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Polish Migration to the UK: Continuities and Discontinuities

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Abstract

This paper puts the recent influx of Polish migration to the UK in a historical context, offers a periodised perspective and distinguishes between earlier forced migration and contemporary economic migration. Further to this, it goes beyond the often discussed quantitative dimension and adds a qualitative perspective. This enables us to differentiate the social group of Polish migrants by their migration strategies, motivations and identities. A typology of Polish migration to the UK is suggested, notably short-term and long-term migrants and the size of each category discussed. Often, strategies are a reflection of the increased risks of individual choice in the postmodern world and geared towards increasing the pool of available options. Finally, this paper not only identifies the different eras and kinds of migration and their characteristics but suggests that these are linked together across time and space by certain migration industries and network.

Key words:

United Kingdom, Poland, East-West migration, migration history, migrant typologies, network effects

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Introduction

Three events stand out in the late modern history of Polish migration to the UK: the resettlement of the Polish army corps after the II World War, the arrival of irregular immigrant workers throughout the 1990s and the large-scale immigration after Poland became a member of the European Union. These events were anything but singular but were embedded in a long history of migration which links together these peaks. Indeed, migration from what is now the territory of Poland to the UK dates back at least to the 18th and 19th century. It also involves Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe and the migration of seafarers and traders from the shores of the Baltic Sea. In the 1980s, refugees from martial law fled to the UK. Singular political conditions and specific historical migration systems facilitate repeated and increasingly continuous flows of people from Poland to the UK. It would be short-sighted to mainly associate Polish migration with the recent mass influx after the country joined the European Union.

There is very little research and only a few publications on Polish migration prior to 1998. Conventionally, British immigration research was conducted within the framework of 'race' (1960s-70s) and 'black communities' (1980s) focussing on Black and Asian immigrants and ethnic minorities. This led to a bias which left smaller ethnic and national communities under-researched. Only from the 1990s did the focus shifted to individual ethnicities. Polish migration research, however, only set off after 2004.
This paper has four aims. First, it contextualises Polish migration to the UK in historical and geographical terms. Second, it concentrates on the two recent periods, the pre- and the post EU accession periods and thus covers the last two decades from 1994 to 2010. Third, it distinguishes between various patterns, strategies and types of migration. And fourth, it sketches the consequences and perceptions of these processes.

Brief History of Polish Migration to the UK, 1800 to 2003

Central and East European including Polish immigration is nothing new to Britain; it goes back at least to the times of the 'Great European Emigration' (Hoerder and Knauf 1992). During the 19th century about 120,000 predominantly Jews from what was then Tsarist Russia fled, for instance, the 1881 pogroms (Endelman 2002) and were absorbed by British society (Lipman 1954, Rees 1978, Holmes 1982). Locations such as London's East End (Whitechapel), West End (Chelsea) or Cheethill in Manchester are associated with this 'old' and often Jewish East European migration. After the turn of the century, however, East European and Jewish immigration sparked the first anti-immigration campaign in modern Britain which in 1905 resulted in the first immigration restrictions (Layton-Henry 1989). In 1939, the Polish government fled from the Russian-German occupation and sought exile in London; there they remained when Poland came under communist rule. 120,000 members of different units of the Polish

army and other forces who served and fought with the allies and decided not to return to communist Poland were resettled to the UK. Another 20,000 to 30,000 refugees, mainly Ukrainian prisoners of war, some Balts and probably ethnic Poles, fled the Russian occupation and reinforced this population (Harris 1987). Finally, Poles were also amongst the 350,000 immigrants from the European Volunteer Workers scheme (Miles and Kay 1990). By 1951, the Polish population in Britain had risen from 44,642 in 1931 to 162,339 (Holmes 1988). It was simultaneously concentrated and dispersed over the country, e.g. 33,500 settled in Greater London, 14,500 in Lancashire, 13,500 in West Yorkshire and 3,200 in Leicestershire (Zubrzycki 1956). In 1968, a small number of refugees related to anti-Semitic purges in Poland fled to the UK including the intellectuals Zygmunt Bauman and Leszek Kolakowski. All these were treated as a desirable replacement population and the government took any measure to integrate them into British society (CAB 1946, Rees 1978). Although quickly absorbed there remained a social infrastructure of associations and institutions, notably in parts of London and Manchester, comprising of ethnic shops, schools, churches and cultural centres, advice agencies, ex-servicemen and other associations.

Around the early 1980s, when martial law was imposed by General Jaruzelski from 1980 to 1983, a small number of refugees arrived in the UK. From 1986 to 1996, 2,900 asylum applications were recorded (Refugee Council 1997). Initially, these were related to repressions of the communist government during the same period; some discrimination of Roma was also reported. However, it could be assumed that by the time asylum applications peaked in 1995 the majority were economic migrants who exploited the opportunities of the asylum system. From the mid-1990s, asylum migration faded out.

