iván Szelényi and Eleanor Townsley (1998), among others, demonstrated economic resources have not significantly re-organized dominant social logics based on cultural capital, particularly in Poland and Hungary. Cultural capital still is being used as the dominant point of reference in social games of the Polish social elite, which is otherwise a typical situation of the peripheral Eastern European countries dependent on the core European system (Zarycki 2014). In Eastern European context cultural capital based elites use these assets (along with other possible strategies) as compensatory resources in nesting orientalisising discourses. The latter—according to Melegh (2006) and Zarycki (2014)—as an important ideology of Eastern European elites secure their privileged position of self-appointed middle men who implement Western core countries' practices and values into Eastern European peripheries.

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<sup>1</sup> This study refers to Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital which—among other resources—according to Lamont and Lareau (1988: 159) constitutes '...one of several [investment] resources (along with social, economic) ... which can be converted into one another to maximize one's upward mobility.' Upward mobility in particular is driven by the institutionalized aspect of cultural capital (e.g. educational attainment, language skills, informal educational competences), which facilitates access to other types of capital (e.g. symbolic, economic) including job opportunities.

Importantly, while inquiring whether the *intelligentsia habitus* is being used by Polish migrants in the UK this contribution does not aim at identifying an actual correlation of variables like income or class position, with e.g. the level of cultural capital of the analysed respondents which would give a statistically valid account on the process of their upward mobility. Even though this paper might be inscribed in the broad field of studies examining how socialization shape educational expectations as a part of lasting disposition which act as a motivational script for planned social and professional upward mobility (e.g. [Bodovski 2014](#)), nevertheless, a precise correlation of class position with the upward mobility shifts of the analysed population would require the use of the quantitative examination.<sup>2</sup> This paper turns its attention to a social mobility qualitative research as informed by Bertaux and Thompson (2007: 7) that places the “centrality of subjective perspectives and evaluations in shaping the life choices.” This is to examine whether the *intelligentsia habitus* carried by migrants from home country to new setting in the UK could have been detected in their self-reported narratives as “a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures” ([Bourdieu 1977: 86](#)) and whether this aspirational “feel of the game” legitimized their innovative strategies on the labour market.

The next section conceptualises two noteworthy theoretical perspectives underpinning the analysis on the introduction of Polish workers into the UK labour market and their potential movement into other jobs and ‘careers.’ A methods section follows, then the findings and conclusion section.

### Segmented Labour Market and Opportunities for a Migrant Agency

For a number of years now freedom of movement to the UK labour market has been a constant theme in the literature, with particular attention paid to Central and Eastern European (CEE) workers who came following the May 2004 accession (commonly termed A8 workers) and the largest proportion of A8 workers has been Polish migrants ([Salt and Millar 2006](#)). Early literature highlighted sectors such as agriculture, construction, health and food processing with UK employers beginning to rely on A8 workers employed in low-skilled jobs (see [French and Möhrke 2006](#); [Gilpin et al. 2006](#); [Dench et al. 2006](#)). This type of employment led sometimes to the exploitation and ill treatment of Polish workers ([Fitzgerald 2006, 2007](#); [CAA 2009](#); [Craig et al. 2007](#)). Two noteworthy but interconnected theoretical perspectives underpin analysis on the changes in the UK labour markets following the A8 accession. These are migrant agency and Piore’s (1986 and 1979) segmented labour market framework. An original Piorean framework assumes, in macroeconomic terms, that advanced capitalist markets require a near constant inflow of migrant workers to fill gaps in their secondary sectors. The secondary sector inevitably features high labour turnover, low pay, health and safety issues and very limited opportunities for upward mobility. This approach has been revised in recent years, for example [McDowell et al. \(2008\)](#) provide an

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<sup>2</sup> Additionally many Polish workers although well-educated have been employed in low skilled jobs ([Drinkwater et al. 2010](#); [McDowell et al. 2008](#); [Eade et al. 2006](#)). This adds another dimension to agency with skilled and/or well-educated Polish workers potentially more able to either take flight or e.g. mobilize cultural resources when jobs are oppressive.