In the early 1990s around 74,000 residents born in Poland were registered in the UK (CRE 1995). These represented less than five percent of the white immigrant population of at least 1.4 million and three percent of all ethnic minorities. Polish-born or Polish background communities were known in only a few locations such as London (Hammersmith, Lewisham, Ealing, Acton and Balham, also spreading to Greenford), Manchester, Liverpool, Leicester and Denbighshire (Northwest Wales). These figures also demonstrate that from 1951 to 1991, the Polish-born population decreased from 162,000 to 74,000 implying that Polish immigration was low and that Polish communities were shrinking (Sword 1996, Burrell 2002).

From the late 1980s and particular since 1994, when Poland became an EU candidate country and entry became visa-free, a small but increasing influx of immigrants was recorded. In the first six months of 1988, 'action against illegal entrants' involved 34 Polish nationals, just over 2 percent of the total of 1,500 enforcement actions, and Poles were at the bottom of the table of the most important irregular immigrant groups (Hansard 21 June 1989: 136). By 1994, however, the number of Poles against whom 'actions were taken as illegal entrants' had risen to 451, representing over 10 percent of the total of 4,300 (Hansard 19 December 1995), the third largest national group (after Indians and Nigerians). At

that time, the total irregular immigrant population was estimated at 10,000 to 20,000 (BBC 2, *Panorama*, 14 July 1997). By 2002, Poles topped the list of 'refusal of entry' (11,670), with Jamaicans coming second (6,285) and Filipinos coming third (3,960) (Home Office 2002). By 2000, the irregular immigrant population had risen to around 500,000 and 2004 figures illustrate that prior to EU accession at least 70,000 Poles but probably more were living and working irregularly in the UK (Home Office 2005a).

Further types of migrants typical for this period were work permit holders, usually highly skilled professionals and businessmen who moved under provisions offered by the EC Association Agreement (Jordan and Düvell 2002). Others fell into the categories of tourists, students and au pairs which partially overlap with the irregular immigrants group. In 2000, 180,000 Polish citizens visited the UK (ONS 2004). By the early 2000s, the number of Polish immigrants had increased significantly, although no exact numbers are available.

Initially, many of the newcomers lived away from the settled communities and in East London (Russian Refugee Aid Society, interview, 3 December 1997). It was assumed that the established post-war migrant communities rejected the new East European migrants and that both groups did not mix (Düvell 1998). Sometimes their relationships were marked by a mixture of suspicion and economic relationships (Garapich 2008c, Sword 1996) as some migrants found employment within the first-wave community as carers, nannies and cleaners or within diasporic institutions. This seems to have changed with the accession of Poland to the EU.

A slightly separate but also important strand of movement from Poland to the UK consists of Polish Roma who along with state employees, farmers and some parts of the working class were most disadvantaged by the post 1989 economic transition from the socialist system to the market economy. Roma were also the victims of increased racist discrimination from the dominant Polish society (Mirga and Mroz 1994) and there is a constant outflow of that group from Poland (Nowicka 2003) to Western Europe with the UK being one of major destination countries. Some community groups of Roma estimate that overall, around 20,000 Polish Roma have established themselves in the UK since 1989 (Roma Support Group 2010).

On the one hand, Polish migration to the UK can be described as an ongoing centuries-long social process. On the other hand, it can be distinguished by periods with specific causes and conditions and thus treated as individual occurrences (Table 1). Hence, Polish migration to the UK simultaneously is a continuum and a series of separate processes.

Table 1: Periods of Polish migration to the UK

Periods	Type	Category	Context	Scale
1820s-1930s	Permanent Transit		Great European Emigration to the Americas and Australia	Small and Medium-scale
1930s-1950s	Permanent	Refugees, resettlement of army personnel	War and post-war	Small-scale One off
1968	Permanent	Refugees	Anti-Semitism	Small-scale
1980s	Permanent	Refugees	Martial law	Low-scale
1994-2004	Temporary	Often irregular	Pre-accession, visa free entry	Medium-scale
Since May 2004	Temporary Permanent	Regular	Post-accession, free movement	Large-scale

Polish migration can not only be distinguished by periods but can be accounted to diverse conditions and distinguished by types. Two major transformations can be identified. First, migration prior to the mid 1980s was mostly forced and related to unfavourable political circumstances, while later migration was entirely related to unfavourable economic and social conditions. Second, earlier migration was predominantly permanent, became increasingly temporary from the mid-1980s and partially permanent again after the mid 2000s.

Polish Migration in Geopolitical Perspective

Migration between member states is generally low in the European Union. In 2006, only n million EU citizens (two percent) lived in another member state (European Commission 2006). These low mobility levels were often cause for concerns and criticism of the European Commission (2002) and other actors (OECD, HWWA, Straubhaar 1996, Puhani 1999). In particular the Lisbon Strategy aims at minimising barriers to mobility and improving conditions for the mobility of people and workers in Europe, resulting in the consequent successive expansion of the right to free mobility to citizens of the new member states.