analysis of recruitment agencies, which recognises the differences in human capital that both permit and restrict migrant agency. Whilst Anderson et al. (2007) note that many of their respondents were in favour of joining a trade union and some were already seeking the help of Citizens Advice. McCollum and Findlay (2015: 440) although adopting a Piorean framework to analyse East European migrants (the majority being Poles) employed in low paid and low skilled tenuous jobs (the most numerous segment being factory process operatives) noted that a: "...more nuanced representation of labour markets as segmented..." [must recognise that these are also influenced by] "...immigration policy and geographic disparities in income levels determining the labour sources ... businesses have access to and ... willingness of ... workers to accept unfavourable pay and conditions (i.e. their flexibility)." Overall, though, they as with many others (see Carby-Hall 2007; Craig et al. 2007), have identified that Eastern European migrants eligible to the same legal and social protection as British citizens, are in fact marginalised in the labour market, holding a similar position to that of undocumented, irregular migrants characterized by job insecurity and low pay. Crucially though, as McCollum and Findlay (2015) note, one of the central concerns with applying a sole Piorean framework is that it can be too deterministic by not adequately accounting for a number of factors including immigration policy, the geographic disparities of migrants and above all the "agency" of migrant workers. The literature has noted this arguing that Eastern European migrants are not entirely removed from upward mobility. Instead cumulative experience, improving language skills or additional education develop a "know-how" that facilitates labour market standing (Alberti 2014). Others have contributed to the examination of "getting by strategies" and enhancing migrant opportunities in the labour market (Berntsen 2016: 473). But moving beyond just survival and challenging oppressive labour conditions is, as much of the agency literature argues, dependent on certain structural factors: educational attainment, language skills, job sector, embedment in ethnic networks, age and gender (e.g. Datta et al. 2007). For example, Ciupijus (2011), following a study by Kennedy (2010), has argued that some especially young and educated Eastern European migrants are able to assume an employment career path similar to British and older EU member state citizens. Nevertheless, he does conclude in a Piorean manner when stating that "...CEE within the EU has continued to be treated as a low-wage periphery offering a supply of workers prepared to accept long working hours..." (ibid: 546).

Migrants' tactics to ensure jobs have been relatively often described within a perspective of ethnic networks (Garapich 2008; Ryan et al. 2008). According to this current of literature networks under certain conditions may contribute to the accumulation of bonding social capital which enhances distribution of job opportunities, information and other resources among its participants (community networking, internet networking), however, ambiguities of an ethnic network were also discovered, namely, its excessive closure may constrain migrants' bridging/reaching-out strategies. Besides social capital there is also a modest line of inquiry on the role of the sending country habitus in the migrants' upward strategies, however, little is known how it may enhance their innovation and learning in the labour market (Samaluk 2016).<sup>3</sup> This paper keeping in line with studies which demon-

<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu (1986) himself identified three basic types of cultural capital: institutionalized, embodied and materialized. Institutionalized covers primarily educational attainment; embodied capital relates to socialized cultural

strated that habitus directs social actions according to internalized aspirations and perceived location in the social hierarchy (Dumais 2002) seeks to yield new insights on Polish migrants' upward mobility in the north of England labour market. In doing so—as it was detailed in the previous section—this paper explores the interview data to find out whether the intelligentsia habitus understood as an interpretative framework of social reality guided respondents' upward mobility.

### Methodology

This article draws on a three-year research project (2012–2015) carried out in the north of England. Its design involved secondary data collection, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews conducted with Polish migrant workers. The questionnaire was administered via a Survey Monkey account with a link being emailed to known Polish language/Polish administered websites in the north of England. A link was also sent to known community activist and there was to some extent a snowball effect in distribution. A decision was taken that a snowball effect would be acceptable to obtain as many respondents as possible. Overall it is not claimed that this is a representative sample of northern Polish communities, this would not be possible given the transitory nature of some groups and indeed the extent of recent Polish migration to the English regions in question. Overall the majority of questionnaire respondents (125 responses) came from Hull (35) and Leeds (21) in the Yorkshire and the Humber region and Newcastle (34) in the North East region. With the remaining 35 distributed in the North East region (28), Yorkshire and the Humber region (5) and North West region (2). The questionnaire was designed around three main areas. First, there were questions on respondent's period of residence and current location, second on their sectors of employment, their occupation and employment status. Importantly 56 (45%) of questionnaire respondents were in SOC2010 Major Groups 8 and 9 (ONS 2010). Whilst a further 40 (32%) were in Major Groups 4, 5, 6, and 7 considered by the UK Migration Advisory Committee as lower skilled. Thus 96 (77%) of respondents were in lower skilled occupations (Home Office 2015). Also covered was if respondents had experienced any issues with their employer(s) and if they belonged to a trade union or civil society organisation (CSO). A final question was about further research which then gave a number of respondents for interview as discussed below.

Fifty in-depth interviews were undertaken and access was obtained firstly through questionnaire respondents who stated that they would take part in further research (38), with 19 indicating issues at work; secondly twelve respondents were identified following contact with first interviewees. Interviewees were located in Newcastle (eighteen), Hull (fourteen), Leeds (nine), Sunderland (five), and Washington (four). The actual interviews focused on the upward mobility analysed in this article. Of these forty-one interviews were conducted face-to-face and the remaining nine were via the telephone. A qualitative schema (Strauss, Corbin 1994) was used that allowed to develop several themes. The first of these was based on respondent's comments on their current and previous employment situations. Analysis

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forms and the informal social conventions of the middle and upper classes (e.g. language patterns); whilst materialized capital includes the collection of cultural objects (e.g. familial artefacts).

also sought to develop the theme of social and cultural capital in migrant strategies by applying this to data on Polish community interrelations and upward mobility. The choice of qualitative methodology was conditioned by the fact that the role of the analysed intelligentsia habitus is often related to family context and early socialization period. As Bertaux and Thompson stated (2007: 7): “individuals are embedded within family, occupational, and local contexts, and mobility is as much a matter of family praxis as individual agency.”

### The Intelligentsia Habitus at Work in the North of England

Probably the most visible claims-making informed by the intelligentsia habitus imagery that was detected in the interview data refers to migrants’ perception of their intra-group symbolic divisions. Namely, the analysed discursive structure was underpinned by the cultural script of social hierarchies built on the opposition between ‘civilized’ (educated) and ‘uncivilized’ (uneducated) individuals. The origin of these binary categories which have been used by the Poles for qualifying social status of individuals is usually derived from the “Lord” (Pan) vs. the “Boor” (Cham) feudal division, which consequently had evolved in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries into the opposition of a morally superior intelligentsia aiming at universally oriented goals vs. instrumentally oriented individuals who are not capable of an ambitious civil life (Tazbir 2013; Zajączkowski 1993). There was given elsewhere a systematic explanation of how these binary categories understood as a symbolic left-over of the feudal legacy still shape the citizenship model in contemporary Poland (Smoczyński, Zarycki 2017), and how while being imported with Poles abroad are used for bridging social capital as well as producing social status inequalities among migrants (Smoczyński, Fitzgerald, Zarycki 2017). This contribution in turn explores a more specific aspect of this post-feudal agency in showing how e.g. the Lord/Boor division can function as a motivational script that discursively organizes respondents’ symbolic status, orients their job seeking strategies and facilitates their upward mobility. This was evidenced by respondents:

*In the factory most people are not ambitious; they do not care about progress. I do not like this and I do not want to waste my life in the factory. I want to do something ... I found assistance from people at the Polish school in Newcastle. These are people who do not work in the factory. There is a big gap between them and my colleagues from the factory. I mean a mental difference. They know how to sort things out, how to act, in the factory nobody speaks out because everybody is afraid of losing job. These people from school told me—fight back. They are people of culture. [1]*

*I think this is an issue of being ambitious, I started with rubbish jobs but wanted to go upward, started learning and now I am working as an engineer ... Poles very often do not want to make any progress. [23]*

*I have a colleague, she wants to change her life, go to the University, do something with her life, but her husband works at the factory and wants to keep things going on a low level ... When she came she did not speak English, now she has learnt to speak and her husband cannot say a word in English. She is ambitious; she aims at something. [13]*