Although Polish migration to the UK is on a continuum, historically the UK was only a minor destination for Poles (Table 2). For instance, after 1989 and the break-up of the Eastern bloc and the fall of the 'Iron Curtain', 98 percent of the annually one million Polish regular migrants went to Germany, USA or Canada and only a very small proportion to the UK (Okolski 1996). In 2000, only 2.6 percent of all CEE citizens who lived in another EU country lived in the UK.

Table 2: Citizens of CEE countries in Western Europe, 2000 (Salt 2005)

Belgium	21,544
Denmark	46,626
Germany	1,969,760
Finland	41,066
France	119,849
Greece	553,500[a]
UK	118,395[b]
Ireland	7-15,000
Italy	328,144
Netherlands	32,468
Norway	31,467
Austria	340,499
Portugal	2,361[c]
Sweden	99,424
Spain	25,733[c]
Switzerland	362,624
Total	4,549,212

[a] 2001, overwhelmingly irregular immigrants from non-EU 8 countries, like Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Russia and Ukraine.
[b] Other sources used in this paper sum to 215.000.
[c] These figures refer to the situation before regularisations in Spain (2005) and Portugal (2001).

This changed considerably by 2005, when 18 percent of all work permits issued to A-8 workers were issued in the UK. Thus, within four years, EU-8 migration to the UK had increased seven-fold and the UK became the second most attractive destination for Polish migrant workers, after Germany but before Ireland. In 2008, the UK became the top destination. In legal and political terms, the character of Polish migration changed radically after 1 May 2004. Before that date, Polish migration was considered as international migration of third country non-EU nationals; after this date, Polish migration was reframed as internal mobility of EU citizens.

Table 3: Work permits for EU-8 immigrants in EU-10 countries, 2004-2005

	2004	2005
Belgium	12,918	15,408
Denmark	4,911	./.
Germany	497,298	500,633
Greece[a]	3,711	
Spain[a]	11,255	
France	9,916	
Ireland	53,829 (May-Dec.)	107,024 (Jan.-Nov.)

Italy[a] (all applications)	26,324	49,454 (Jan.-Sept.)
Netherlands	24,424	14,612
Austria	68,449	32,265 (Jan.-Jun.)
Portugal[a]	43	
Finland	1,651	
Sweden	3,514 (May-Dec.)	4,500
UK	134,530 (May-Dec.)	156,165 (Jan.-Sept.)
Total	852,773	880,061

[a] These figures are not very representative as these countries had previously no pro-active immigration policy in place but relied on post hoc regularisation policies of irregular immigrants.
Source: EU Commission (2006: 17)

Post-Accession Migration to the UK

In 2004, when Poland and nine other countries became members of the European Union, the UK decided, unlike most other EU countries except Ireland and Sweden, not to impose migration restrictions of Polish citizens. British embassies advertised this new opportunity:

> Did the UK open its labour market from the first day of accession? Yes. From 1 May 2004, Czech nationals have had the same rights to work in the UK as EU-15 citizens. The UK will allow free movement to those who genuinely want to work in the UK'[1].

The only control measure taken was the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) which came into force on 1 May 2004[2]. Employees were required to register with the Home Office for a fee of £50, later increased to £90; a new registration was requested whenever a person changed jobs. The permit was valid for 12 month after which automatic indefinite permission was granted. Also, in-country applications were permitted and no retrospective punishment introduced for those who were already in the country and working. Therefore, the *Guardian* (25 February 2004) concluded that the WRS was an amnesty for irregular immigrants from Eastern Europe in anything but the name. The only restriction was that for the first 12 month migrants were not entitled to social benefits. Not all EU-8 workers, however, registered because the system was considered bureaucratic and not worthwhile for those who only intended to work temporarily (Association of Labour Providers (ALP) 2005).

At that period the UK enjoyed economic growth and recorded 610,000 job vacancies. Some studies suggested the generally positive impact of immigration on GDP, the fiscal system and the labour market (Dustmann *et al.* 2003, Sriskandarajah *et al.* 2005). Initially, it was assumed that the UK would only attract a low level of East-West migration, 5,000-13,000 annually (Dustmann *et al.* 2003) or 17,000 in 2005. But these scholars proved to be completely wrong.

[1] British Embassy, Prague, www.british-embassy.gov.uk
[2] For further information see www.workingintheuk.gov.uk/working_in_the_uk/en/homepage/schemes_and_programmes/worker_registration.html.

Immediately after the EU-accession in May 2004, international travel between the EU-8 countries and the UK more than doubled, from 677,000 entries in 2003 to 1.29 million in 2004, including 528,000 from Poland, and tripled between the second and third quarter (from 262,000-602,000) (ONS 2005). Within the first 12 month of the WRS 276,000 application were submitted, more in summer, fewer in winter months, and 232,000 employees were registered (the difference can mostly be explained with persons filing more than one application) (Home Office 2005a). Of these 132,000, or 48 percent, were from Poland. According to WRS figures, at least 70,000 applicants, around one third, already worked in the UK prior 1 May 2004, presumably as irregular immigrant workers. Initially, only five percent came with relatives, amounting to another 15,225 persons. Finally, the ALP (2005) assumed that because not everybody registered with the WRS, the total rather was 350,000 employees of which 120,000 worked irregularly. These figures demonstrate an enormous influx of labour migrants from Poland (Table 4). The ALP also reported an average employment period of only one month; hence the number of workers staying at any one time was considerably lower than the annual total. According to the Labour Force Survey (ONS 2004) the total of EU-8 employees only rose by 40,000 as all others had left the country again.