*I did not want to work with boorish Poles in factories, we were two different worlds... And I found a job in an insurance company, but this was a terribly boring job, just a monotonous rubbish which killed me off. This was for somebody who is not educated but not for a girl who graduated from the University ... So I decided to do something and I got the accountancy training because there is lots of good jobs in finances in the UK. [49]*

There have been other intelligentsia habitus symptoms revealed in the interview data as e.g. a downward mobility avoidance claims-making. This historically long-lasting strategy that had been employed as a typical defensive mechanism of either former feudal or the intelligentsia elite who once affected by a downward mobility protected their superior status through promoting, among other strategies, good education of their offspring<sup>4</sup>. The significance of education understood as a solid asset which on a number of occasions proved to be a more efficient investment than fragile material assets (the latter were often lost in Eastern European fragile geopolitical circumstances over last two centuries) and therefore should be passed on to new generations has deeply saturated the Polish intelligentsia collective imagination. This “informal knowledge” has been returning in these respondents’ citations:

*Our kids enjoy reading books ... I always tell them that all you have inside your mind will be with you forever. Money can be lost, but knowledge, all you have read cannot be taken from you ... Our son is a fifth grader, he has read the highest number of books in the school. His teacher said that she never met any high school student who has read so many books, and this is a posh school in town, nobody ordinary can get there. We wanted our son to get to a good school. [14]*

*My daughter goes to the best school in town, in fact this school has been ranked one of the best high schools all over the world. There are five Polish girls attending this school ... We are migrants, we may look different, dress different, but I have left behind many people, even local people. [6]*

*We want them [children] to get education in a good school, to make their life better. Let's face it, we are migrants, our life is hard, we do not speak a proper English, thus we are not offered good jobs, only poor positions are available for us, but our children will have a better situation. [7]*

### **Deficit of Internalized Aspirations and Poor English Language Competences**

Obviously, the intelligentsia habitus cannot be understood as a versatile agency that exclusively stimulates upward mobility of the analysed Polish migrants. As it was earlier stated, the intelligentsia habitus should be perceived as an interpretative framework of reality (inherited during the socialization processes) that among other motivational scripts (e.g. instrumental rationality) can contribute to the legitimization of e.g. job seeking strategies. Moreover, it was found that its efficient usage has been constrained not only due to the lack of certain cultural capital resources among non-intelligentsia class respondents (e.g. they did not have a proper formal education), also several structural factors as identified in the Piorean model explain why the validation of the intelligentsia habitus has been available only to a limited number of respondents. In fact the majority of respondents noted difficulties with overcoming the roles prescribed to migrant workers in a segmented labour

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<sup>4</sup> This strategy was excellently articulated Aleksander Hertz (1951) who explained the significance of education in some Eastern European countries: “In these nations formal education acquired in an institution of higher learning meant, and still means, more than personal success as expressed in terms of money. There education is not a means to achieve personal success but rather a *permanent asset* which sets the individual apart and gives him access to a higher social sphere. The diploma from an institution of higher learning not only entitles a person to follow a particular profession. It gives more than that: *it bestows a title, a dignity that will remain forever associated with its bearer*. It is easy enough to trace a parallel to the ancient tradition that went with the bestowal of a title of nobility” (cited in Gella 1971: 16).

market economy. In contrast to intuitive assumptions that an extended stay in the UK increases the chances of improving the employment status of Polish workers, it was found, that most secondary sector respondents entered a monotonous, vicious industry cycle. Here they were not only unable to find better jobs but could also not develop civil and labour rights competences or civil society organizations engagement that would help them overcome e.g. exploitation. 49 of survey respondents (36%)—either experienced direct employer exploitation or ill treatment in the workplace. Forty-one of these came from lower skilled occupations; seven from higher skilled groups and one did not indicate an occupation. Respondents stated that exploitation ranged from forced labour (9–18%) through to unpaid or delayed wages (15–31%) and generally poor working conditions.