Table 4: Nationality of applicants to Workers Registration Scheme (WRS), 5/2004-4/2005

Poland	131,290
Lithuania	33,775
Slovakia	24,470
Latvia	16,625
Czech republic	14,610
Hungary	6,900
Estonia	3,480
Slovenia	250

Source: Home Office (2005c)

By the end of March 2009, 949,000 applicants to the WRS were approved, though after 2006 annual numbers began to drop; 627,000 (66 percent) were Poles, and the second largest group of 99,400 were Slovaks (Tables 5 and 6). On top of these came 118,620 registered dependants (Home Office 2009). Thus, a total of 1,067,000 EU-8 nationals migrated to the UK between May 2004 and March 2009. The ONS (2010) puts the number of Polish-born residents in the UK in 2010 at 515,000 but Moszczyński (2008) estimates ethnic Poles at 800,000.

Table 5: Approved applications to WRS, 2004-March 2009, number of Poles

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009, 1 quarter
Total WRS	125,885	204,970	227,875	210,800	158,340	21,275
	8,525	16,285	29,905	31,090	27,610	5,205
	134,410	221,255	257,780	241,890	185,950	26,480
Poles WRS	71,025	127,325	162,495	150,255	103,015	12,480

Source: Home Office (2009)

Table 6: Sectors of employment

Admin/Bus	Hospitality	Agriculture	Manufact.	Food	Retail	Health	Construct.	Transp.	Entert.
255,800	111,905	55,080	45,870	30,040	28,045	26,515	26,420	18,305	8,025

Source: Home Office (2009)

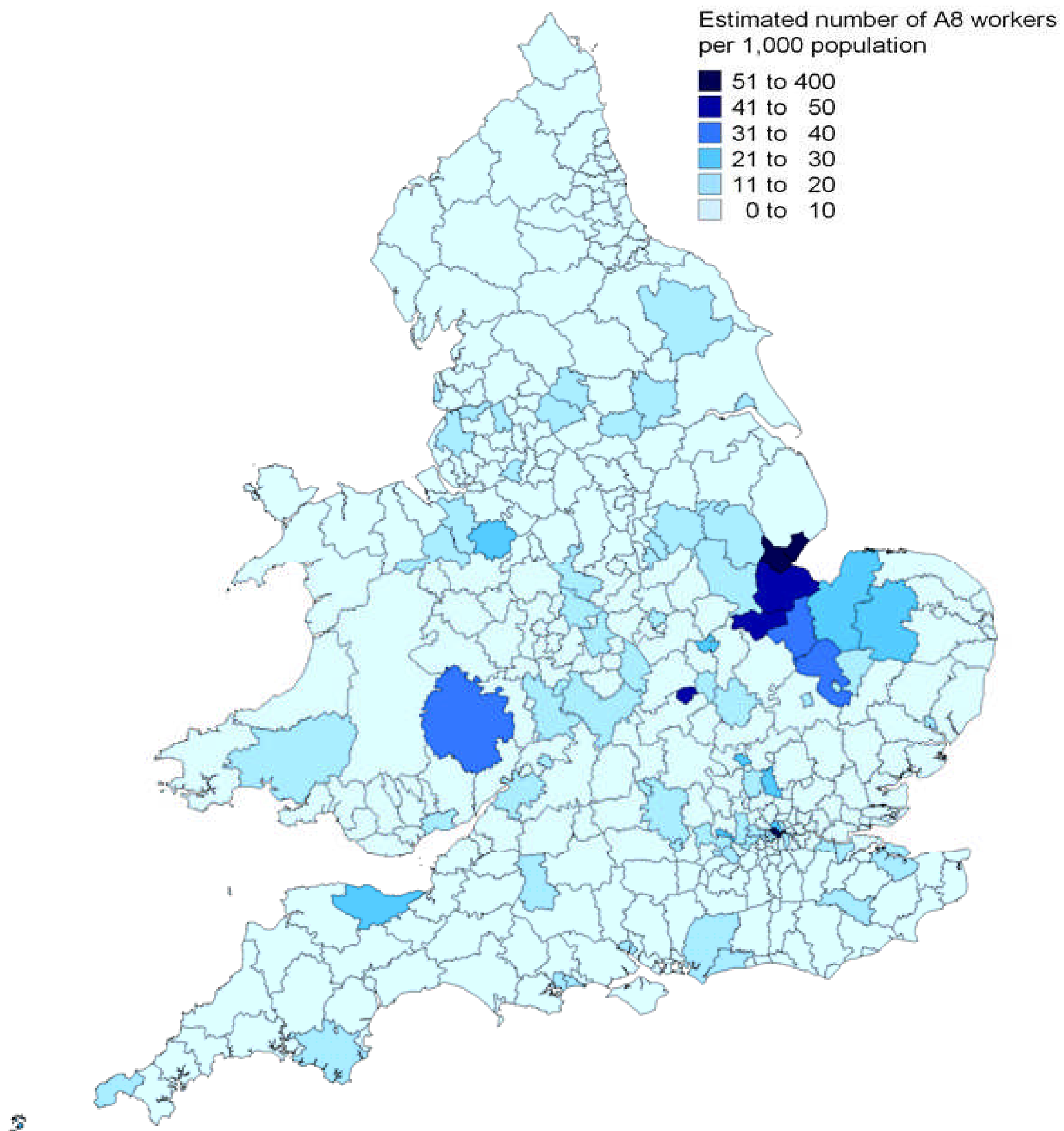
No further breakdown according to nationality is available. In terms of gender, the ratio changed from 56:44 to 50:50 by 2009; 43 percent were in the age group 18-24 and 38 percent in the group 26-34. Comparing 2004 with 2009 figures shows that in later years proportionally more migrant workers were older. Before leaving Poland, 51 percent were in temporary employment and 46 percent in permanent employment. During the period May 2008 to March 2009, 62 percent indicated on their application that they intended to stay in the UK for less than three months, compared to 60 percent in the previous period.

The EU-8 workers were dispersed across the entire country (Table 7). This is an untypical pattern as compared with previous migrations and other groups which tend to concentrate in certain regions and cities. Indeed, EU-8 and Polish migrants settled in cities and regions that had never before experienced any significant immigration. For instance, eight percent of the 130,000 residents of Wrexham county borough (Wales) are Poles (8,000-10,000). Significant communities can also be found in London (120,000), Leicester (30,000), Southampton (20,000), Peterborough (10,000), Slough (10,000), Reading (8,000), Swindon (7,000), Nottingham (6,600), Wrexham (4,000), Blackpool (3,000), Aberdeen (2,150), Carlisle (1,600) and Lancaster (1,300) (compiled from diverse sources).

Table 7: EU-8 workers, dispersal across UK regions, proportion of total in per cent, rounded, 2004-2009.

Angl.	Midl.	Lond.	NE	Centr	NW	SW	Scot	SE	N.Irl.	Wales
15	13	12	10	10	9	9	8	7	4	3

Map 1: Dispersal of EU-8 workers across UK, per 1,000 population



Source: Health Protection Agency (2008: 8)

Patterns, Strategies and Types of Polish Migrants in the UK

Polish migration is facilitated by political regimes, migration networks, socio-economic opportunity structures and transnational practices embedded in particular migration cultures. Second, people are mobile for a mix of economic and non-economic, political and non-political factors. Third, Polish migrants are heterogeneous along different mobility patterns, aspirations and intentions reflecting social

class and regional differences within Polish society. All of this is dynamic and fluid and changes over time; regimes alter, networks emerge and dissolve and people adjust their strategies and identities.

Polish Migration Networks

According to Burrell 'the fall of the communist regime and the increased globalisation of communications [from the early 1990s] has had a dramatic impact on the relationship between Poles in Britain generally and Poland, allowing new links to be forged with the homeland' (Burrell 2002: 71). These facilitated the emergence of migration networks and transnational activities. It was found, for instance, that the post-war refugee generation in growing old developed a demand for carers from Poland (Jordan and Düvell 2002). Similarly, refugees from the early 1980s sometimes served as point of reference, sources of information or employment for others coming later and under different circumstances. Hence, Poles who arrived at earlier periods and who migrated under specific circumstances facilitated subsequent migration of people who moved under different conditions. Thus certain networks effects were observed that not only span across different periods but link together movements of different kinds. The majority of temporary or seasonal migrants rely in one way or another on ties to and the assistance provided by previous migrants of the same or earlier cohort (Garapich 2008a Eade *et al.* 2007). These represent a base of settled individuals whose trajectory dates back to the various migration movements after WWII. In highly symbolic fashion the president of the Federation of Poles, Jan Mokrzycki (a descendant of the WWII immigrant generation) when asked whether he knew anyone from his generation who had not invited at some point a relative from Poland replied: 'no'. Hence previous immigrants or migrants with long-term settlement plans generated some chain migration. Typical cases are Polish-owned construction companies who rely on a steady flow of short-term migrants. The same has been observed in the care sector where elderly Polish immigrants in the UK invite relatives or friends for a few weeks, for instance, to step in when the main carer takes holidays in Poland. Modern communication systems enable Polish employers or households to recruit their workforce from Poland within a few days. These networks link together Polish migrants from different cohorts as well as different types of migrants. The result is that Poles with different migration strategies – circular, permanent or flexible – participate in the same transnational social field reinforcing and facilitating transnational mobility between two or more localities. This provides for a sustainable and functional mobility system: the more migrants are permanently and economically incorporated into British society, its labour market and crucial networks, the more opportunities are created that facilitate a strategy of quick funds accumulation through seasonal and temporal work. Thus different migration strategies represent a mutually functional and reinforcing system that facilitates further diversification of migration strategies. Probably nowhere is this more obvious than in the growth of the 'migration

industry' catering for Poles in London (Garapich 2008b). All owners and editors of Polish magazines or commercial advice offices (advising on setting up bank accounts, accountancy or businesses to compensation, litigation and social benefits claims) came during the 1980s or 1990s and are long-term settlers, often with British citizenship.