It is important to note, however, that poor career prospects cannot be explained solely by exhausting patterns of work underpinned by the structural conditions of a segmented labour market or a lack of formal education. One of factors leading to employment stagnancy is related to migrants' deficit of internalized aspirations concerning their perceived location in the social hierarchy that might have been otherwise transferred into upward mobility opportunities. As it is well known from Bourdiesian studies (Bourdieu 1991) poor qualities of institutional cultural capital but also—and this is crucial—embodied cultural capital which includes embodied or learned „social expectations” concerning the position in the social hierarchy, can compromise professional progress of individuals in their home country, but—as it is suggested here—this deficit may contribute also to the reproduction of a disadvantaged situation in the host labour market.<sup>5</sup> Respondents highlighted that their “poorly educated fellow Poles” or “non-ambitious” had migrated to the UK from Polish regions with high rates of unemployment and pre-existing social inequality. Thus, they were more likely to remain in low-skilled jobs. For example:

*In this factory you need to work like a beast of burden in hard conditions, you get poor money, you sort cold fruits and are not always given cotton gloves. You really need to be desperate to want this job. Poles employed here come mainly from Podlasie or Podkarpacie, ... these places with high unemployment. [1]*

Individual factors such as a deficit of cultural capital often overlap with macrostructural Piorean factors blocking not only upward mobility but also leading to exploitation in the workplace:

*I have [no] choice, I have to work for my mother and son. In Poland I had been unemployed for 10 years, I am old and ... had to force myself; this is my 5<sup>th</sup> year here. Without English you cannot find a good job... [18]*

*I have been working [in repairing and maintain buildings] for this guy for 6 years, but it has begun to be uneasy, there was too much work, he forced me to work over hours, he blackmailed me, all the time asked me to come to work on Saturdays. When I said that I am staying with my family on Saturdays he was really upset. [21]*

Labour market opportunities are decisively conditioned by a migrant's English language proficiency or the “ambitious attitude” to achieve language proficiency since this ability constitutes one of the most important resources facilitating a career status:

*When you know English it is easier to find a new job. The story is different when you do not speak English... [12]*

<sup>5</sup> Also either insufficient or improper resources of cultural capital legitimize class inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; 1979).



As with others (see Aziz 2015; Holgate et al. 2012; Wilkinson 2010) respondents also noted that their limited engagement with civil society entitlements often related to this English language deficit:

*People not only do not speak English properly [and] are not familiar with English procedures... [19]*

*There are some legal advice services and some English institutions, but the language barrier is too big, I cannot use them. [27]*

Also “ethnic ghetto” can further limit migrants’ upward mobility and prevent some respondents moving beyond ‘survival’ as noted by some respondents:

*...Poles from the lower classes usually do not speak English, they usually work in low-skilled jobs. They also have a tendency ... to socialize only with other Poles ... This ghetto situation blocks them from learning English, from meeting other people, and finding new opportunities. [24]*

Many low-skilled Polish respondents were then not only unable to ‘...unpack cultural capital from their rucksacks’ (Erel 2010) which could be consequently validated in the UK. They were also not able to create new forms of cultural capital (activities such as taking part in college courses or training opportunities) instead a respondent from Hull spoke about an ‘apathy’:

*Many Poles do not even try to change their plight. I work in a Polish school, I inform them about courses and colleges where they can get training free of charge but they say “no.” They use different excuses: “I have no time, I cannot make it, this is too hard for me.” [24]*

### **Breaking Apathy and the Intelligentsia Habitus**

Among migrants embedded in the dual labour market and affected by the sense of “apathy” as indicated in the above citations the possibility of activating the intelligentsia based habitus in order to mobilize cultural capital resources (e.g. the education upgrading, improvement of English language skills) and overcome their plight might be limited. The passive attitude in job seeking strategies contrasts with those respondents who refer to their internalized upward mobility expectations which function as “ambitious incentives” legitimating their efforts to break their unsatisfactory labour conditions. Importantly, citations demonstrate that upward mobility expectations are usually articulated within the “ambitious vs unambitious” binary framework which clearly is underpinned by the core dichotomist Lord/Boor structure:

*After few weeks I realised that this nursery job is not for me. I have graduated from the University in order to work in other type of job. I also realised that people who I worked with were not that kind of people who I would be happy to socialize with. These people were nice but they were not properly educated, they were not ambitious, I had nothing to talk about with them. So I have been all the time frustrated ... I decided to take a number of courses in order to improve my qualifications and I work as a therapist now. [13]*

*The ambitious people want to remain here in the UK. These are people who do not want to work in the factory and get the lowest salary, but they want to really achieve something. They set up businesses, they get new qualifications, new skills, they struggle to get new education. I set up a business, I earn more money, and feel that I am making a progress. [15]*

*I have tried always to be a solid person, I have done my best in different situations ... I started from cleaning in restaurants, later I became a chief in a restaurant, but it was not really what I wanted to do in my life, I was dissatisfied, felt exhausted mentally and physically ... I decided to get a better job, eventually I got a job in the library. I graduated from the library studies department in Poland thus one can say that I work in my field. [17]*

*An educated person will always go upward, will always look for new opportunities... My teacher qualifications were approved in the UK and I can teach pupils in schools, so it is something ... Soon I plan to start graduate studies, I look all the time to go upward. [6]*

### **Losing Ties with Ethnic Niches**

The interview data suggest that the opportunities to develop cultural resources, particularly language skills, require that migrants make “risky” decisions, including losing close ties with respondents’ ethnic niches. Decisions are inherently ambiguous as they in fact initially increase insecurity since risk reduction in a migration context is typically achieved within a homogenous environment (Luhmann, 1988: 95). However, some respondents identified that operating out of a homogeneous network allows the development of cross-relations with culturally and ethnically non-familiar networks, as well as integration with the local population this opens up avenues for upward mobility in the labour market. Significantly, some of these risky decisions have been legitimized by the intelligentsia habitus discursive script:

*People who are better educated, who speak better English are more inclined to keep in touch with English people, but also with people from other nations. [24]*

*People who are more engaged in searching for new opportunities usually seriously think about settlement in the UK. These are guys who do not want to remain as the working class all the time on the minimum wage but they want to achieve something in their life. They start new businesses; go to colleges, develop new skills. [15]*

*I got a contract in the factory but I did not develop in any sense, because I only talked to Poles. I did not improve my English language skills in the factory. ... At a certain point I said to myself: “enough, I will get stuck in this job for good like most of my colleagues.” I left the job and found a better one. [27]*

Inevitably the typical Lord/Boor division emphasizing instrumental “boorish attitude” of some Poles also underpins claims-making as in these citations below:

*When I am looking for a new job, I first check whether there are not too many Poles employed because the situation with many Poles is not good, first is the competition for the job, ... also many Poles are prone to act as savages, and their intellectual horizon is often narrow ... Besides I do not intend to work in the factory all my life, I have already made a decision, currently I work as a cleaning lady, but soon I want to start a business, namely, I want to go for a restaurant business. [1]*

*People who come here from big towns are culturally competent, they know how to cope with other religions, with other races. They come to the UK to live here, to make a good career, unlike those Poles who just want to grab money and after a while return to Poland. [22]*

*We are coming to the UK from different groups, from different regions sometimes you start socialize with newly met Poles and suddenly you realize „Oh dear what I am doing with them” ... There are so many red necks here. [14]*