Transnational Practices and Identities

Transnational migrants 'link together their societies of origin and settlement' (Basch *et al.* 1992: 6). With respect to Poles in the UK, various studies suggest that the vast majority pursue transnational practices (Garapich 2008a, Eade *et al.* 2007, Ryan *et al.* 2009). They participate in activities and are simultaneously attached to Poland and the UK and operate in social networks and markets that are rooted in and connect both countries. This involves constant communication and frequent visits to Poland and easy access to Polish media, goods and entertainment. Transnational activities have real, practical and everyday significance. On the one hand, Polish migrants perceive physical distance and state boundaries as a mere inconvenience; on the other hand, they acknowledge structural and cultural barriers, notably exemption from some benefits of the welfare state, language problems or a sense of unfamiliarity with the new environment. For instance, of a sample of 50 people interviewed in-depth (Eade *et al.* 2007) 40 frequently visited Poland, three to ten times a year; 35 maintained strong economic and life interest in their home community – i.e. businesses, education, job seeking, voting in Polish elections and expressing general interest in what happens back home; and 12 have bought or were planning to buy property from money earned in London. Another large scale survey (Garapich and Osipovic 2007) generated a similar picture: 20 percent went to Poland four times a year, 40 percent twice a year; 25 percent had daily contact with their families/friends in Poland via email, phone or sms; 43 percent maintained contact a few times per week. In addition, 52 percent used Polish internet and 28 percent watched Polish satellite TV on a daily/few times a week basis. Thus, media consumption in the UK facilitates keeping up with developments in Poland. In particularly the Internet blurs the boundaries of the British and Polish states and societies as Polish websites can now be based in Poland and the UK and are frequented by residents in both countries. A common practice in discussion forums on Polish sites in the UK is to use double identification signatures like: *Darek, London/Wroclaw* or *Jurek, Nottingham/Poznan*. In many individuals' perceptions being *from* somewhere and being *somewhere now* is simultaneously incorporated into individual identities.

Links between Internal and External Migration

Sometimes, UK trips are an extension of internal Polish migration and vice versa, migration to the UK can be replaced by internal migration. Jaźwińska and Okólski (2001) found that migrants who used to go

to Warsaw for work subsequently engaged in international migration, for instance, in response to the mid-1990s Polish economic slowdown. Choice of location depends on various factors: the availability of jobs, financial needs and family circumstances. When more money is required, people may choose London which means longer separation from the family but higher financial gains. In contrast, working in Warsaw may generate lower gains but does not require a long period of separation from the family. Such migrants can select from three locations, their own rural setting, Warsaw or the UK. Such a strategy is pan-European in character and determined by a combination of factors including agricultural seasons, economic cycles, i.e. construction booms, family constraints and individual needs.

Short-term Migrants: Storks and Hamsters

One type of migrant only engages in temporary migration; their point of reference is life in Poland – home, family, job or business – and they are 'return oriented' (Düvell and Vogel 2006a). Usually, they move within their own networks and take advantage of wage differentials. This pattern is determined by market conditions, personal circumstances and preferences.

This type of migrant moves repeatedly, usually for shorter periods of time and with the purpose of earning funds that facilitate their life and/or business in Poland. Sometimes, these are labeled as 'storks' or 'people on the swing' (Jazwinska and Okólski 2001). This flow includes peasants, businessmen or students coming during winter, low season or summer breaks to supplement their income in Poland, and seems to be attracted to the urban construction or agricultural sectors. Several studies show that around 12-15 percent of respondents make frequent short visits to the UK (Eade *et al.* 2007, Garapich and Osipovic 2007).

Another type of migrants are those who only migrate once, for a few months and up to two years with the aim of earning a significant amount of money for a specific purpose. These can be labeled as 'hamsters' or 'target earners' (Piore 1979: 61). Such migrants can be illustrated by the example of a female university graduate from Krakow who has lived in London for almost 2 years, who does 'not want to stay forever' but to stay just long enough to pay back her student loan in Poland. A similar case is a man who aims 'to earn some cash for opening a business' and thus to move up the social ladder in Poland. Roughly 12-20 percent could fall into this category (Eade *et al.* 2007, Garapich and Osipovic 2007).

There are similarities and differences between both groups. They share strongly economic attitudes with a view to enhancing their economic position in Poland, which in turn explains their lifestyles and habits in London. They often work extremely long hours, 70-80 hours per week, driven by the aspiration to accumulate capital. The reason behind the 'Polish work ethos' widely praised by UK employers lies to some extent in this temporary stay 'hamster' strategy. The difference, however, lies in

their aspirations, maintaining versus improving social status, and their perspectives, looking back versus looking forward.

Altogether around 40 percent only intend to stay for short periods of time, either for a few months or up to two years. Indeed, return rates are 40-50 percent (Lemos and Portes 2008, Pollard *et al.* 2008). Thus, half of the cumulative number of Poles are actually not permanently in the UK but represent a very transient, temporary and seasonal workforce adapting to equally volatile economic environments.

Stayers, On-Migrants, Nomads and Undecided

A distinctly different type of migrants are people with clear intentions of long-term settlement whose main ties are in the UK and who state that their future is in Great Britain. These can be classified as emigrants/immigrants (Düvell and Vogel 2006a) and dubbed as stayers. Around a fifth of all contemporary Polish migrants from the different cohorts of pre- and post-accession migrants fall into this category (Eade *et al.* 2007). This type is well illustrated by a man in his 40s who migrated to the UK in the mid-1990s: he experienced an economic downturn and closure of his business in Poland and travelled to the UK on a tourist visa but with the intention of staying; he set up a new, successful business (just like 40,000 others, see *Wall Street Journal* 3 June 2008); he has children at English schools though he is still involved in transnational activities and invests in property in Poland. Similar patterns were observed amongst migrants who arrived shortly before Poland joined the EU. However, even people who did not want to go back to Poland at the time of their interview often did not exclude the idea altogether.

Other migrants have already lived in several countries or are intending to live in other countries (see Düvell and Jordan 2006). They do not have intentions to stay in the UK or return to Poland, are open to life in different countries and consider migrating, for instance, to the traditional top destinations, i.e. the US, Australia or Canada or wherever a suitable job can be identified. Indeed, their choice-making strongly depends on employment opportunities and their networks are rather international and professional than locally confined. Those for whom the UK is the first post abroad and who intend to go to another country can be denoted as on-migrants. But those who have already been to other countries and for whom the UK is only another stage can be labeled as 'nomads' (for narratives see Düvell and Vogel 2006b). Both types have not (yet) developed strong ties to the UK, do not have any particular loyalty to any country, not even Poland, are permanently mobile and move from one country to another, at least for a certain period of their life before settling down or returning to their country of origin, for example after retirement. For the mobile period of their life they pursue temporal, non-linear, open-ended and continuous patterns of migration.

A significant proportion of migrants seems deliberately vague and undecided about their migration plans and leaves their migration outcomes open-ended. When asked about their plans for staying or returning their typical response is *'I don't know'*. In the several surveys quoted so far this group accounts for 27-43 percent, independent from their length of stay in the UK, education, income, gender and age. Table 8 cross-tabulates intentions of stay with actual time spends in the UK.

Table 8: Declared intention of length stay depending on duration already in the UK

		Length of stay						
		Less than 6 months	between 6 and 12 months	between 1 year and 2 years	between 2 years and 5 years	between five and 10 years	between 10 and 18 years	Total
How long intends to stay in the UK/Ireland	Less than 6 months	34.8%	4.1%	10.8%	7.8%	3.3%	8.3%	13.4%
	Between 6 and 24 months (2 years)	13.4%	21.5%	11.2%	11.4%	9.8%	4.2%	12.6%
	Between 2 and 5 years	11.2%	19.0%	23.4%	15.9%	14.1%	4.2%	16.9%
	More than 5 years	5.8%	11.6%	10.8%	16.5%	14.1%	4.2%	11.7%
	Permanently	8.9%	14.0%	11.9%	17.7%	25.0%	50.0%	15.2%
	I don't know/hard to say	25.9%	29.8%	31.9%	30.8%	33.7%	29.2%	30.2%

Source: Garapich and Osipovic (2007)

On the one hand this reflects dynamic decision-making processes, liminal identities or carefully balanced responses that are reactions to a political environment wary about large-scale Polish immigration, rather than genuine considerations regarding individual perspectives. On the other hand, such open answers reflect a specific migration strategy: these respondents do not commit themselves to certain periods or locations; instead they keep all options open, constantly assess the social, economic and cultural environment and remain flexible in responding to changing conditions. There is also the question, however, as to whether individuals have somewhere to go back. The 'don't know' answer is also a statement about belonging and identity and illustrates how individuals conceptualize their migration project – rather a flexible life course than a linear spatial and temporal plan. This reflects an important aspect of migration in modern Europe – its fluidity, open-endedness, non-linearity and the growing importance of transnational fields of social, economic and cultural activities for which territorialisation and fixed setting become an obstacle, where being on the move increases ones chances of expanding networks, looking for opportunities and building social capital.