## Conclusion

A segmented labour market concept with migrant workers occupying the bottom levels and the phenomenon of self-contained ethnic ghettos that constrain bridging social capital can partially explain the situation of harsh working conditions and limited upward mobility of some post-2004 Polish migrants in the UK. It was argued, however, that a Piorean structural perspective does not fully explain this “trap” for low skilled migrants. Whilst acknowledging the limited individual agency migrants have in challenging the structural conditions of segmented labour markets this paper—following other contributions—notes a range of strategies that migrants use to enhance their individual opportunities. Specifically, whereas other “migrant agency” studies were focused on different “getting by” strategies employed by migrants, this paper explores the intelligentsia habitus discursive structures that legitimize upward mobility and job seeking strategies. Given operational problems with the precise specification of upward mobility interpretative frameworks that were being used by respondents in terms of their class position the proposed line of inquiry focused on “turning points,” “life stories,” “local structures of opportunities” which could have been omitted by the quantitative research and its standardized data strategies (Bertaux, Thompson 2007). Surveys aiming at juxtaposing the intelligentsia habitus with the formal intelligentsia class position could have also underestimated the fact that the intelligentsia emancipatory ideology as Gella (1971: 20), among others noted, has exceeded its original class frontiers: “Members of intelligentsia stood at the front of all other class parties-workers, peasants, and bourgeois but they never created their own independent social force. In fact they never fought in the name of their own group interests (at least formally).” The intelligentsia habitus embedded within the changing structures of power relations has been resonating with the broader strata, and this diffusion of the intelligentsia’s ideologies included also the post-feudal Lord/Boor division imagery that has been consequently informing social structure aspirational interpretative frameworks in Poland since late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Importantly, this is not to deny that the intelligentsia habitus has not evenly embraced all social classes, in other words, the class structure difference clearly has been constraining the intelligentsia ideological impact particularly on working class and peasantry. The latter classes have been less capable of the full mastery of the intelligentsia habitus in their upward mobility strategies, let alone due to the fact that they have been less significantly equipped with cultural capital resources. Thus, besides identifying the agency of the intelligentsia habitus among respondents it was also interesting to inquire whether respondents with poor capabilities of mobilizing cultural capital resources were more likely to assume a disadvantaged position in the UK host labour market. The possibility of accumulating cultural capital in the host UK context is limited (particularly for respondents from a disadvantageous background) what again may perpetuate the vicious circle of segmented labour markets. Bourdieusian sociology reminds us that in contrast to social capital resources that might be accumulated relatively quickly among members of a migrant network (what sometimes has a detrimental impact see Portes 1998 on negative social capital), the accumulation of cultural capital usually requires a longer period of time. Moreover, some crucial embodied cultural competencies cannot be achieved after the completion of early family socialization. This family socialization is the period when conventional middle and upper class linguistic compe-

tences, behavioural style and distinctive attitudes are formed as habitus dispositions. For others this irreversible loss perpetuates, together with other factors (e.g. economic), status inequalities but also—and this is crucial—deprives them of symbolic added value when competing or bargaining for jobs.

Acknowledging the possible class constraints this paper did not argue that only those respondents who were more capable to activate the intelligentsia motivational script tended to leave low-skilled jobs, or were less affected by poor working conditions. Nor was it argued that the intelligentsia habitus is the only available aspirational script that guides upward mobility of Poles. There are obviously other incentives, to mention just an instrumental rationality, which might contribute to upward mobility (see also Polkowski 2015). The intelligentsia habitus should be rather understood as one among other aspirational scripts that potentially may facilitate upward mobility in the labour market. Also the efficiency of the usage of the intelligentsia habitus understood as a interpretative framework that facilitates the mobilization of cultural capital resources in the migration context for both the working-class and the intelligentsia members might be hindered since as Erel (2010: 646) has argued it is often wrongly assumed that a receiving country validates cultural capital neutrally. She argued instead that “...measures of cultural capital are shaped by policy constructions of national economic interests, and protectionist professional policies.” Therefore, formal education does not necessarily guarantee its efficient use in a host environment and even though education and other cultural capital resources may constitute autonomous agency that challenges the existing conditions of a segmented labour market, its mobilizing potential may be structurally dependent.

Given qualitative nature of this study the precise testing of the intelligentsia habitus mobilization potential in class terms in the host labour market was not fully exploited. Following the line of inquiry (Lareau 2003; Lareau and Weininger 2003) which demonstrates that parental practices contributing to the establishment of upward mobility expectations among the offspring have a decisive impact on actual educational attainment and employment prospects, which are correlated with the class position of a given family (working class members are socialized as “constrained,” “dependent,” “powerless,” while middle class and upper-middle class based individuals are exposed to empowerment practices that increase their successful upward mobility) further studies may examine whether individuals whose families invested more in their cultural resources during their socialization and education process in Poland were more likely to reproduce their privileged position in the UK labour market.

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