Social and Individual Consequences and Perception of Polish Post-Accession Migration to the UK

By and large, politicians and the public were rather positive about A-8 migration despite its unprecedented and unanticipated scale. The Home Office explained that Eastern European workers 'contributed to the success of the British economy whilst making very few demands of the welfare system and public services', were 'helping to fill the gaps on the labour market', 'supporting the provision of public services in communities' and made a positive contribution to the fiscal system (Home Office 2005b: 1). Equally the Department for Work and Pensions confirmed a 'moderate but generally positive effect' (Portes and French 2005). Neither were wage dumping nor job replacement effects observed (ONS 2006); only in some sectors, notably fishery and agriculture, was there assumed to be a damping effect on wage increase. Indeed, unemployment fell from 4.9 percent (December 2003) to 4.7 percent (December 2005). EU-8 immigrants rarely competed with indigenous workers. Meanwhile, there are signs that the large supply of regular Polish and other A-8 workers had some negative effect on irregular workers for whom it became more difficult to find employment. Another effect seems to be a new population of irregular workers from Ukraine and elsewhere filling vacant jobs at the bottom of the market (TUC 2004).

The media was tolerant, even enthusiastic about this migration: for instance, *The Times* (16 February 2008) argued that this 'wave of immigration helped to fuel Britain's early 21st century boom', the *Daily Telegraph* (9 February 2006) concluded that 'Great Britain decided rightly' whilst boulevard papers like the *Daily Mail* (9 February 2005) compared 'workshy British' with Polish workers: 'they want to work, they are magnificent'. Internationally it was noted with some disbelief how 'multi-cultural Britain absorbed these workers like a sponge' (*International Herald Tribune* 21 October 2005). Initially, Polish and other EU-8 mass migration triggered few negative responses though problems were noted on the local level: some authorities complained about overstretched resources, i.e. in housing, schools and public transport, being caught by surprise and a lack of support from central government. Even some instances of racism and xenophobia were recorded. Notably, with the emergence of the economic crises in 2008 negative headlines became more frequent, e.g. the *Daily Telegraph's* claim that 'Polish immigration to Britain has spun out of control' (19 January 2008) fuelled threatened feelings.

Migrants too were largely positive about their migration outcomes in the UK. Indeed, a survey (Eade *et al*. 2007) finds that 58 percent believe that as a result of their migration they occupy a higher social class position than in Poland. Around 25 percent believe that they are on the same level as in Poland or that they do not see themselves as part of British society. Only 14 percent said that they moved down the social class ladder. Thus, in the majority's perception they do not suffer from up-

rooting, de-skilling, brain-waste, separation, alienation or marginalisation but rather enjoy upward mobility, higher returns for their labour and an improved social status.

Conclusion

Post-2004 Polish migration to the UK was the largest single movement to the UK of its kind. Whilst pre-1990 migration was mostly forced and politically motivated, since then migrants have come for economic, educational and other reasons. From a contemporary perspective it becomes clear that different migration periods and strategies are not separate but interconnected and interdependent. Networks and network effects but also the migration industry set up by earlier immigrants link together migrants from different periods or cohorts. For example, short-term migrants often rely on the assistance provided by the longer-term migrants who have settled down and can provide accommodation, jobs, advice and information. With some caution overall we can argue that around half or more of all Polish migrants in the UK are short- or medium-term migrants, a strategy tuned towards a high-risk capitalist labour market where flexibility, mobility, insecurity and risk require the ability to anticipate new opportunities, respond to constantly changing demands and a high degree of flexibility. It is a reflection of the increased risks of individual choice in the postmodern world (Giddens 1991, Beck 1992) and accordingly a strategy for multiplying social and cultural capital, expanding networks, gaining experience and thus increasing the pool of available options. Indeed, for many, accepting a territorially bounded and nationally fixed social environment in which they would spend the rest of their life is not an option. Thus, many of these migrants not only give in to the requirements of deregulated labour markets but are actively shaping them. Bearing in mind the recent economic turbulence, those who accept temporality and develop flexible approaches have advantages over those who are more sedentary. By keeping all options open migrants attempt to insure themselves against the precarious condition of the modern capitalist world – high property prices, flexible employment arrangements, shaky markets and economic downturns. If things turn negative, they can always go back. This form of adaptation, however, also has negative consequences for migrants: (i) they are often unable to progress professionally because they get stuck in the secondary labour market, or (ii) they lack long-term financial and social stability, and (iii) some experience family breakdown, homelessness, low pay and lack of employment rights. There is no doubt that for many their migration project turned sour; the dramatic rise in the numbers of Polish homeless people on the streets of London in recent years is a testimony to that (Garapich 2010). Another question is whether and to what extent the economic downturn and slow recovery in the UK compels the more mobile sections of Polish migrants to move to other countries. Germany will open its labour market to A8 nationals in May 2011. For 'storks' and 'hamsters'

it may make more sense to migrate there instead. Nevertheless, vast numbers of migrants will stay in the UK; for instance, White (2010) and White and Ryan (2010) noted that family and children's education is one of the stronger factors behind the decision to remain in the UK. In any case, post-2004 migrations from Poland have left a permanent mark on British society, even if a large part of these movements may decrease in time.

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